

49ers Clips – March 4, 2017

Local Media

John Lynch: 49ers 'Aggressively' Exploring Every Option with No. 2 Overall Pick

By Joe Fann, 49ers.com

<http://www.49ers.com/news/article-2/John-Lynch-49ers-Aggressively-Exploring-Every-Option-with-No-2-Overall-Pick/63fa7567-3ac9-487e-959b-ad81cb1d2b5c>

Colin Kaepernick Opts Out of Contract, Becomes a Free Agent

By Joe Fann, 49ers.com

<http://www.49ers.com/news/article-2/Colin-Kaepernick-Opts-Out-of-Contract-Becomes-a-Free-Agent/55f3952d-1f83-4682-bf97-3c423ab26fa8>

Colin Kaepernick officially opts out of contract with 49ers

By Eric Branch, San Francisco Chronicle

<http://www.sfchronicle.com/49ers/article/Colin-Kaepernick-officially-opts-out-of-contract-10976082.php>

49ers: QBs take to the podium at combine

By Eric Branch, San Francisco Chronicle

<http://www.sfchronicle.com/49ers/article/49ers-QBs-take-to-the-podium-at-combine-10975940.php>

49ers QB drama heats up: three-team trade idea surfaces, draft prospects speak, Colin Kaepernick files exit papers

By Cam Inman, San Jose Mercury News

<http://www.mercurynews.com/2017/03/03/49ers-qb-drama-heats-up-three-team-trade-idea-surfaces-draft-prospects-speak-colin-kaepernick-files-exit-papers/>

With the No. 2 pick ... it's hard to find right fit for 49ers

By Matt Barrows, Sacramento Bee

<http://www.sacbee.com/sports/nfl/san-francisco-49ers/article136436238.html>

DeShone Kizer a hit with 49ers, not so much at Notre Dame

By Matt Barrows, Sacramento Bee

<http://www.sacbee.com/sports/nfl/san-francisco-49ers/article136304973.html>

Kaepernick no longer a 49er after opting out of contract

By Matt Barrows, Sacramento Bee

<http://www.sacbee.com/sports/nfl/san-francisco-49ers/article136331398.html>

KAEPERNICK OFFICIALLY OPTS OUT OF 49ERS' CONTRACT TO BECOME FREE AGENT

By Matt Maiocco, CSNBayArea.com

<http://www.csnbayarea.com/49ers/kaepernick-officially-opts-out-49ers-contract-become-free-agent>

Report: Possibility of a three-way trade involving Kirk Cousins, Tony Romo

By Darin Gantt, ProFootballTalk.com

<http://profootballtalk.nbcsports.com/2017/03/03/report-possibility-of-a-three-way-trade-involving-kirk-cousins-tony-romo/>

Talk of three-way Romo-Cousins trade is "conjecture!" at this point

By Mike Florio, ProFootballTalk.com

<http://profootballtalk.nbcsports.com/2017/03/03/talk-of-three-way-romo-cousins-trade-is-conjecture-at-this-point/>

Kaepernick opts out of contract, becomes free agent

By Staff, Associated Press

<http://pro32.ap.org/article/kaepernick-opts-out-contract-becomes-free-agent>

National Media

As Seahawks have found out, what you see at the NFL Combine isn't always what you get later

By Bob Condotta, The Seattle Times

<http://www.seattletimes.com/sports/seahawks/as-seahawks-have-found-out-what-you-see-at-the-nfl-combine-isnt-always-what-you-get-later/>

Arizona Cardinals announce off-season schedule

By Kent Somers, The Arizona Republic

<http://www.azcentral.com/story/sports/nfl/cardinals/2017/03/03/arizona-cardinals-announce-off-season-schedule/98704762/>

Julio Jones expected to undergo minor foot surgery

By Marc Sessler, NFL.com

<http://www.nfl.com/news/story/0ap3000000789666/article/julio-jones-expected-to-undergo-minor-foot-surgery>

Vikings' Captain Munnerlyn wants raise, longterm deal

By Chris Tomasson, St. Paul Pioneer-Press

<http://www.twincities.com/2017/03/03/vikings-captain-munnerlyn-wants-raise-longterm-deal/>

Steelers offensive lineman Harris retires

By Joe Rutter, Pittsburgh Tribune Review

<http://triblive.com/sports/steelers/12022323-74/harris-season-injured>

Patriots release Sebastian Vollmer

By Mark Daniels, Providence Journal

<http://www.providencejournal.com/sports/20170303/patriots-release-sebastian-vollmer>

Local Clips – Full Version

John Lynch: 49ers 'Aggressively' Exploring Every Option with No. 2 Overall Pick

By Joe Fann, 49ers.com

Prior to last year's draft, we saw both of the top two overall picks traded. The Los Angeles Rams moved up to No. 1 and selected Cal quarterback Jared Goff. The Philadelphia Eagles then leapfrogged to No. 2 and took North Dakota State signal-caller Carson Wentz.

Now the San Francisco 49ers own the second overall selection ahead of the 2017 NFL Draft. That means that the phone is bound to ring with NFL general managers inquiring about the price tag of the pick.

So if the right offer presents itself, would John Lynch be open to trading out of the No. 2 spot?

"Yes. From Day 1 – why wouldn't you be? A lot of people keep talking about (the No. 2 pick) like it's a burden," Lynch explained in a 1-on-1 interview with 49ers Studios. "It's not a burden, it's a tremendous asset, and it gives us a ton of options. We can sit pat and find a game-changing player who's going to help us win championships in San Francisco.

"It's a coveted pick, and so a lot of people want that. I think we're in a great place with that. We're being aggressive in exploring every option, and we'll continue to do that right down to draft day."

Lynch told reporters on Thursday that he's been impressed by the top quarterbacks in this year's class. The GM added on Friday that he believes this draft class has a particularly deep group of defensive backs.

San Francisco's exact list of needs going into the draft should be narrowed following free agency, which begins March 9. The 49ers will look for players to fill holes on the roster so that they can take the best player available when they go on the clock on April 27 in Philadelphia.

They have already begun that process with the addition of defensive tackle Earl Mitchell, who projects to start in 2017 on San Francisco's defensive line.

"(Taking the best player available) is a great mindset to have, but it's not always a reality when you have needs," Lynch said. "We are targeting some priorities in free agency, such that we can get to the draft and truly take the guys that we've just fallen in love with through the process."

Colin Kaepernick Opts Out of Contract, Becomes a Free Agent

By Joe Fann, 49ers.com

What was reported on Wednesday became official on Friday. Colin Kaepernick has opted out of his contract and is now a free agent. Kaepernick met with John Lynch and Kyle Shanahan last week at the team facility and indicated that this would be his course of action.

Thursday marked the first day that Kaepernick could officially opt out. He can begin to negotiate a new contract on March 7. Free agency officially begins on March 9.

"We had an idea (that he would opt out)," Shanahan said on Wednesday. "He didn't say it for sure, but we talked about it, and we had an idea he would go that route."

Kaepernick threw for 2,241 yards, 16 touchdowns and four interceptions in 11 starts last season. He's got 72 career passing touchdowns since being taken by the San Francisco 49ers in the second round of the 2011 NFL Draft.

"We've got to evaluate all the free agents, the trade possibilities and the draft, and whatever we think is the best scenario is the way we're going to go," Shanahan said of the 49ers impending QB search. "Kap is in that, and he's involved in that just like anyone else."

The 49ers are currently without a QB on the roster as Blaine Gabbert and Christian Ponder are also free agents.

The search for the team's next quarterback will be thorough and expansive.

"You've got to do your homework and look into everything," Shanahan said.

Shanahan and Lynch will exercise patience throughout the process of finding their franchise quarterback. That could mean waiting a year before investing fully into a player they believe can lead the 49ers for the foreseeable future.

"I'm very eager. We're all very eager," Shanahan said. "But we're going to make the right decision, and we're not just going to do something because we're eager."

So who is Shanahan's top choice to start under center for the 49ers in 2017? The answer to that question, at least for now, is being kept close to the vest.

"The consensus we have is that there are lots of good options," Shanahan said, cracking a wry smile. "That's the most I can give you."

Colin Kaepernick officially opts out of contract with 49ers

By Eric Branch, San Francisco Chronicle

INDIANAPOLIS — For the first time in six years, Colin Kaepernick is not under contract with the 49ers.

That inevitability became official Friday when the quarterback filed paperwork to opt out of the final year of his contract. Kaepernick will hit the open market when free agency begins Thursday.

Head coach Kyle Shanahan and general manager John Lynch have acknowledged Kaepernick, 29, would opt out of his contract this week at the NFL combine.

Lynch indicated the 49ers would have released Kaepernick if he didn't opt out. Kaepernick was scheduled to earn a \$14.5 million base salary in 2017. His exit leaves the 49ers without a quarterback under contract for next season, although neither Lynch nor Shanahan have ruled out re-signing Kaepernick.

"I think we both agreed that under the current construct it wasn't going to work out," Lynch said. "But we said let's not close the door, and we had some good jokes. Once he was gone, we weren't going to have (a QB). As he hits free agency, that's something that we'll keep our eyes open and we want him to keep us in mind as well. So, it's something that we left that door open in a very real and positive way."

Talking up trenches: Lynch acknowledged Thursday the 49ers "need players," but it sounds as though they may not be shopping for many guards, centers or tackles this offseason.

Asked about an area of strength on a team that went 2-14 last season, Lynch cited the offensive line, which allowed the third-most sacks in the NFL (47).

"I think offensive lines are tough to build in this league," Lynch said. "And you turn on the film and there's a lot of exciting things to see with an offensive line."

The 49ers did rank 10th in the league in yards per rushing attempt (4.4), and they could return the same unit in 2017. They have a pair of promising young starters in right tackle Trent Brown, 23, and right guard Joshua Garnett, 23, a 2016 first-round pick. The front five is rounded out by Pro Bowl left tackle Joe Staley, left guard Zane Beadles and center Daniel Kilgore, who has missed 23 games since 2014 due to injury.

Lynch said the 49ers had the potential to be tough in both the offensive and defensive trenches. He said the defensive line, which includes recent first-round picks Arik Armstead and DeForest Buckner, isn't as "polished" but had "a lot of great potential."

Last year, the 49ers set an NFL record by allowing 100-yard rushers in seven straight games and surrendered the sixth-most rushing yards (2,654) since 1990. Armstead missed the final eight games with a shoulder injury he sustained in training camp.

The 49ers will put Earl Mitchell, 29, at nose guard after he signed a four-year, \$16 million deal last week. Lynch said the seven-year veteran will help set the tone up front.

"I'm excited about what he's going to do for Buckner and Armstead," Lynch said. "... We can tell people run to the football, but when one guy is doing it, you better do it or you're going to stand out like a sore thumb. That's what he brings."

49ers: QBs take to the podium at combine

By Eric Branch, San Francisco Chronicle

INDIANAPOLIS — A day after John Lynch said he "blew the doors off" his combine interview with the 49ers, Notre Dame quarterback DeShone Kizer was asked Friday what he said that wowed the general manager.

"I answered the questions that were asked," Kizer said. "His response to that was awesome. I'm glad that he did enjoy that. I look forward to throwing in front of him Saturday and trying to impress him there."

Kizer, Clemson's Deshaun Watson and North Carolina's Mitch Trubisky are all hoping to be impressive enough this week to become the first quarterback drafted, perhaps by the 49ers, the owners of the No. 2 pick.

The potential problem for the QBs, all of whom were grilled about their perceived shortcomings Friday at the NFL combine? What they say — and how they throw — in Indianapolis, isn't nearly as important as how they played before they got here and this year's QB class is viewed as underwhelming.

On Wednesday, 49ers head coach Kyle Shanahan put it plainly when he discussed the evaluation of college quarterbacks: "If you don't like what you see on the tape," he said, "then nothing else matters."

Shanahan didn't have time to study tape of the college prospects before this week, but he's been trying to determine who they truly are as people during interviews.

It's not an easy assignment. Many of the combine prospects arrive after spending time at training facilities, where they hone both their skills and their answers to the questions NFL teams will pose during 15-minute interviews.

The result? Allow Shanahan to explain.

"I try my hardest to get a guy just to talk like a human because they don't the first 12 minutes," Shanahan said. "And there's like 2 ½ (minutes) left and you finally see a guy be a normal person. They're all so schooled up that it's like talking to a robot."

Shanahan's words echoed when the top quarterbacks took to their podiums Friday.

First up was Trubisky, who grew up in suburban Cleveland as a rabid fan of the Browns, who have the No. 1 pick. Of course, he wants to be first player drafted and play for his favorite team, right?

"I'm going to be excited wherever I go," Trubisky said. "I have a lot of pride of where I'm from, that being my hometown, but no matter what team selects me I'm going to be super excited."

In case he didn't make his point, Trubisky later added he was "going to be excited wherever I go" and "wherever I end up, I'm going to be really excited."

Oh, boy. That set the tone for a host of scripted answers.

For his part, Watson played up his reputation as a winner to deflect criticism of the 17 interceptions he tossed last season. Watson went 28-2 as a starter the past two seasons and nearly single-handedly toppled Alabama in the national-championship game in January by totaling 463 yards and four touchdowns in the win.

"At the end of the day, winning solves everything," Watson said. "You can't take that away from anyone. You can talk bad about their techniques, the bad decisions, but if a guy wins, you can't really say anything."

The knock on Trubisky: He was only a starter for one season and NFL teams have just 13 starts and 572 pass attempts to examine. Trubisky noted he often came off the bench during two seasons as a backup.

"I think I definitely have enough experience," he said. "I only have 13 starts but I played in 30 games. I've come in off the bench and I've seen significant time ... I feel like I'm in a really good spot right now to take my game to the next level, and I feel really confident."

And then came Kizer, who made such an impression on Lynch during their sitdown.

It's possible Lynch was struck by Kizer's candor. In a rarity at the combine, Kizer didn't attempt to spin his way to a sunny answer when asked about Notre Dame's record last year. The Irish went 4-8, their second-fewest wins since 1963, and Kizer completed just 58.7 percent of his passes in his second season as a starter.

"I didn't make plays," Kizer said. "The ball is in your hand as a quarterback every single play. If you're going to win games in the fourth quarter, then you've got to be the guy making the plays."

His answer suggested he was willing to be held accountable, which is an important quality for a quarterback.

But most important is the tape, which means blowing the doors off an interview in March might not mean much in April.

49ers QB drama heats up: three-team trade idea surfaces, draft prospects speak, Colin Kaepernick files exit papers

By Cam Inman, San Jose Mercury News

INDIANAPOLIS — Chatter heated up Friday on the 49ers' quarterback hunt, with no sign of cooling off until the franchise's next Joe Montana lands on their retrofitted roster.

Could that quarterback be:

a). Kirk Cousins, via a three-team trade from Washington that the NFL Network reports could bring the Dallas Cowboys into the mix? Under that bewildering scenario, Tony Romo would go to Washington and the 49ers would deal picks to Dallas.

b). DeShone Kizer, Deshaun Watson, Mitchell Trubisky, Patrick Mahomes or another draft prospect who met the media Friday to state their case?

c). An unassuming veteran who arrives once free agency opens next week?

One quarterback almost surely out of contention is Colin Kaepernick. He officially filed paperwork and opted out of his contract Friday, and now the 49ers have no quarterbacks signed for next season.

Cousins got Washington's franchise tag earlier this week. A high-ranking Cowboys official disputed the three-trade rumor, telling the Fort Worth Star-Telegram they haven't been contacted about it.

With the No. 2 overall draft pick, the 49ers indeed have options, and using it not in a trade but on a prospect is surely being considered.

Kizer handled his media session Friday as deftly as his 49ers interview Tuesday. Which means, to borrow general manager John Lynch's earlier expression, Kizer "blew the doors off" it.

The Notre Dame quarterback balanced a show of confidence — he claims he's "absolutely" the draft's best QB — with a dose of humility — he blames himself for not making enough plays in his 4-8 farewell season.

The 49ers are coming off their own humbling season, a 2-14 disaster that has left them with a new regime in Lynch and coach Kyle Shanahan.

The media ate up Kizer's revelation he's boycotting social media, marketing opportunities and the proverbial spotlight "to make sure I could perfect my craft."

Kizer has perhaps perfected the art of public speaking, and Lynch candidly praised Kizer's Tuesday night interview with the 49ers, adding that Kizer's film was "pretty impressive," too.

"His response to that (interview) was awesome and I'm glad he enjoyed that," Kizer said. "And I look forward to throwing in front of him Saturday and try to impress there with the ball now."

One sound bite that will surely be music to the ears of 49ers CEO Jed York — a Notre Dame alum — was Kizer invoking the term "winning culture," something York repeatedly clamored for in January after firing Trent Baalke and Chip Kelly.

"The way this draft is set up, to be a top pick, it looks like you're going into a situation with a team coming off a season like I had last year," Kizer said. "To learn from the 2015 season compared to 2016, it allows me to understand a winning culture."

The Fighting Irish went from 10-3 in Kizer's first season as a starter to 4-8 last season, when "looking over my shoulder" led to fourth-quarter fiascos.

"When you're doing nothing but winning your whole life — being at an elite high school (Central Catholic in Toledo, Ohio), winning championships and then go into the 2015 season like I did — you really don't understand what winning culture is until you have something to compare it to," Kizer added.

When it comes to winning culture, Clemson's Deshaun Watson is coming off winning the national championship. "Winning solves everything," Watson said. "You can't take that away from anyone. You can talk about techniques and bad decisions, but if a guy wins, you can't say anything."

Watson's 17 interceptions last season became an afterthought — well, not totally — when he accounted for four total touchdowns and led Clemson to a 35-31 comeback win over Alabama in the national championship game.

Trubisky went 8-5 last year in his first and only season as North Carolina's starter, including a Sun Bowl loss to Stanford where he threw a pick-six but nearly rallied the Tar Heels at the end.

"I'm going to be excited wherever I go," said Trubisky, an Ohio native who could tempt the Cleveland Browns with either of their first-round draft picks (Nos. 1 and 12).

At least eight teams planned on interviewing Trubisky: the 49ers, Browns, Chiefs, Saints, Bears, Cardinals, Chargers and Bills. That list, essentially, sums up the 49ers' competition in the QB market the next two months.

Count Cal's Davis Webb as a possible savior for one of those QB-needy teams. Webb said he's met with "a ton of teams" and preferred keeping their identities private.

Being the Senior Bowl MVP raised Webb's stock, and even if he's not going in the first round, he likely will go the next day in Rounds 2 or 3, according to one league personnel executive.

"I don't know what is being said about me," Webb said. "When people ask, I don't know because I don't concern myself with it. ... I just try to listen to what the GMs and the coaches are telling me to do and how to get better. I'll continue to do that."

Webb's predecessor as Senior Bowl MVP was Dak Prescott, who fell to the Cowboys in the fourth round but won NFL Offensive Rookie of the Year honors.

— Job hopefuls are apparently willing to say anything at the combine, and one statement stood out Friday by Toledo running back Kareem Hunt. "Honestly, the 49ers are a great team. They're going to come up," Hunt said. "They had a tough last year, but I feel I could fit them, too. I wouldn't mind."

The 49ers could use the help at running back behind entrenched starter Carlos Hyde, and with 10 draft picks in hand, they're wisely looking at candidates in Indianapolis.

Another confirmed interview they've had was with Florida State running back Dalvin Cook, who ran the 40-yard dash in 4.49 seconds Friday.

Stanford's Christian McCaffrey, who was to also meet with the 49ers, tied for the forth-fastest time at 4.48 seconds. That effort impressed former Stanford teammate and current 49ers guard Joshua Garnett, who tweeted: "Been up since 6 a.m. watching the combine to make sure I saw (McCaffrey). Dude killed it."

LSU's Leonard Fournette's time of 4.51 seconds was the fastest since at least 2003 by a running back weighing 240 pounds. The previous day, Fournette said: "A lot of people think I'm just strong. Some people say I lack speed, lack burst. Tomorrow will show it all."

That may not impress the 49ers but they at least impressed him. "It was a great experience," Hunt said of his interview. "They can relate to me and understand everything I'm going through personally — the grind and everything. It's just a huge experience."

With the No. 2 pick ... it's hard to find right fit for 49ers
By Matt Barrows, Sacramento Bee

INDIANAPOLIS -- Step one in crafting a mock draft is easy: Pass rusher Myles Garrett from Texas A&M widely is considered the most gifted player available, and the Browns, picking first overall, need an edge rusher.

It's at pick No. 2 and the 49ers where things get tricky.

The second-best player may be Alabama's Jonathan Allen. The problem is that he's an interior defensive lineman, the same position the 49ers have drafted in the first round the last two years. Few think they could take a defensive lineman three years straight.

Other connections between San Francisco's needs and draft talent are just as difficult to make.

The 49ers, for example, must restock their inside linebacking corps. The best player at that spot, Alabama's Reuben Foster, showed up at the scouting combine smaller than expected at 6-feet, 229 pounds, arrived with a shoulder injury, then was sent home early after a heated exchange with a hospital worker while he was waiting for an exam.

Malik Hooker didn't disappoint as far as size. The Ohio State safety, who had seven interceptions last year, measured 6-1, 206 pounds. But the 49ers seemed to indicate that Jimmie Ward would play the same free-safety spot that would be Hooker's natural position in San Francisco's defense.

LSU running back Leonard Fournette is intriguing. He would be more so if the 49ers didn't already have a similarly-sized running back on the roster in Carlos Hyde.

"Carlos is a guy who I was a fan of coming out of college," coach Kyle Shanahan said Wednesday. "He had a good career there. I looked at him hard when I was in Cleveland and I had a good feeling he was going to be a great back then. I don't think he's the finished product. There's a lot more to his game. I look forward to us helping him bring that out."

Finally, there's a huge need at quarterback. Shanahan said he's looking for a passer who processes information quickly and who doesn't flinch in the face of a pass rush.

The best fit when it comes to that criteria may be North Carolina's Mitch Trubisky. The issue: Trubisky only started one season for the Tar Heels.

"The more tape the better, the more confident you feel in it," Shanahan said of evaluating players. "A year's tape is pretty good, you get to see a lot. But when people have done it over time, it makes it a lot easier to make some of the decisions we have to make. You only get so many draft picks."

Receivers wanted -- One area Shanahan and the 49ers are sure to upgrade: Wide receiver. The team's top two players from last season, Jeremy Kerley and Quinton Patton, are scheduled to be free agents on Thursday, and neither came close to 1,000 receiving yards last year.

Shanahan was lukewarm in his praise of the group.

"No one in particular," he said when asked who stands out. "I feel we've got a bunch of good players we feel we can compete with, and we know we need to add some, too. We're going to add as many as we can to help our roster."

That likely will start in free agency.

The 49ers have been linked to the Bears' Alshon Jeffery, while Cleveland's Terrelle Pryor or Washington's Pierre Garcon -- who has a background with Shanahan -- also make sense.

The two top receivers in the draft, Clemson's Mike Williams and Western Michigan's Corey Davis, did not run at the combine but said they will do so at their pro days.

Cal's Chad Hansen, who could be taken as high as the second round, ran his 40-yard dash at in unofficial times of 4.54 and 4.57 seconds. That's not bad for someone who measured 6-2, 202 pounds with 10 1/8-inch hands.

DeShone Kizer a hit with 49ers, not so much at Notre Dame

By Matt Barrows, Sacramento Bee

INDIANAPOLIS -- DeShone Kizer's advantage over the other top quarterbacks in this year's draft: He knows what it's like to win ... and to lose.

His 2016 Notre Dame squad went 4-8, the school's worst season in nine years and one that included defeats to Navy and Duke.

Kizer noted that any NFL team that drafts a quarterback early will be in a similarly rough situation. He explained that his awful 2016 season gave him a better understanding of, and appreciation for, the winning years that preceded it. For instance, Kizer took over as a starter early in 2015 and helped Notre Dame to a 10-3 record.

"When you're doing nothing but winning your whole life -- being at an elite high school where we won championships -- and then going through that 2016 season like I did, you really don't understand what a winning culture is until you have something to compare it to," he said.

Kizer is considered one of the top three passers in the upcoming draft, and he likely expanded on the radar of 49ers fans this week when general manager John Lynch said Kizer "blew the doors off" his Wednesday interview with the team.

Lynch, of course, also gave rosy assessments to Clemson's Deshaun Watson and North Carolina's Mitch Trubisky, the other prospects gunning to be the first passer drafted.

There's also a thought shared by some at the combine that Lynch is trying to inflate the quarterbacks because he'd prefer Cleveland, which has the first pick in the draft, to take one so that the 49ers, picking at No. 2, are left with pass rusher Myles Garrett. Kizer grew up in Toledo, Ohio, which is two hours west of Cleveland.

Still, it was easy to see why Lynch is impressed by the Notre Dame passer.

Kizer spoke openly about the Fighting Irish's struggles last year and took responsibility for the losses. He said he had gone into a "bunker mentality," staying away from social media and rejecting any marketing deals in the run-up to the draft. His father is a police officer and his mother a bailiff, meaning that off-the-field issues probably aren't a big worry for teams.

He also has the prototypical size for an NFL quarterback at 6-foot-4, 233 pounds, with a powerful right arm. Most evaluators believe Kizer, Trubisky and Watson will need a year or two before they can be reliable starters in the NFL. Kizer's physical abilities may be worth waiting for.

There also are plenty of doubts about him.

He completed only 58.7 percent of his passes last season after hitting on 64 percent a year earlier. NFL evaluators want that mark to be at least 60 percent. Watson and Trubisky, by comparison, had completion percentages of 67 percent and 68 percent, respectively, in 2016, although Kizer noted that he operated in a more traditional, pocket-based offense.

Then there was the losing record, which included some dubious decisions by Kizer in the fourth quarter of games.

He said Notre Dame's successful 2015 squad had talented upperclassmen, including offensive tackle Ronnie Stanley, who was drafted sixth overall last year, and wide receiver Will Fuller, who was taken 21st.

Kizer said his goal was to become more verbal after those players left for the NFL and to lead his young teammates.

"Unfortunately, I didn't do that well enough," he said. "And I think that's what led to a 4-8 season instead of a season that went the same way as 2015."

Kaepernick no longer a 49er after opting out of contract

By Matt Barrows, Sacramento Bee

INDIANAPOLIS -- Colin Kaepernick opted out of his contract on Friday, leaving the 49ers with no quarterbacks signed for 2017 and with even more salary cap space to make roster moves this offseason.

According to the NFL players' union, the 49ers had nearly \$77 million in cap space to begin the week, second only to the Cleveland Browns' nearly \$104 million cushion. Kaepernick's departure adds another \$14.5 million to San Francisco's cap space.

Kaepernick, meanwhile, will become a free agent Thursday, the first time in his six-year career he has not been with the 49ers.

Both general manager John Lynch and coach Kyle Shanahan said this week they could sign Kaepernick to a more modest deal during free agency. The team will have to add four passers for their offseason practices, and the 49ers have been linked to just about every quarterback available.

On Friday, for instance, the NFL Network reported a possible three-way trade among the 49ers, Cowboys and Washington that would send Washington quarterback Kirk Cousins to the 49ers, Dallas quarterback Tony Romo to Washington and deal draft picks to the Cowboys.

A league source not authorized to speak on the record said there was nothing "solid" about the deal yet and that the transaction was merely at the rumor stage.

Lynch and Shanahan, meanwhile, continue to meet with the top quarterback prospects at the combine. They interviewed Notre Dame's DeShone Kizer on Wednesday and had similar sessions with Clemson's DeShaun Watson, North Carolina's Mitch Trubisky and Texas Tech's Patrick Mahomes on Friday. Those quarterbacks will throw and work out in front of teams Saturday.

"We don't have any (quarterbacks)," Lynch said. "And so, that's a position that's a big focal point of our preparation right now, and this week's a big part of that."

Et cetera -- Stanford running back Christian McCaffrey ran his 40-yard dash in 4.48 seconds Friday, the fourth-fastest of any runner in Indianapolis. Former NFL general manager Charley Casserly wrote that he thought McCaffrey looked the best during the running back drills later in the afternoon.

- Mahomes said that during one interview, a team official asked if he were more like a cat or a dog.

"I chose dog. I feel like I've got a fiery dog mentality on the field," he said.

▪ Clemson's Mike Williams, perhaps the top wideout in the draft, said he would wait until March 16 to run the 40-yard dash so he's better prepared. Does he think the event will hurt his draft position?

"I don't think so at all," he said. "Jerry Rice didn't run a fast time. Antonio Brown didn't run a fast time. He's the highest-paid receiver in the league right now. It's all about just playing football if you look at it at the end of the day."

KAEPERNICK OFFICIALLY OPTS OUT OF 49ERS' CONTRACT TO BECOME FREE AGENT

By Matt Maiocco, CSNBayArea.com

INDIANAPOLIS – Quarterback Colin Kaepernick officially opted out of his contract to make him an unrestricted free agent, the club announced Friday afternoon.

The 49ers have no quarterbacks under contract for the 2017 season. Kaepernick was scheduled to make \$14.9 million in salary and bonuses, which will now count as savings on the team's salary cap. The 49ers have approximately \$90 million in cap room with the start of the new league year scheduled for March 9.

If Kaepernick had not opted out of his contract, the 49ers would have released him.

Kaepernick met last week with 49ers general manager John Lynch and coach Kyle Shanahan at the team's headquarters in Santa Clara to talk about how both sides will handle the offseason.

"There was a great understanding and I think we both agreed that under the current construct it wasn't going to work out," Lynch said this week. "But we said let's not close the door.

"As he hits free agency that's something that we'll keep our eyes open, and we want him to keep us in mind as well. So it's something that we left that door open in a very real and positive way."

Kaepernick started 58 of the 49ers' past 71 games since taking over as the team's starting quarterback over Alex Smith during the 2012 season.

In Kaepernick's first season as the starter, the 49ers advanced to the Super Bowl. Kaepernick posted a 98.3 passer rating in seven starts in 2012. In his first playoff start, he rushed for 181 yards against the Green Bay Packers.

Kaepernick's best full season as a starter was 2013, when he threw a career-best 21 touchdown passes with eight interceptions for a 91.6 passer rating.

In 2016, Kaepernick replaced Blaine Gabbert as the starter after five games. He threw 16 touchdown passes with four interceptions and a 90.7 rating. He also rushed for 468 yards.

Kaepernick signed a six-year, \$115 million extension in June 2014. In reality, he served three years and earned approximately \$39.3 million on the contract. Kaepernick signed a contract restructure in October which gave him the freedom to opt out of his contract to void the remainder of his deal.

Kaepernick recently hired new agents Jeff Nalley and Sean Kiernan to represent him in future contract negotiations. Earlier this week, sources first told ESPN that he would no longer kneel during the playing of the national anthem as a way to protest racial inequality in the United States.

Report: Possibility of a three-way trade involving Kirk Cousins, Tony Romo

By Darin Gantt, ProFootballTalk.com

Well, this would shake things up.

In the wildest permutation of the quarterback dominoes falling we've heard to date, we have a report that a three-way trade could be discussed which would include Washington, San Francisco and Dallas and presumably keep Tony Romo in the NFC East.

According to Ian Rapoport of the NFL Network, as a potential Kirk Cousins deal to the 49ers is discussed, the two teams may involve the Cowboys.

That's a lot of conditions jammed into one tweet.

That would mean Cousins could join Kyle Shanahan with the 49ers, Washington would end up with a longtime rival and the Cowboys would end up with picks.

This is, frankly, so far out there it's hard to believe, as the idea of the Cowboys trading Romo to a team they play twice a year seems farfetched. And since Romo has some degree of control over this process, it would be a bit of a surprise if Washington would be the place he'd choose to be.

Talk of three-way Romo-Cousins trade is "conjecture!" at this point

By Mike Florio, ProFootballTalk.com

Absent an actual trade rumor to shake up the Scouting Combine, Ian Rapoport of NFL Media essentially made up a potential three-team blockbuster.

In fairness to Rapoport, he added the various "could be" and "may be" qualifiers, making it clear that it was all speculation. Nevertheless, the notion that the 49ers and Washington would, in order to get Kirk Cousins to San Francisco, include the Cowboys send Tony Romo to D.C. represents implausibility at best. Multiple sources with direct knowledge of the situation scoffed at the idea of such a convoluted outcome; one source called it "conjecture," adding an exclamation point for effect. (Sad!)

It would be complicated enough to get Cousins to San Francisco in a two-team trade, given the total compensation Washington would want and the long-term contract Cousins would expect. Getting a veteran quarterback as part of the transaction could make Washington more willing to part with Cousins, by why would Romo and the Cowboys need to be part of the deal when Dallas and Washington could simply do a trade separate from the trade between San Francisco and Washington?

Then there's the question of why the Cowboys would ship Romo to a division rival, given the firmly-held belief by owner Jerry Jones that Romo is destined to win a Super Bowl. If Jones truly believes that, he surely doesn't want to hand Romo to Washington.

While Rapoport gets points for creativity and for filling a slow Friday afternoon with a little intrigue, this is one of those potential transactions that feels too far fetched and too over the top to happen. But maybe the chatter stretches the rubber band far enough to get another team to make to the Cowboys an offer that could then be presented to Romo to see if he'll accept a trade rather than push for his outright release.

Ultimately, that may be the goal. By floating the idea of interjecting Romo into the 49ers-Washington trade, the Cowboys are shaking the tree to its roots. Now, they just have to stand back and wait for fruit to fall from it.

Kaepernick opts out of contract, becomes free agent

By Staff, Associated Press

SANTA CLARA, Calif. (AP) — Colin Kaepernick is a free agent after opting out of his San Francisco 49ers contract Friday.

The six-year veteran quarterback who drew particular attention and headlines last season by not standing for the national anthem, met with new general manager John Lynch and coach Kyle Shanahan before making the move.

Kaepernick made a meteoric rise with the 49ers under coach Jim Harbaugh, leading them to the 2012 NFC title and a close loss to Baltimore in the Super Bowl. But his career spiraled in recent seasons, and he was benched for journeyman Blaine Gabbert.

Kaepernick threw for 2,241 yards, 16 touchdowns and four interceptions in 11 starts in 2016. He's thrown for 72 touchdowns since joining San Francisco as a 2011 second-round draft pick.

His decision leaves the team with no quarterbacks on the roster. Gabbert and Christian Ponder also are free agents.

"You've got to do your homework and look into everything," Shanahan told the team's website.

Kaepernick originally signed a \$114 million, six-year contract with the 49ers in 2014, but restructured it down to a two-year deal last October — one day after replacing Gabbert as San Francisco's starting quarterback.

The new contract, much more franchise-friendly than the original deal, converting Kaepernick's game bonuses into guaranteed money, included the clause allowing him to become an unrestricted free agent in 2017.

Kaepernick, 29, has indicated he plans to stand for the anthem next season. He knelt through the "Star Spangled Banner" all of last season to protest police brutality and the treatment of minorities, drawing criticism and acclaim alike.