

49ers Clips – May 10, 2017

Local Media

***Trent Taylor: Not Your Typical Underdog Story***

By Keiana Martin, 49ers.com

<http://www.49ers.com/news/article-2/Trent-Taylor-Not-Your-Typical-Underdog-Story/01e0d792-b7fd-4e9a-8a05-cfb84637fff1>

***49ers rookie Ahkello Witherspoon has medical school in future***

By Eric Branch, San Francisco Chronicle

<http://www.sfchronicle.com/49ers/article/49ers-rookie-Ahkello-Witherspoon-has-medical-11134063.php>

***K.D. Cannon lands in NY; so does most of his contract guarantee***

By Matt Barrows, Sacramento Bee

<http://www.sacbee.com/sports/nfl/san-francisco-49ers/article149580084.html>

***As Kyle Shanahan's 'draft crush,' Trent Taylor out to prove he belongs***

By Nick Wagoner, ESPN.com

[http://www.espn.com/blog/san-francisco-49ers/post/\\_/id/24979/as-kyle-shanahans-draft-crush-trent-taylor-out-to-prove-he-belongs](http://www.espn.com/blog/san-francisco-49ers/post/_/id/24979/as-kyle-shanahans-draft-crush-trent-taylor-out-to-prove-he-belongs)

***Setting up every QB battle: Who's leading, which rookies could start***

By Dan Graziano, ESPN.com

[http://www.espn.com/nfl/story/\\_/id/19346361/setting-every-2017-nfl-quarterback-battle-leading-which-rookies-start](http://www.espn.com/nfl/story/_/id/19346361/setting-every-2017-nfl-quarterback-battle-leading-which-rookies-start)

***25 undrafted free agents to watch from 2017 NFL draft***

By Mel Kiper Jr., ESPN.com

[http://www.espn.com/nfl/draft2017/insider/story/\\_/id/19344327/top-25-2017-undrafted-nfl-free-agents-watch-mel-kiper-jr](http://www.espn.com/nfl/draft2017/insider/story/_/id/19344327/top-25-2017-undrafted-nfl-free-agents-watch-mel-kiper-jr)

***John Lynch expects Reuben Foster will be "full go" at training camp***

By Josh Alper, ProFootballTalk.com

<http://profootballtalk.nbcsports.com/2017/05/09/john-lynch-expects-reuben-foster-will-be-full-go-at-training-camp/>

National Media

***Free agent deadline sets Seahawks' 2018 draft picks, could spur more signings***

By Bob Condotta, The Seattle Times

<http://www.seattletimes.com/sports/seahawks/free-agent-deadline-sets-seahawks-2018-draft-picks-could-spur-more-signings/>

***T.J. Logan in a good position to make immediate impact for Cardinals***

By Josh Weinfuss, ESPN.com

[http://www.espn.com/blog/arizona-cardinals/post/\\_id/25525/t-j-logan-in-a-good-position-to-make-immediate-impact-for-cardinals](http://www.espn.com/blog/arizona-cardinals/post/_id/25525/t-j-logan-in-a-good-position-to-make-immediate-impact-for-cardinals)

***The Rams' preseason schedule is set, with dates and kickoff times***

By Gary Klein, Los Angeles Times

<http://www.latimes.com/sports/rams/la-sp-rams-preseason-schedule-20170509-story.html>

***Five things to know about new Bills General Manager Brandon Beane***

By Jay Skurski, Buffalo News

<http://buffalonews.com/2017/05/09/five-things-know-new-bills-general-manager-brandon-beane/>

***Broncos guard Ronald Leary leading offensive line in pursuit of continuity, nastiness and an identity shift***

By Cameron Wolfe, Denver Post

<http://www.denverpost.com/2017/05/09/ronald-leary-broncos-offensive-line-shift/>

Local Clips – Full Version

***Trent Taylor: Not Your Typical Underdog Story***

By Keiana Martin, 49ers.com

Consider rookie wide receiver Trent Taylor your walking cliché. He's got the size of David but the mindset of Goliath.

Taylor has always been a stud athlete.

He compiled 2,700 receiving yards and 38 touchdowns over his final two years in high school. The wide receiver also starred in basketball, track and in an effort to build chemistry with his quarterback, picked up tennis as a senior. The doubles tandem made it all the way to the state finals.

The Shreveport, La., native made the most of what he was given - elite athletic ability without the size to turn heads. Being 5-foot-8 has its limits. Louisiana Tech was the only college program who decided that the 160-pound pass-catcher was worthy of a Division I scholarship.

"I understood why I wasn't getting offered," Taylor said. "I just knew that I needed an opportunity to go prove myself and Louisiana Tech gave me that opportunity and that's all I could ask for."

Taylor continued to put up gaudy numbers. As a senior in 2016, he led the nation with 1,803 receiving yards and added 12 touchdowns. Taylor finished his Bulldogs career with 4,179 yards and 32 touchdowns to go with his program record of 327 career receptions.

Despite the impressive production, Taylor still went unheralded throughout the pre-draft process. The San Francisco 49ers were pleased to land the diminutive wideout in the fifth round of the 2017 NFL Draft.

"I thought he was as good at the slot role as anyone that we were looking at in the draft," Kyle Shanahan said of his 'draft crush.' "What impressed me the most about him besides the separation ability is that when he did get the ball in his hands, he ran angry and pissed off. He got up the field. He's not scared to get hit. He's a very competitive, violent runner and those are the guys who keep you on the field and move the chains."

The physical disposition that caught coach Shanahan's eye emanates from Taylor's experience at cornerback and safety as a two-way player in high school.

Taylor's hard-hitting nature once broke an unlucky opponent's jaw.

"I love to hit. Playing defense, that's something I loved to do," Taylor said. "So anytime I got the ball on offense, I'm not scared to lay my head in there and get a hit. It's a part of the game and I love it."

Just as he's done his entire football career, Taylor will have to prove that his size is an asset rather than a limitation. He's one of 13 receivers currently on the 49ers 90-man roster in what is expected to be one of the most competitive position groups come training camp.

That uphill climb is something that Taylor will continue to embrace.

"People (have been) telling me my whole life that I'm not supposed to be here. So, anytime I get the ball, I want to prove them wrong," Taylor added. "Prove that I can compete with the best of them."

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***49ers rookie Ahkello Witherspoon has medical school in future***

By Eric Branch, San Francisco Chronicle

Cornerback Ahkello Witherspoon wants to attend medical school and become a surgeon after his career, which sounds like the type of dream that will die if he exits the NFL with a fat bank account.

After all, the desire to study for years and endure intense training can be dulled for those who can afford to, well, do absolutely nothing.

Given that, Witherspoon, a third-round pick of the 49ers from Sacramento, was politely challenged about his post-NFL plans. What if he has a 12-year career? Still heading to medical school, young man?

"It's regardless," Witherspoon said. "Med school is happening no doubt, whether it's a year (in the NFL) or 12. It's just my passion."

And perhaps it's best not to doubt Witherspoon: The man of many interests has proven he's not the do-nothing type.

Just six years ago, Witherspoon had not played football, but he was so skilled at soccer, basketball and baseball that he might have landed a Division I scholarship in each sport. He's also a strong drummer and singer, had a 4.4 GPA at Christian Brothers High in Sacramento and studied ecology and evolutionary biology at Colorado.

San Francisco 49ers cornerback Ahkello Witherspoon goes through drills during NFL football rookie minicamp Friday, May 5, 2017, in Santa Clara, Calif. (AP Photo/Marcio Jose Sanchez) Photo: Marcio Jose Sanchez, Associated Press Photo: Marcio Jose Sanchez, Associated Press San Francisco 49ers cornerback Ahkello Witherspoon goes through drills during NFL football rookie minicamp Friday, May 5, 2017, in Santa Clara, Calif. (AP Photo/Marcio Jose Sanchez)

In fact, he was so good at so many things growing up that he heard a familiar refrain: He'd never be great at anything.

"That's one thing that kind of always resonated with me," Witherspoon said. "I thought about it and thought, 'No, I can try to be great at everything I do.'"

The 49ers have reason to believe Witherspoon has potential for greatness. They picked him No. 66 overall because he possesses the size (6-foot-3, 190 pounds) and skill to excel in a scheme that requires cornerbacks to play suffocating man-to-man defense against hulking receivers.

Last year, Witherspoon led the nation in pass-breakups (22) thanks to traits he later showcased at the combine: He had the highest vertical jump (405/8 inches) and longest wingspan (793/8) among cornerbacks.

He credits his success in a sport he took up after a high school growth spurt — he was 4-11 as a freshman — to the sports he played before football. In fact, Witherspoon is a poster boy for those who don't believe young athletes should specialize in one sport.

He credits his footwork and body awareness to his soccer background, his ability to track the football to his work as a center fielder and his lateral quickness to basketball.

"I think all those sports have (influenced) where I am as a football player," Witherspoon said.

One thing he didn't learn in soccer, baseball or basketball: how to slam his body into other bodies.

Last year, Witherspoon had just two more tackles (24) than pass break-ups and his tackling was routinely viewed harshly by draft analysts. Offered NFL.com: "Almost always in a state of retreat when run heads his way. Unwilling to step downhill and stick his nose in to help contain the edge."

General manager John Lynch, who played 15 years in the NFL as a hard-hitting safety, was direct when Witherspoon visited the 49ers before the draft. Lynch showed Witherspoon video, said the some of the passivity on display bothered him and asked Witherspoon to explain why he wasn't more aggressive.

Witherspoon, not surprisingly, recalled the exchange with the nine-time Pro Bowler and four-time Hall of Fame finalist.

"It's just experience," Witherspoon said. "He pulled up clips of me doing it well and doing it poorly. And (he said), 'This is what's encouraging to me. It's not like a fear thing. You are willing to do it.'"

Witherspoon's ability to improve his tackling could determine whether he receives significant playing time as a rookie. The 49ers drafted him partly because their two starting cornerbacks from 2016 are no longer their starting cornerbacks. Tramaine Brock was released in April after his arrest on suspicion of felony domestic violence and Jimmie Ward has been moved to safety.

Before the draft, NFL teams often asked Witherspoon about his zest for football. The questions could have been influenced by his tackling issues and interests that include a "passion" for attending medical school. That is, how long will he stay committed to a sport that can exact a significant physical toll when he clearly has other options?

There is a franchise precedent: Former 49ers tight end John Frank retired in 1988, at 26, to attend medical school.

Lynch, a Stanford alum who knows there is a perception smart players lack commitment, posed hard questions to Witherspoon and was satisfied with his answers.

For his part, Witherspoon says he's focused on his challenging journey that will precede medical school: moving from good to great.

"That's kind of one of the reasons I keep grinding every day," he said. "My fuel is I'm interested to see how good I can be ... and I think we can take this to a very special place."

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### ***K.D. Cannon lands in NY; so does most of his contract guarantee***

By Matt Barrows, Sacramento Bee

The New York Jets on Tuesday claimed receiver K.D. Cannon off of waivers, and in doing so took on the bulk of Cannon's contract guarantee with the 49ers.

The 49ers landed Cannon, a prolific receiver at Baylor, following the draft in part because they guaranteed him \$45,000 -- a hefty amount for an undrafted rookie.

When the 49ers waived him following a three-day minicamp, it seemed like wasted money and prompted questions about why the team would have parted with a prized rookie so quickly. However, Cannon's guarantee was divided between a \$5,000 signing bonus and a \$40,000 roster bonus, the latter of which the Jets now would pick up.

Cannon obviously did not impress the team's coaches over the three-day minicamp. They used his roster spot to sign a rookie who did look good to them, Georgia Southern receiver B.J. Johnson III.

The 49ers now have 13 receivers on their 90-man roster. They are ...

Veterans: Pierre Garcon, Marquise Goodwin, Aldrick Robinson, Jeremy Kerley, Bruce Ellington, Aaron Burbridge, DeAndre Carter, DeAndre Smelter, Rashad Ross

Rookies: Trent Taylor, Victor Bolden, Kendrick Bourne, Johnson.

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***As Kyle Shanahan's 'draft crush,' Trent Taylor out to prove he belongs***

By Nick Wagoner, ESPN.com

Throughout the buildup to the NFL draft, fans, analysts and even head coaches and general managers develop what have come to be known as "draft crushes." Those are the players that someone just can't stop watching on tape.

In the run-up to their first draft in charge, San Francisco 49ers general manager John Lynch and coach Kyle Shanahan developed an appreciation for their share of players. Last week, Lynch told KNBR radio that Alabama linebacker Reuben Foster qualified as a draft crush for him, and he went on to name one for Shanahan who didn't come with nearly the high profile of Foster: wide receiver Trent Taylor.

"We all give each other a hard time during the draft process because we all develop these draft crushes," Lynch said. "Trent Taylor was one of those guys for Kyle. He's got a rare ability, and that's what Kyle wants, a slot receiver to separate. He can get open on third down. He's a chain mover."

While the 49ers made the aggressive move to land Foster late in the first round, the wait to bring Taylor to town was much longer. The Niners drafted him in the fifth round with the 177th pick overall. The 5-foot-8, 181-pound slot receiver out of Louisiana Tech was the only wideout the 49ers selected with their 10 picks.

It was a choice that didn't come with much fanfare but certainly brought a smile to Shanahan's face.

"What Trent did is I thought he was as good at the slot role as anyone that we were looking at in the draft, is he really owned that spot," Shanahan said. "He was very quick. His body's always under him. He can make cuts. I thought what impressed me the most about him, besides the separation ability, is that when he did get the ball in his hands, he ran angry and pissed off. He got up the field. He's not scared to get hit. He's a very competitive, violent runner, and those are the guys to me who keep you on the field and move the chains."

While those are all desirable qualities in a slot receiver, it still begs the question of what moved Taylor into "draft crush" territory over other talented players? The easiest answer: toughness.

Like most players of his size, Taylor didn't make it to where he was without a fearless approach that belies his stature. As a 160-pound high schooler in Shreveport, Louisiana, Taylor played receiver, safety, cornerback and punt returner. Despite consistently being one of the smallest players on the field, Taylor never hesitated to get physical, especially on defense.

"There's a bunch of clips of me knocking some people out in high school," Taylor said. "I broke this kid's jaw one time hitting him on a slant route. I didn't mean to do that, but it happened."

Even on offense, Taylor has never been afraid to take on would-be tacklers in the open field.

"It's something that's always been in me," Taylor said. "I guess just [have] a love for the game, people telling me my whole life that I'm not supposed to be here. So anytime I get the ball, I want to prove them wrong, prove that I can compete with the best of them and I'm not scared to lay my head in there and hit anybody who comes my way."

Taylor also honed his skills by playing other sports, including tennis. He played only one season of high school tennis, but he played doubles with his quarterback and the pair made it to the state finals. He credits that season with helping to improve his footwork.

Still, Taylor's lack of size prevented major college offers from rolling in. Louisiana Tech was the only football offer he received, making his recruiting process an easy one.

At Louisiana Tech, Taylor continued to find ways to produce. In 51 games, he posted 327 catches for 4,179 yards and 32 touchdowns, including 136, 1,803 and 12 as a senior. Naturally, Taylor has drawn comparisons to other undersized slot receivers known for their toughness and ability to get open from the slot. Names like Julian Edelman, Danny Amendola and Wes Welker are the obvious, if not lazy, comparisons that come up, but as Shanahan points out, there's a reason for it.

"I'd like to come up with someone else, but just speaking facts, that's what he looks like," Shanahan said. "He moves similar to [WR Jeremy] Kerley. He's built that way. We're talking slot receivers. There's different types, but usually the quicker guys whose feet are always under them, who can make cuts at any time, those are the guys who make it and usually those guys are smaller guys who aren't so fast.

"There's not many slot receivers who run 4.3. There's a reason. They can't cut as well as they need to underneath. It's the same with nickel backs. In order to cover those slot receivers, not many of them are real long and lanky. They're pretty short and quick too. So, it's all about matchups and who you want to put against other people when it's man to man coverage. That's usually what you get on third down, and that's a real important thing to staying on the field."

For the Niners, Taylor is expected to step in and compete for a role in the slot. Kerley was re-signed and is likely to start, but Taylor should have every opportunity to win a roster spot behind him and, perhaps, become the team's primary punt returner. While Taylor is aware of the other comparisons, he's also a fan of Atlanta wideout Taylor Gabriel and took notice of how Shanahan used him with the Falcons.

Draft crush or not, Taylor is well aware of what Shanahan's offense can do for his career.

"Just to know the type of interest he has in me and the belief he has in me as a player, that's always good to know," Taylor said. "It just brings some extra confidence going into this system and being out there on the field, it's great to know."

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***Setting up every QB battle: Who's leading, which rookies could start***

By Dan Graziano, ESPN.com

San Francisco 49ers

Where it stands: Look, there's a nonzero chance that Kyle Shanahan still swings a crazy deal for Kirk Cousins if Washington figures out it can't sign Cousins to a long-term deal before July 15. More likely, though, the Niners wait for Washington to transition-tag Cousins or let him walk next spring, and they spend 2017 figuring out what kind of team they have and what holes they still need to fill for when it's time to bring in Cousins or a 2018 draft pick or whomever their long-term solution is.

For now, it'll be either Brian Hoyer, Matt Barkley or, if he comes much more quickly than anyone imagines, third-round pick C.J. Beathard. The folks running the Niners got six-year deals, so they'll be patient and wait for the quarterback of their dreams.

Most likely to start Week 1: Hoyer. He has starter's experience, and Shanahan knows him from their time together in Cleveland.

Most likely to lead team in 2017 starts: Hoyer, but his injury history tells us someone else is likely to get a shot, too.

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**25 undrafted free agents to watch from 2017 NFL draft**

By Mel Kiper Jr., ESPN.com

Cole Hikutini, TE, San Francisco 49ers

Final Big Board rank: 104

A 6-4, 247-pound Louisville product, Hikutini dropped big time, but I thought his tape showed a Day 2 pick, and he was my sixth-ranked tight end. A knee injury kept him from drills at the combine, and he ran the 40 around 4.80 at his pro day. The Niners need talent all along their roster, and Hikutini could be a steal.

Lorenzo Jerome, S, San Francisco 49ers

Final Big Board rank: 202

Jerome is short (5-10) and slow (4.70 40 at the combine), but the football just seems to find him. He had two interceptions and a forced fumble in the Senior Bowl and two more interceptions at the NFL Players Association Collegiate Bowl. Jerome had 18 career interceptions at St. Francis (Pennsylvania).

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**John Lynch expects Reuben Foster will be "full go" at training camp**

By Josh Alper, ProFootballTalk.com

When discussing first-round pick Reuben Foster's shoulder last week, 49ers coach Kyle Shanahan said that the "worst-case scenario" would be that Foster misses some time early in his rookie year after having surgery this offseason.

Other teams have taken a dimmer view of the linebacker's health, which helped keep him available for the 49ers to take at the end of the first round. Those teams reportedly feel Foster could require additional surgery because the first one didn't fully correct the problem.

On Tuesday, 49ers General Manager John Lynch told Alex Marvez and Mark Dominik of Sirius XM NFL Radio that the team hasn't wavered in its belief that Foster will be OK. He said Foster is ahead of schedule in his recovery from the surgery and that the team expects him to be "full go" when they start training camp this summer.

While any absence early in his career will be easier for the 49ers to swallow if Foster develops into the kind of player that was once projected to go in the top half of the first round, the team would surely prefer if it is right that he can get directly on the field and stay there.