

49ers Mid-Day Clips – March 3, 2017

Local Media

Tough in trenches? Lynch talks up 49ers' lines

By Eric Branch, San Francisco Chronicle

<http://www.sfchronicle.com/49ers/article/Tough-in-trenches-Lynch-talks-up-49ers-lines-10975436.php>

NFL combine prospect: 'Honestly the 49ers are a great team'

By Cam Inman, San Jose Mercury News

<http://www.mercurynews.com/2017/03/03/49ers-scouring-running-back-crop-at-combine/>

49ers position-by-position analysis: 'We need players'

By Cam Inman, San Jose Mercury News

<http://www.mercurynews.com/2017/03/03/49ers-position-by-position-analysis-we-need-players/>

DeShone Kizer to the 49ers? 10 reasons it just might happen

By Jon Becker, San Jose Mercury News

<http://www.mercurynews.com/2017/03/03/10-reasons-why-deshone-kizer-fits-as-49ers-next-quarterback/>

John Lynch: 'Game-changing player' possible at No. 2

By Kevin Patra, NFL.com

<http://www.nfl.com/news/story/0ap3000000789425/article/john-lynch-gamechanging-player-possible-at-no-2>

National Media

Bears could be loading up for run at CB Stephon Gilmore, QB Mike Glennon

By Brad Biggs, Chicago Tribune

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/sports/columnists/ct-bears-free-agent-targets-biggs-spt-0303-20170302-column.html>

NFL free agency 2017: Jets expected to target safety Tony Jefferson, source says

By Connor Hughes, Newark Star-Ledger

http://www.nj.com/jets/index.ssf/2017/03/free_agency_jets_cardinals_tony_jefferson.html

Saints would want a first-round pick for Brandin Cooks

By Marc Sessler, NFL.com

<http://www.nfl.com/news/story/0ap3000000789546/article/saints-would-want-a-firstround-pick-for-brandin-cooks>

Eagles to draft No. 14 in first round after winning coin toss

By Zach Berman, Philadelphia Inquirer

<http://www.philly.com/philly/blogs/sports/eagles/Eagles-to-draft-No-14-in-first-round-after-winning-coin-toss.html>

Texans want to manage Lamar Miller's workload better

By Aaron Wilson, Houston Chronicle

<http://www.chron.com/sports/texans/article/Texans-want-to-manage-Lamar-Miller-s-workload-10972440.php>

Local Clips – Full Version

Tough in trenches? Lynch talks up 49ers' lines

By Eric Branch, San Francisco Chronicle

INDIANAPOLIS - General manager John 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 year, 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 and 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 due to injury since 2014.

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.

Armstead and Buckner “are obviously very talented,” Lynch said. “We just have to have them max out. And that’s part of the coaches’ job, our job, to put them in the right situation.”

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.”

NFL combine prospect: ‘Honestly the 49ers are a great team’

By Cam Inman, San Jose Mercury News

Job hopefuls are apparently willing to say anything at the NFL scouting combine, and one statement stood out by Toledo running back Kareem Hunt.

“Honestly, the 49ers are a great team. They’re going to come up,” Hunt said Thursday. “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."

North Carolina's T.J. Logan was the fastest running back Friday at 4.37 seconds, followed by Utah's Joe Williams (4.41) and North Carolina A&T's Tarik Cohen.

Hunt ran the 40 in 4.62 seconds. That may not impress the 49ers but they at least impressed him, as did new general manager John Lynch.

"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."

Shaun Draughn and Du'Juan Harris, the 49ers reserve running backs the past two seasons, are both headed for free agency. The only others beside Hyde on the roster are Mike Davis and Raheem Mostert.

49ers position-by-position analysis: 'We need players'

By Cam Inman, San Jose Mercury News

Combing through quarterback options is not the only 49ers' task, albeit their most important. As general manager John Lynch summed up at the NFL scouting combine: "We need players."

Next week's free agency will open the door for reinforcements to help a franchise rebound from arguably its worst-ever season. Negotiations can begin Tuesday and signings must wait until Thursday.

Filling holes now will also take less onus off next month's draft, in which the 49ers' hold the No. 2 overall pick. Asked if teams have inquired about obtaining that draft pick, Lynch coyly replied: "Maybe."

A month into the new regime, Lynch and coach Kyle Shanahan have sized up their position groups heading into a surefire, offseason makeover. A couple veterans might get released ahead of free agency, and a couple of their own pending free agents might get re-signed before hitting the market. For now, this is how the 49ers' roster looks:

Quarterback: Colin Kaepernick will formally opt out of his contract Friday, ESPN reported, and that leaves no quarterbacks on the roster, seeing how Blaine Gabbert, Christian Ponder and Thad Lewis are pending free agents.

Reuniting Shanahan with a familiar veteran such as Brian Hoyer and/or Matt Schaub is one plausible step. "Everyone tries to get people who've been in their offense before, but that's not a requirement," Shanahan said. "That's a bonus. You need to get the best guys available."

Trading for an experienced quarterback could be the more costly but effective route. And, of course, there is the draft, and Lynch spoke highly of four candidates: DeShone Kizer, Deshaun Watson, Mitch Trubisky and Pat Mahomes.

Running back: Carlos Hyde drew more praise from Shanahan and Lynch than any other current 49er. And they want Hyde to excel even more as he enters the final year of his rookie deal. "Kyle has an ability to maximize the skills of running backs both in the run game and the pass game, and I think Carlos fits that mold and we think he's got a lot more," Lynch said. "He's had nice film. We think he has a lot more in him, and we're excited to try to pull that out of him."

Hyde's injury history should prompt the 49ers to stock up on backups. Shaun Draughn and Du'Juan Harris are ticketed for free agency. Mike Davis and Raheem Mostert are current backups. Look for the 49ers to chase a couple multi-dimensional backs.

Wide receiver: Asked if any current wide receiver or tight end on the roster jumped out at him, Shanahan replied: "No one in particular." Ouch. But accurate.

Torrey Smith needs to change that opinion. He's due \$6.5 million, and his straight-line speed needs to deliver more big plays, assuming the 49ers find a quarterback or two to inspire him (and free agents who might be skeptical). He's totaled 53 receptions and seven touchdowns since arriving in 2015 free agency.

Jeremy Kerley and Quinton Patton are unrestricted free agents, and Kerley has voiced a desire to return after leading the 49ers last season with 64 receptions. Bruce Ellington, Eric Rogers and DeAndre Smelter are question marks because of health issues.

Tight end: Vance McDonald landed a contract extension in December, and Garrett Celek got one a year ago. Blake Bell has 19 career receptions. The 49ers could use better depth at a spot that Shanahan utilized well in Atlanta.

Offensive line: Left tackle Joe Staley, a 10-year veteran, anchors a line that showed encouraging signs last season with the addition of guards Zane Beadles and Joshua Garnett. Right tackle Trent Brown also transitioned well into a starting role. If center Daniel Kilgore can stay healthy, he has the experience and smarts Shanahan wants at that spot.

Lynch used the word "encouraging" when discussing this unit. "Offensive lines are tough to build in this league, and you turn on the film and there's a lot of exciting things to see with an offensive line," Lynch said.

Defensive line: Arik Armstead and DeForest Buckner, the 49ers top picks in the past two drafts, will fit fine into the new scheme featuring four down linemen. At least that is what Lynch is expecting.

"These guys are great examples of (scheme versatility), guys that could play very well in the 3-4, but great fits in what we're doing as well," Lynch said. "These guys are obviously very talented and we just need to have them max out. That's part of the coaches job and our job to put them in the right situation."

Last week's acquisition of veteran nose tackle Earl Mitchell helps the unit that also will include Quinton Dial and other complementary pieces. Aaron Lynch and Ahmad Brooks are big enough to adapt as edge rushers in the new scheme but the 49ers obviously need more threats here.

Linebacker: NaVorro Bowman is recovering well from his latest career-threatening injury, an Achilles tear five months ago. But this position is a glaring need for more starters and impact players. Ray-Ray Armstrong is coming off a pectoral tear, and he got a two-year extension in December. Younger, faster linebackers are a need that can be filled in the draft.

Cornerback: The 49ers retained Jeff Hafley as their secondary coach so he's familiar with his options: Tramaine Brock, Rashard Robinson, Keith Reaser, Will Redmond, Chris Davis, Dontae Johnson, Prince Charles Iworah and newly signed K'Wuan Williams. What about Jimmie Ward? Read below.

Safety: Lynch strongly indicated that Ward could shift to free safety. What does that mean for Antoine Bethea, Eric Reid and Jaquiski Tartt? Bethea, an 11-year veteran, could be the odd man out. Here is what it means for Ward: "We think he's a good scheme fit for what we're doing at the free safety position," Lynch said. "But we don't know that until you put him there. It's projection.

“His traits, his skills translate very well to that. But it’s such an instinct position,” Lynch added. “We’re excited to give him an offseason to say, ‘Let’s give this a go.’ That doesn’t preclude him from playing nickel and moving around in certain situations.”

Specialists: Kicker Phil Dawson is a pending free agent and it’s unknown if the 49ers will pony up to resign him for another tour alongside punter Bradley Pinion and long snapper Kyle Nelson.

DeShone Kizer to the 49ers? 10 reasons it just might happen

By Jon Becker, San Jose Mercury News

Could Notre Dame quarterback DeShone Kizer be drafted by the 49ers next month? There are some compelling reasons, as well as some incidental ones, why the 6-foot-4 redshirt sophomore could find himself in a 49ers huddle this fall.

1. Simple. He’s really good. Kizer is rated as the No. 2 quarterback coming out of college, according to many pre-draft rankings.
2. He can demolish doors. Forget the fact that Kizer is mobile, has a “generational” arm that accounted for 2,925 yards and 26 touchdowns this past season. New 49ers general manager John Lynch said Kizer “blew the doors off” of his interview at the NFL combine this week.
3. Duh! He went to Notre Dame. Jed York went to Notre Dame. It’s also John York’s alma mater. For what it’s worth, safe to say the owners would very much like to see Kizer in red and gold.
4. He’s adept at audibilizing, on and, especially, off the field. Actually, the ex-girlfriend of former Sacramento King Nik Stauskas would know better than us.
5. He’s able to effectively tune out NFL draft guru Mel Kiper Jr.
6. Madden won’t get in the way. Unlike most any other 21-year-old, you don’t have to worry about Kizer spending too much time playing video games. He’s reportedly so bad at video games that he’s given up trying to learn.
7. He’s on the right side of the law. His father, Derek, is a police officer and his mother, Mindy, is a court bailiff. There’s a very good chance there will be no worries about DeShone getting into trouble.
8. His parents made him work for what he wanted. They said DeShone could either enlist in the military or go to college, but he’d have to pay for it himself by earning an athletic scholarship. The decision was easy. “I knew I didn’t want to shoot anyone, and I don’t want to get shot,” he told Sports Illustrated.
9. Did we mention his parents didn’t hand him anything? DeShone lost his wallet at college and all of his cash (\$170), meaning he was broke as he headed home for school break. Needing money, Kizer’s parents hired him to do landscaping and household chores, as well as power washing and staining their deck.
10. Who else do the 49ers have!?! Let’s face it, Colin Kaepernick won’t be back and Blaine Gabbert doesn’t excite anyone. It also doesn’t look as though Kirk Cousins or Jimmy Garoppolo will be walking through the door in Santa Clara any time soon.

John Lynch: 'Game-changing player' possible at No. 2

By Kevin Patra, NFL.com

John Lynch and Kyle Shanahan take over a 2-14 roster that has arguably the worst assembled talent in the NFL. The first-time GM isn't fretting.

On Friday, Lynch told NFL Network's Good Morning Football that his staff doesn't have the stench of that poor season, but gets the rewards of a top selection.

"A lot of people have said almost that they almost feel sorry for me with the No. 2 pick," Lynch said. "I think the great thing -- Kyle and I weren't part of the 2-14 season but the benefit we have now is the No. 2 pick, and that's a great asset. There are so many directions we can go. We can stay pat and find an excellent player, a game-changing player who could help to change the fortunes of our franchise ... there's so many things we can do."

For the next 55 days, the question will be whether that "game-changing player" will be a quarterback. With Colin Kaepernick set to opt out of his contract the, as of now, the 49ers won't have a QB when the new league year opens next week.

Lynch doubled down on his Thursday comments that not having a quarterback on the roster was "somewhat liberating."

"So much of life is perspective and the good part of that is we get to form it the way we want to do that," he said Friday. "There's a number of different routes we can go to find that and we're looking at every single one, including the draft, including free agency, and we're excited about that."

Whether Mitch Trubisky, DeShone Kizer, Deshaun Watson or another rookie becomes the apple of Shanahan and Lynch's eye will be fettered out over the next seven-plus weeks. Regardless of whether they decide to take a QB high in the draft, the Niners are still likely to add a short-term, lower-cost veteran QB to the mix. Given how bad the roster is, it wouldn't be a shock to see San Francisco kick the quarterback can down the road another year if the team isn't convinced it can find a franchise signal-caller in this draft.