

49ers Mid-Day Clips – May 9, 2017

Local Media

Mike McIntyre Gives Scouting Report on 49ers CB Ahkello Witherspoon

By Joe Fann, 49ers.com

<http://www.49ers.com/news/article-2/Mike-McIntyre-Gives-Scouting-Report-on-49ers-CB-Ahkello-Witherspoon/e8f527c1-c5b3-4212-a2b7-302e2a6ffb0b>

Five impressions from the 49ers rookie minicamp

By Kevin Lynch, SFGate.com

<http://blog.sfgate.com/49ers/2017/05/09/five-impressions-from-the-49ers-rookie-minicamp/>

Will Reuben Foster's 'freakishness' help him heal? 49ers hope so

By Cam Inman, San Jose Mercury News

<http://www.mercurynews.com/2017/05/09/will-reuben-fosters-freakishness-help-him-heal-49ers-hope-so/>

49ers salary guarantees for rookies contain offset language

By Matt Maiocco, CSNBayArea.com

<http://www.csnbayarea.com/49ers/49ers-salary-guarantees-rookies-contain-offset-language>

Searching for hidden gems, 49ers sign three tryout players

By Nick Wagoner, ESPN.com

http://www.espn.com/blog/san-francisco-49ers/post/_id/24961/49ers-search-for-hidden-gems-by-signing-three-tryout-players

John Lynch: Reuben Foster's injured shoulder is 'ahead of schedule'

By Chris Biderman, TheNinersWire.com

<http://ninerswire.usatoday.com/2017/05/09/john-lynch-reuben-fosters-injured-shoulder-is-ahead-of-schedule/>

49ers pint-sized WR makes up for size with toughness, love for contact

By Chris Biderman, TheNinersWire.com

<http://ninerswire.usatoday.com/2017/05/09/49ers-pint-sized-wr-makes-up-for-size-with-toughness-love-for-contact/>

National Media

Arizona Cardinals sign cornerback Jumal Rolle to one-year contract

By Staff, Arizona Republic

<http://www.azcentral.com/story/sports/nfl/cardinals/2017/05/09/arizona-cardinals-sign-cornerback-jumal-rolle-one-year-contract/314576001/>

Seahawks release Perrish Cox, seven others

By Josh Alper, ProFootballTalk.com

<http://profootballtalk.nbcsports.com/2017/05/09/seahawks-release-perrish-cox-seven-others/>

Panthers' Michael Oher turns himself in, booked on misdemeanor assault

By A.J. Perez, USA Today

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/sports/nfl/2017/05/09/michael-ohr-turns-himself-in-nashville-police/101465894/>

Bucs to sign ex-Falcons CB Robert McClain to 1-year deal

By Greg Auman, Tampa Bay Times

<http://www.tampabay.com/blogs/bucs/bucs-to-sign-ex-falcons-cb-robert-mcclain-to-1-year-deal/2323266>

Scot McCloughan praises Redskins after 'mutual' parting of ways

By John Keim, ESPN.com

http://www.espn.com/nfl/story/_/id/19344329/former-gm-scot-mccloughan-praises-washington-redskins-mutual-parting

Bills sign free-agent LB Carl Bradford

By Vic Carucci, Buffalo News

<http://buffalonews.com/2017/05/09/bills-sign-free-agent-lb-carl-bradford/>

Local Clips – Full Version

Mike McIntyre Gives Scouting Report on 49ers CB Ahkello Witherspoon

By Joe Fann, 49ers.com

Oregon was on the doorstep as Colorado clung to a three-point lead late in the fourth quarter. Ducks quarterback Dakota Prukop sent a pass into the end zone for the go-ahead score, but Ahkello Witherspoon jumped the route for a game-saving interception.

The takeaway secured Colorado's 3-1 start in a year where the program returned to relevance on the college football landscape.

"That was the signature play since I've been here," said Mike McIntyre, who's been the Buffaloes head coach since 2013.

Colorado went on to enjoy a 10-2 campaign as the Pac-12 South Champions. Witherspoon led the nation with 19 pass breakups, went on to stand out during the pre-draft process and was ultimately taken in the third round (66th pick) by the San Francisco 49ers.

McIntyre has known the 6-foot-3 cornerback since he was a junior in high school. At that time, Witherspoon was only 5-foot-9 and a meager 150 pounds. McIntyre, then the coach at San Jose State, passed on Witherspoon and the corner stayed in his hometown at Sacramento City College for freshman year. A growth spurt put Witherspoon back on McIntyre's radar, and he eventually signed with the Buffaloes in 2014.

McIntyre called his former defensive back a "late bloomer," but noted that Witherspoon's size and footwork are a rare combination.

"He has the quickness that he had when he was 5-foot-9 – being able to bend his hips, flip his hips, bend his body – so he's a tall guy who can really rip and move," McIntyre said in his scouting report. "It's very unusual. He has a long, long reach and can really track a ball. He has great ball skills."

The knock on Witherspoon coming out of college was his lack of physicality. A few things contribute to that, McIntyre said. For starters, Witherspoon has only played football since high school. He was a multi-sport star at Christian Brothers High School. Secondly, he's still filling out his wiry frame. The coach told 49ers fans to give the corner 18 months to work with the team's strength and conditioning staff.

Then Witherspoon will have the strength to match his skillset as a cover corner.

"He has a lot of confidence when he's out there covering," McIntyre said. "He enjoys that battle. Some guys are afraid of it; he wants quarterbacks to throw it his way. And if he gets beat, he'll bounce right back. He's not going to shy away, which I think is a critical factor."

John Lynch referenced his conversations with McIntyre after the 49ers selected Witherspoon on Day 2 of the 2017 NFL Draft. San Francisco's GM said that McIntyre's insight proved to be very helpful in the 49ers evaluation process.

"He wanted to know where I think he's headed," McIntyre said. "He wanted to find out about his work ethic. He wanted to find out about his football intelligence. He wanted to know what his tool set was."

"Every team is looking for the tall corner who can bend and move."

Witherspoon will be a player to watch in order to see how he develops under defensive coordinator Robert Saleh and defensive backs coach Jeff Hafley.

Five impressions from the 49ers rookie minicamp

By Kevin Lynch, SFGate.com

Rookies will undoubtedly gobble up a significant share of playing time in 2017 for the 49ers and beyond. Head coach Kyle Shanahan puts massive stock in not only the team's eight-member draft class but also its 18 undrafted free agents, many of whom made the roster last week during the rookie minicamp. Rookies are likely to get try-outs through the spring and summer. Shanahan said he has unearthed talent during past tryouts, including the discovery of Falcons speedy receiver Taylor Gabriel.

The 49ers opened a practice to the media last Friday and here are the rookies who stood out.

1. WR Trent Taylor, La. Tech, 5th round: Taylor is listed at 5-8, 180 pounds, and those are exaggerations. Taylor would be lucky to crest 5-6, and he doesn't look much over 170. However, he looked slippery on the field with third-round choice Ahkello Witherspoon struggling to keep up with him.
2. Taylor Gabriel: He also played defense in high school and said he once broke the jaw of a wide receiver when he hit him after he caught a slant pass. Taylor said he enjoys the physical nature of the game.
3. QB C.J. Beathard, Iowa, third round: Beathard threw with ease and with impressive accuracy during individual drills. Not surprisingly, when he was nearly as accurate in team drills and, at times, he had trouble negotiating the Santa Clara winds. However, overall, he looked good.
4. QB Nick Mullens, Southern Mississippi, free agent: Mullens didn't have the arm strength of Beathard, however he exhibited a deft touch on deep sideline routes and was signed after the minicamp.
5. S Lorenzo Jerome, St. Francis, free agent: Jerome doesn't look like a safety at a stocky 5-10, but he plays like one. He had a couple of pass breakups and a pick.

Will Reuben Foster's 'freakishness' help him heal? 49ers hope so

By Cam Inman, San Jose Mercury News

The health of new 49ers linebacker Reuben Foster is not a topic going away anytime soon.

General manager John Lynch appeared on SiriusXM NFL Radio Tuesday morning and said the No. 31 overall draft pick is progressing after February surgery on his rotator cuff.

Last week, coach Kyle Shanahan told KNBR that a worst-case scenario would be Foster needing a follow-up surgery and possibly keeping him out his rookie year.

Lynch clarified that somewhat Tuesday morning by saying that the worst-case scenario is basically the same for any athlete coming off a surgery.

Lynch, speaking with Alex Marvez and Mark Dominik, said: "It's healing very well. He's one of these freakish athletes. Those guys tend to heal a little faster. He's ahead of schedule. Our biggest deal with Reuben is holding him back. His persona, and one thing that drew me to him, is he loves football and wants to be on the field right now.

"We had our rookie minicamp, and he was trying to pull the okie-doke and trying to run out there with guys. We're going to have to keep the reins on him.

"Come training camp we anticipate him being full go and I can't wait to see it."

49ers salary guarantees for rookies contain offset language

By Matt Maiocco, CSNBayArea.com

UPDATED (Tuesday, 1:49 p.m.): The New York Jets claimed KD Cannon off waivers, reports the Houston Chronicle. The Jets now assume the terms of the contract under which he originally signed with the 49ers after going undrafted. The 49ers are off the hook for the remaining \$40,000 of guaranteed salary for the 2017 season.

The 49ers signed a talented, undrafted rookie wide receiver for a signing bonus of \$5,000. That is not a significant figure for a “priority free agent.”

But the figure that got a lot of attention in recent days when the 49ers parted ways with Baylor wide receiver KD Cannon was \$45,000 guaranteed. That is a lot of money for a player who was not among the 253 prospects who heard their names called during the NFL draft.

Cannon ranks third in Baylor history in receptions (195), receiving yards (3,113) and touchdowns (27). He was invited to the NFL Scouting Combine, where he ran the 40-yard dash in 4.41 seconds. It was the fourth-fastest time among the 51 wide receivers in attendance.

There were 32 wideouts drafted. The 49ers selected Trent Taylor of Louisiana Tech in the fifth round.

Obviously, Cannon came to the 49ers with some question marks. And after the first practice of the team's rookie minicamp, Cam Inman of the Bay Area News Group observed, “Cannon didn't show much urgency or hustle.”

The one thing an undrafted rookie cannot do when he steps onto the field for the first time is give the appearance – or act as if – he is not going to do everything in his power to compete hard for a job.

The 49ers released Cannon and signed rookie camp invitee B.J. Johnson of Georgia Southern, who immediately impressed the coaching staff with his approach.

So it could be said that the 49ers just wasted \$45,000 on Cannon without giving him an opportunity to adjust his attitude. But the last thing any team wants to do – especially a new regime that's trying to “change the culture” – is spend precious time attempting to light a fire under an undrafted rookie.

The case with these partial salary guarantees that are becoming more and more popular in the NFL does not mean the 49ers are immediately responsible for that money. There is standard offset language in the contract.

If Cannon ends up on a 53-man roster – or even five weeks on a team's practice squad – and earns \$40,000 or more from another NFL team this season, the 49ers will not owe him another penny.

Cannon appeared on the league's waiver wire on Monday. If another team claims him before the deadline on Tuesday at 1 p.m. (PT), the new team will pick up the contract and the 49ers are off the hook for everything but the original \$5,000 signing bonus.

But only if there is no place for him with any other team this season, will the 49ers be forced to follow-through and pay the entire \$45,000 guarantee.

Searching for hidden gems, 49ers sign three tryout players

By Nick Wagoner, ESPN.com

The San Francisco 49ers brought a whopping 56 tryout players to last weekend's rookie minicamp. It made for a crowded gathering in which the Niners nearly had a full 90-man roster on the field.

But there was a method to coach Kyle Shanahan and general manager John Lynch's madness. Nobody knows better than Shanahan the type of talent that can be uncovered in such settings.

In previous stops as an assistant, Shanahan was on a staff that identified players such as receiver Taylor Gabriel, cornerback K'Waun Williams and receiver Brandon Banks as tryout players who eventually not only made a 53-man roster but became contributors. Gabriel is the most famous of that group, becoming a star for Shanahan in Atlanta last year after the pair first worked together in Cleveland. The 49ers signed Williams as a free agent this offseason.

The Niners announced Monday the signing of three players who participated on a tryout basis at last weekend's rookie minicamp. They added safety Chancellor James, receiver BJ Johnson III and offensive lineman Richard Levy, while releasing running back DuJuan Harris, receiver KD Cannon and offensive lineman Bret Treadway to make room.

Here's a look at the three players the Niners signed:

Chancellor James, safety, Boise State: James played in 35 games with 24 starts for the Broncos, posting 171 tackles, 10.5 tackles for loss, four interceptions and three sacks. Better suited as a strong safety who can play square to the line of scrimmage but should get an opportunity to prove himself in a secondary that is still figuring out where the pieces best fit.

BJ Johnson III, wide receiver, Georgia Southern: The 6-foot-1, 210-pound Johnson played in 44 games with 35 starts. He had 92 catches for 1,377 yards and six touchdowns in his college career. The Niners have room for a receiver to force his way on to the roster, though Johnson will likely need to show he can contribute on special teams in order to be seriously in the mix.

Richard Levy, offensive lineman, Connecticut: Levy started 37 games on the offensive line for the Huskies, including all 12 as a senior. He was a two-year starter at left tackle but also played guard, giving him the versatility that will be required for him to have a chance to crack the roster. The Niners have room for offensive linemen capable of playing multiple spots to provide some depth, though it will clearly be an uphill climb for Levy.

John Lynch: Reuben Foster's injured shoulder is 'ahead of schedule'

By Chris Biderman, TheNinersWire.com

It became news last week when 49ers coach Kyle Shanahan outlined the worst-case scenario for Reuben Foster, indicating the possibility exists that the linebacker may require another surgery on his shoulder that could jeopardize his rookie season.

For now, Foster is recovering from the operation to repair his torn right rotator cuff well, according to general manager John Lynch, who expects the 31st pick in the recent NFL draft on the field for the start of training camp the last weekend in July.

"He's ahead of schedule. So our biggest deal with Reuben's going to be holding him back," Lynch said Tuesday on Sirius XM NFL Radio.

Foster's clearly itching to get back on the field. The Butkus Award winner at the start of the recent rookie minicamp Friday was suited up in cleats, gloves and his helmet on the practice field, despite not being cleared to participate.

“He was trying to pull the ‘okie doke’ and run out there with the guys, and we’re just going to have to keep the reins on him,” said Lynch. “But come training camp, we anticipate him being full go. And I can’t wait to see it.”

There were reports leading up to the draft indicating teams were concerned about the long-term health of Foster’s shoulder. It’s a leading reason why Foster, considered a top-10 talent, fell to the end of Round 1.

Foster also failed a drug test with a dilute sample at the NFL combine, from which he was sent home after getting into an altercation with a hospital technician.

Lynch read the reports about Foster’s shoulder and made sure to double- and triple-check with the 49ers’ medical staff ensure it wouldn’t be a long-term issue.

“I applaud (our doctors) for it, they never blinked, they never deviated from their initial stance,” said Lynch. “They went and re-checked it over and over.

“Believe me, in my first draft, I wasn’t going to just kind of listen to them one time. I kept going back and saying, ‘Why are there all these reports out there? Look at them again. Look at the pictures again.’ And they came back with the same report over and over. I can’t tell you what (other teams) saw. What we saw is a guy that had rotator cuff surgery, it’s healing very well.”

The 49ers traded up from pick 34 in Round 2 to select Foster with No. 31 in the first round. They traded a fourth-round selection to Seattle to move up, which they received in the trade back from No. 2 to 3 from the Chicago Bears. San Francisco selected Stanford defensive lineman Solomon Thomas with the third-overall pick.

49ers pint-sized WR makes up for size with toughness, love for contact

By Chris Biderman, TheNinersWire.com

Trent Taylor might be the smallest 49er in years.

San Francisco’s newest receiver, a fifth-round pick in the recent NFL draft from Louisiana Tech, makes up for his stature with toughness.

Taylor, 5-foot-8 and 181 pounds, plays with the ferocity of a 230 pounder, putting his head down to barrel into defenders to milk every yard possible after the catch. It’s among the reasons why he led the FBS last season with 1,803 yards receiving.

And given Taylor’s shiftiness and ability to separate from defenders in small spaces, he could prove a useful weapon as a slot receiver in Kyle Shanahan’s new offense. He’s also a candidate to return punts.

“I thought what impressed me the most about (Taylor) besides the separation ability is that when he did get the ball in his hands, he ran angry and pissed off,” Shanahan said.

“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.”

Said Taylor: “Any time I get the ball on offense, I’m not scared to lay my head in there and get a hit, lay somebody out, anything like that. (It’s) part of the game and I love it.”

Taylor’s toughness stems back Evangel Christian high school, when he tried to play enforcer in the defensive secondary despite weighing just 160 pounds as a senior.

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

Aside from his physicality, Taylor's his ability to get open stands out. He's balanced while running routes and difficult to cover, despite having just 28 3/4-inch arms and 8 1/4-inch hands.

He didn't run particularly well leading up to the draft, logging a 4.63 in the 40-yard dash. He makes up for a lack of blazing speed with his ability to change directions.

"If you run a 4.3, it's usually hard to just cut right away," said Shanahan. "Usually, the slower guys can cut a little better. If you can get guys in between, that's usually the best slot receivers. 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."

That could become useful for the 49ers while the league continues to transition to pass-happy offenses that rely on short-throws to simulate the running game.

What are the keys for getting open despite regularly having a physical disadvantage?

"Just having a low center of gravity, just playing sports my whole life, playing basketball, football, tennis," Taylor said. "You just kind of develop good balance with all."

Yes, the tough guy even played tennis. Taylor said he played doubles with his high school quarterback in the offseason to help build up chemistry, which ultimately paid dividends on the football field.

"The receiver's got to be the quarterback's best friend. That's what I was trying to do," Taylor said.