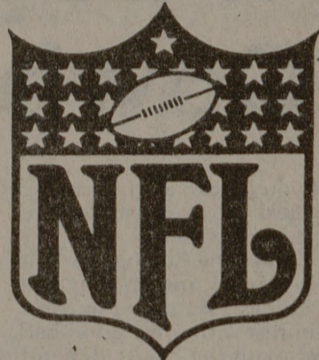


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'88 NFL draft was a strange one

Teams draft for strong needs rather than skills



NEW YORK (AP) — Michael Irvin and Keith Jackson, two game-breaking receivers, lasted until the 11th and 13th picks. A kicker was chosen before the first quarterback and the first quarterback was really a punter.

The 1988 NFL draft was definitely one in which teams went for needs rather than sheer athletic skill. With few exceptions in the five rounds that took nine hours and 28 minutes, teams examined their holes, then took players to fill them. That was particularly true of the stronger teams — the Cleveland Browns, Denver Broncos San Francisco 49ers, New Orleans Saints, New York Giants, Denver Broncos and even the Super Bowl champion Washington Redskins.

Only one true quarterback was drafted Sunday. Three more quarterbacks — Don McPherson of Syracuse, Scott Secules of Virginia and Stan Humphries of Northeast Louisiana — went in the sixth round today.

Typical of Sunday's draft was Miami's choice of Ohio State's Eric Kumerow with the 16th pick in the draft. Kumerow, a 257-pound defensive end-linebacker, was generally rated a second-rounder or lower but he fit one of the Dolphins' desperate needs.

"We had 17 sacks last year and the Bears had 70 so we had to do something," said Chuck Studley, Miami's linebacker coach. "I think he's going to be great pass-rusher."

While a record six wide receivers and five running backs went in the first round, no quarterbacks were chosen and the first quarterback

Dolphins took running back Melvin Bratton of Miami, who might have been a first-rounder if not for a serious knee injury suffered in the Hurricanes' victory over Oklahoma for the national championship.

The first round was typical of the search for needs.

The first eight picks, starting with Auburn linebacker Aundray Bruce, already signed by the Atlanta Falcons, was predictable.

But then the Los Angeles Raiders, who had already taken Heisman Trophy winner Tim Brown of Notre Dame with the sixth choice, used the ninth on Terry McDaniel, a cornerback from Tennessee, who was projected as a late-first, early second-rounder. He will be used as a successor to the keystones of the Raiders' aging secondary, cornerbacks Mike Haynes and Lester Hayes.

Then the Giants took 290-pound offensive tackle Eric Moore of Indiana, following it up with 306-pounder John Elliott of Michigan on the second round as they chose to rebuild the offensive line that was in part responsible for their slip to 6-9 from a Super Bowl title in 1986.

That left Irvin, the Miami wide receiver and one of the top athletes available, to slip through to Dallas, which needed just about everything, particularly outside speed.

"He should accelerate our return to the living," said Tex Schramm, Dallas' president.

Jackson slipped by the Cardinals, who in their usual enigmatic style, took California linebacker Ken Harvey, claiming they needed an outside rushing linebacker. If he works out,

Harvey would compensate for two previous draft disappointments — outside linebacker — Freddie Johnson, the Cardinals' first pick in 1985, and Anthony Bell, their first choice in 1986.

That left the Eagles to take Jackson.

"I think the guy's as fine an athlete is in the draft," said Joe Wood, the Philadelphia personnel director. "And he's graduated. We didn't get a dummy out of Oklahoma."

But most of the better teams went for needs.

The Redskins, whose first pick was the last of the second round and 55th overall, took Chip Lohmiller, a kicker from Minnesota, in hopes of ending the erratic kicking game that has plagued them the last two years.

Then they traded away three late picks to move up in the third round to take another specialist, kicker-turner Mike Oliphant of Page State, and set up a brother-on-brother confrontation when they used their fourth-rounder to take Jamie Morris of Michigan, brother of Joe Morris, a running back for their main NFC East rival, the 49ers.

Cleveland, desperately needing pass rushers, went for Cliffor Charlton, a blitzing Florida line backer on the first round, then took defensive lineman Michael Dean Perry of Clemson, the brother of Chicago's William Perry. They decided on Charlton over Lorenna White of Michigan State, who would have augmented an already strong running back corps.

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McPherson starts run of quarterback picks

NEW YORK (AP) — Don McPherson, the Heisman Trophy runner-up, set off a run on quarterbacks on the second day of the NFL draft Monday after the position was virtually ignored the first day.

McPherson, who led Syracuse to an 11-0-1 season, was taken with the 12th pick of the sixth round by the Philadelphia Eagles — the 149th player taken but only the second true quarterback taken during the draft.

The first, Chris Chandler of Washington, was chosen on the third round Sunday by Indianapolis, the 76th pick overall. Earlier, Phoenix had taken Tom Tupa of Ohio State with the 68th pick, put Tupa is regarded primarily as a punter.

Before this year, the latest quarterback had been chosen was in 1974, when Dallas took Danny White with the 53rd pick.

Eleven quarterbacks were taken on the second day.

The draft wound up at 5 p.m. EDT after a total of 16 hours, 44 minutes over two days, the second fastest draft since the merger of the AFL and NFL in 1967. The fastest was 16:19 in 1981.

McPherson, a 6-foot, 182-pounder with 4.4 speed in the 40-yard dash, might have been taken several rounds higher had he opted to play wide receiver or defensive back.

He would be more likely to fit into the Philadelphia style than that of other teams. The Eagles' starter, Randall Cunningham, is a scrambler. McPherson plays the

same way, although he is four inches shorter, 35 pounds lighter and lacks Cunningham's arm strength.

"I'm not disappointed one bit. I knew going into the draft that I wouldn't go in the first couple of rounds because I wanted to go as a quarterback," said McPherson, who said Eagles Coach Buddy Ryan "made it clear to me that he likes me as a quarterback and only that."

"To have the opportunity to play quarterback is what I'm after."

Cunningham and McPherson would also give the Eagles two black quarterbacks, the second time in NFL history that has happened. In 1984, Houston had Warren Moon and Brian Ransom on their active roster.

Two picks after McPherson, Dallas took another quarterback, Scott Secules of Virginia. And later in the sixth round, Washington took Stan Humphries, a quarterback from Northeast Louisiana.

It was the Redskins' interest in Humphries that fueled rumors the Super bowl champs might be willing to deal Jay Schroeder, the backup to Doug Williams. But Humphries is considered a project who will take several years to develop.

Two more quarterbacks went during the seventh round — Mike Perez of San Jose State to the New York Giants and Kerwin Bell of Florida to Miami. Both had been rated much higher before subpar senior seasons, particularly Perez, who is considered a tough-guy kind of leader and once had a roughing-the-rusher penalty called on him.

White added to strong Oiler running attack

HOUSTON (AP) — The Houston Oilers went into the 1988 NFL draft seeking defensive help but when their turn came in the first round, it was Michigan State running back Lorenzo White who got the call.

Although the Oilers already were deep at the running back position, General Manager Ladd Herzog fell back on the old "best athlete available" cliché.

White was a tireless runner for the Rose Bowl champion Spartans last season, carrying a Big 10 Conference record 56 times in a conference clinching victory over Indiana.

But White won't help the Oiler defense, which dropped to 17th overall among the 26 NFL teams last season.

"He will allow us to move Spencer Tillman to fullback," Oiler Coach Jerry Glanville said.

"We draft by categories and we don't drop down in category just to try to fill a need," Oiler General Manager Ladd Herzog said.

The Oilers had a solid backfield starting combination of Mike Rozier and Alonzo Highsmith last season and they are expected to be the starters again this season.

It could have been the Oilers were looking for security at the position.

Rozier, who had his best NFL season for the Oilers, twice was tardy for workouts and admitted to an alcohol problem.

Highsmith, the Oilers' No. 1

draft pick last year, has undergone two arthroscopic knee operations since last season.

White will have to find a spot on the Oiler roster that already includes running backs Allen Pinkett, Tillman and Ray Wallace.

"He's not that great breakout back," Oilers personnel director Mike Holovak said. "But maybe used less often, we'll get that out of him too."

"You're going to see one helluva football player."

Rozier likely would have gotten his first 1,000-yard rushing season in the NFL had it not been for the NFL player strike.

He gained 957 yards in 13 games and gained his first Pro Bowl trip, finishing third in the AFC and fourth in the NFL in rushing. He had five 100-yard games.

Highsmith, a late signee because of a long contract fight with Herzog, didn't play until the eighth game last season and didn't start until Dec. 13 against New Orleans.

Highsmith had 109 rushing yards on 29 carries last season but promised he'd return this season and be "hell on wheels."

The Oilers did not ignore their defensive needs in the draft.

They chose Pittsburgh cornerback Quintin Jones, 5-11, 193 in the second round and after taking Michigan State punter Greg Montgomery in the second round, they added defensive players with later picks.

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