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Sports Focus: Racism in the NFL

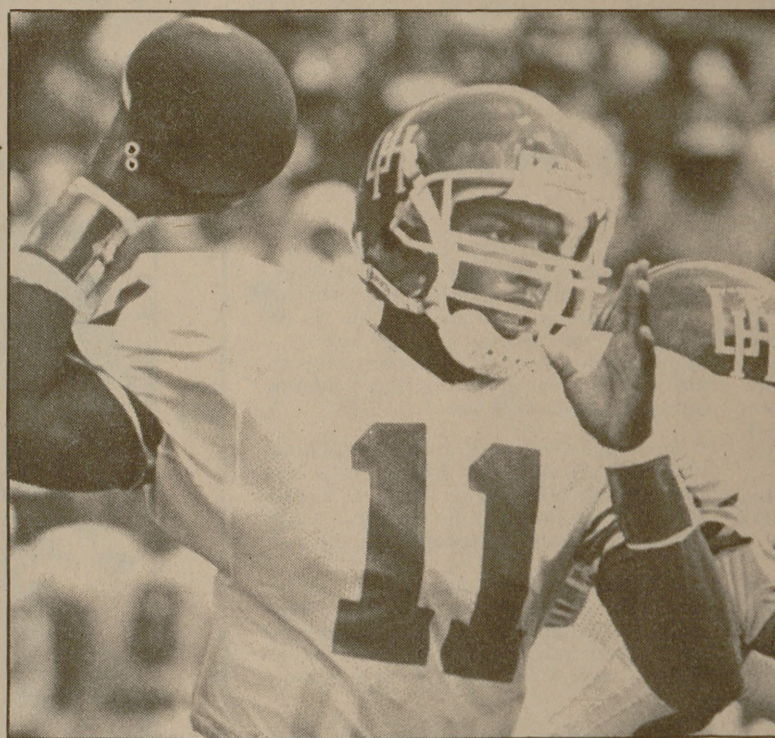
Two Sides of NFL Racism

Roland S. Martin
 Reader's Opinion

Draft snubbing of black QBs simply racism

Football is a funny business. Professional football is even funnier. The NFL completed its annual slave auction on Monday... usually referred to as the draft. After pouring over statistics, interviews and intelligence tests, the wise scouts of the NFL chose the collegiate players that met the needs of their particular teams. In many cases, the value of a player fluctuated between a franchise player in one scout's eye, to an overrated player in another. No greater example can be given than the case of Andre Ware. After racking up 4,699 yards and 47 touchdowns as a junior in Houston's Run-and-Shoot offense, Ware was proclaimed as the "quarterback of the '90's." His stock increased even more so after he was named as the winner of the 1989 Heisman Trophy. He then proceeded to win every major quarterback award in the country. Pro scouts loved him, college coaches wished they had him, and the dreams of playing quarterback in the pros were being fulfilled by every black high school and college quarterback who never got their shot.

Then it all ended. After declaring himself eligible for the NFL draft, the critics came out of the woodwork to announce Ware was a suspect quarterback and a product of an offense that bloated his stats. Then came Jeff George. George completed his junior season by throwing for over 2,900 yards for Illinois. After George declared himself eligible for the draft, he "dazzled" the scouts with his quick release and his pro-sized body. Unlike Ware, George was never mentioned as a Heisman candidate and his name never came up in the discussion of who was the best in college football. Even though no one heard of George, he subsequently became the first pick in this year's draft and signed a six-year, \$15 million contract with the Indianapolis Colts. The question remains: Why him and not Ware? *Opinion:* At 6-1, Ware was too short to be effective in an orthodox NFL offense. *Fact:* Of the 107 quarterbacks on the 1988 NFL roster, 43.9 percent were between the heights of 6-0 and 6-2. Among this group were Jim McMahon, Dan Majkowski, Joe Ferguson and Joe Montana. I'm sure they were told they were too short. *Opinion:* Ware's arm isn't the sharpest. *Fact:* 4,699 yards, 47 See Martin/Page 9



Battalion file photo by J. Janner

Heisman Trophy winner Andre Ware wasn't picked until the seventh pick, leading some people to accuse the NFL draft of being racist since several black quarterbacks were overlooked.

Beathard weaves NFL draft magic




Associated Press

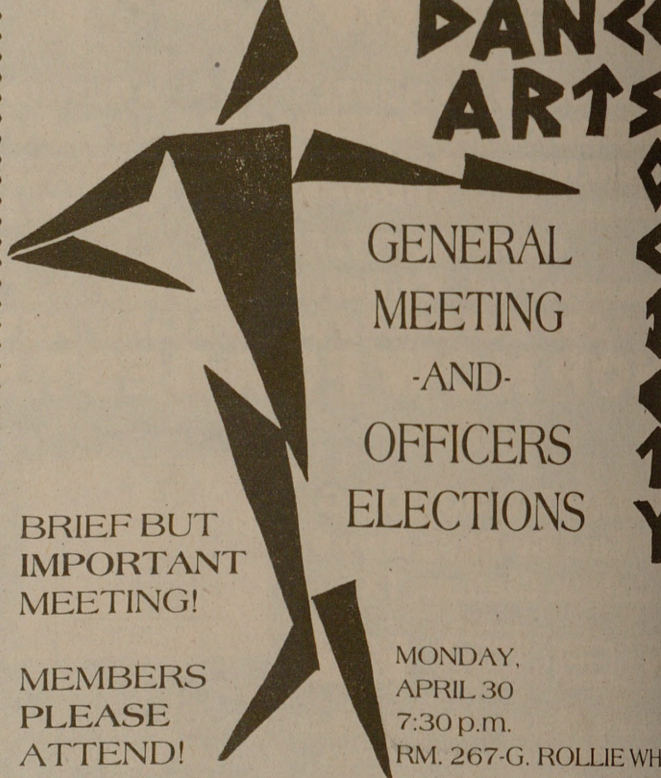
With everyone in reach of a computer terminal and a television camera applying grades to the drafts of all 28 NFL teams, it's advisable to heed the advice of a man who knows football better than most. "I can't evaluate our draft until we've played," said Bobby Beathard, the new general manager of the San Diego Chargers, who has had a profound impact on the way teams draft. Beathard chose 17 players, eight of whom were taken in the sixth and seventh rounds. He's much more comfortable in mid-and late draft than with the fifth overall pick, the one he used to take Junior Seau. When he was with Washington, Beathard got Mark Rypien in the sixth round and Dexter Manley in the fifth. That being the case, keep an eye on: John Friesz, qb, Idaho (6, 138); Frank Cornish, c, UCLA (6, 143); David Pool, db, Carson-Newman (6, 145); Derrick Walker, te, Michigan (6, 163); Jeff Novak, g, Southwest Texas State (7, 172); Joe Staysniak, t, Ohio State (7, 185); Nathaniel Lewis, wr, Oregon Tech (7, 187), and Keith Collins, db, Appalachian State (7, 193). Overall, the 1990 draft had some prime examples of what can best be called the Bobby Beathard ripple effect: **BOBBY'S ABOUT TO STRIKE...** Sometimes just Beathard's presence affects the draft. For example, while Chargers coach Dan Henning said Friesz, whom he got with the first pick of the sixth round, was the No. 2 quarterback on his board behind Jeff George, the No. 1 pick overall, the New York Giants thought otherwise. Three picks (and 12 hours) earlier, the Giants shocked almost everyone when they took Craig Kupp, the Pacific Lutheran quarterback, who wasn't listed in any scouting book. They hope to groom him as



Calling NFL racist not right, just ignorant

Maybe football is a funny business. But racism isn't. I'm growing tired of repeated complaints that NFL clubs are drafting the players they want due to the color of their skin rather than the size of their abilities. If an NFL owner, general manager, coach or scout is actually intent on passing up the best player for their team because he's either white or black, then he or she is in the wrong business. It's time we start looking at facts and quit seeing through opinions. • Andre Ware vs. Jeff George. Ware threw all those thousands of yards and beaucoups of touchdowns in a collegiate offense that takes advantage of collegiate defenses. Ware had four receivers that spread the field so well that he often just had to pick which one was open, zip it to him and watch him run down the field. The Run-and-Shoot is dead in the hands of a quarterback like Ware. That's why the Colts didn't pick him. They don't have the Run-and-Shoot. Indianapolis needed a quarterback with good size and a strong arm to replace weak-kneed Jack Trudeau and underachiever Chris Chandler. That's where George came in. The junior from Illinois fits the Colts' needs: a strong-armed passer who is confident and will stay in the pocket. He is over two inches taller than Ware and possesses the soft touch on deep passes that the junior from Houston seldom showed. He also stays cool under pressure, and the Colts will like that. They now have a truly offensive line after trading Pro Bowler Chris Hinton, and George has the cockiness that General Manager Jim Irsay said he likes in a signal caller. George's calm under pressure will come in handy in the NFL. Ware seldom was pressured in college. With four receivers to choose from, someone was usually open. Until the Cougars met up with a team that blitzed and gave Ware constant pressure — like Texas A&M. The Aggies stuck it to him, and Ware couldn't respond. Ware was untested in a pro-style offense. The first six teams that drafted Sunday — the Colts, the Jets, the Seahawks, the Buccaneers, the Chargers and the Bears — either don't use the Run-and-Shoot or already are set at the quarterback position. Two teams could have safely drafted Ware Sunday. Both Detroit See Tijerina/Page 9

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