

49ers Clips – February 24, 2017

Local Media

***5 Bold Predictions for the NFL Scouting Combine with Matt Miller***

By Joe Fann, 49ers.com

<http://www.49ers.com/news/ninerfeed/article-2/5-Bold-Predictions-for-the-NFL-Scouting-Combine-with-Matt-Miller/b2f7badb-7f20-4ba5-8307-1ef8085ae205>

***Further proof that 49ers, Shanahan won't draft a QB at No. 2***

By Jon Wilner, San Jose Mercury News

<http://www.mercurynews.com/2017/02/23/how-kyle-shanahans-first-nfl-gm-knew-he-was-head-coach-material/>

***49ers could use help at tight end, but other positions more important***

By Nick Wagoner, ESPN.com

[http://www.espn.com/blog/san-francisco-49ers/post/\\_/id/23627/49ers-could-use-help-at-tight-end-but-other-positions-more-important](http://www.espn.com/blog/san-francisco-49ers/post/_/id/23627/49ers-could-use-help-at-tight-end-but-other-positions-more-important)

***John Lynch doesn't think the 49ers are as bad as their record says they are***

By Curtis Crabtree, ProFootballTalk.com

<http://profootballtalk.nbcsports.com/2017/02/24/john-lynch-doesnt-think-the-49ers-are-as-bad-as-their-record-says-they-are/>

***GM John Lynch on 49ers: We're better than a 2-14 team***

By Kevin Patra, NFL.com

<http://www.nfl.com/news/story/0ap3000000787653/article/gm-john-lynch-on-49ers-were-better-than-a-2-14-team>

***Zierlein mock draft 2.0: 49ers, Bills address QB issues***

By Lance Zierlein, NFL.com

<http://www.nfl.com/news/story/0ap3000000787246/article/zierlein-mock-draft-20-49ers-bills-address-qb-issues>

National Media

***Broncos don't pick up Russell Okung's option. Could a return to the Seahawks be in the cards?***

By Bob Condotta, The Seattle Times

<http://www.seattletimes.com/sports/seahawks/former-seahawk-russell-okung-to-hit-free-agency-as-broncos-do-not-pick-up-his-option/>

***Cardinals to face Cowboys in Aug. 3 Hall of Fame Game***

By Kent Somers, The Arizona Republic

<http://www.azcentral.com/story/sports/nfl/cardinals/2017/02/23/cardinals-face-cowboys-aug-3-hall-fame-game/98304662/>

***Vikings, Adrian Peterson have not discussed \$18M option for 2017***

By Ben Goessling, ESPN.com

[http://www.espn.com/nfl/story/\\_/id/18750000/minnesota-vikings-rb-adrian-peterson-not-spoken-contract-upcoming-season](http://www.espn.com/nfl/story/_/id/18750000/minnesota-vikings-rb-adrian-peterson-not-spoken-contract-upcoming-season)

***Mohamed Sanu: Falcons won't be defined by collapse***

By Conor Orr, NFL.com

<http://www.nfl.com/news/story/0ap3000000787646/article/mohamed-sanu-falcons-wont-be-defined-by-collapse>

***Bucs to release cornerback Alterraun Verner***

By Greg Auman, Tampa Bay Times

<http://www.tampabay.com/blogs/bucs/bucs-to-release-cornerback-alterraun-verner/2314295>

## Local Clips – Full Version

### **5 Bold Predictions for the NFL Scouting Combine with Matt Miller**

By Joe Fann, 49ers.com

Nobody covers the NFL Draft quite like Matt Miller. Bleacher Report's go-to guy for all things draft is one of the premier sources for prospect analysis, and next week's NFL Scouting Combine is the Super Bowl-equivalent for talent evaluators everywhere.

More than 300 NFL hopefuls will go through physicals, meet with clubs individually and (most notably) go through a series of drills that have the potential to separate them from their counterparts.

Miller, who has often been featured on 49ers.com and is a friend of the website, has offered five bold predictions for the upcoming festivities in Indianapolis. Be sure to follow Miller on Twitter @nfldraftscout and keep tabs on his coverage leading up to Draft Day.

Here's what Miller expects to go down at Lucas Oil Stadium next week.

#### 1. Who will be the fastest prospect at the combine?

The 40-yard dash is the most talked about drill each year. Miller has an ACC wideout taking the crown in 2017.

"I'm going to go with Kermit Whitfield from Florida State. He's not a well-known guy in this draft class at all, but he's a little wide receiver and he is blazing fast. He ran track in high school. He ran a 10.21 100-meter dash. I think he's going to burn up the track in Indy. He's going to turn some heads there."

#### 2. Who will be the biggest riser?

It happens at every combine – a player enters with little fanfare and leaves as one of the most talked about prospects of the week. Texas Tech's quarterback has a shot to be that name this year.

"I honestly think it will be a quarterback this year, and I think it will be Pat Mahomes. I think the work he's done, from the time he declared for the draft until now – working on his footwork, taking snaps from under center and the terminology that goes into being an NFL quarterback. He has the strongest arm in this year's draft class, hands down. I think Pat Mahomes is going to get himself into the first-round conversation with a big combine."

#### 3. Who will draw the most media attention?

Each prospect is herded through the media workroom and announced over the loudspeaker. For certain players, nearly every reporter will flood to the podium to hear what they have to say.

"(LSU running back) Leonard Fournette should be the star of the show this year. He's been called a generational talent at running back. He's been heralded as a first-round pick since he was in high school. He was kind of protected by the coaches and the system at LSU. He hasn't been given a lot of access to the media. This will really be his first time, and so he's a name that everyone is going to flock to."

#### 4. Who will the 49ers be keeping a close eye on?

With the No. 2 overall pick, San Francisco could have its choice of any signal-caller in this year's draft.

"I would spend so much time with the quarterbacks in this class because it's such an unknown position. You have Mitch Trubisky, who was a one-year starter at North Carolina, and until about three-quarters of the way through the season, no one thought he would declare. You missed out on a lot of evaluation time

with him. So with the interviews, bringing in Trubisky, bringing in (Notre Dame's) DeShone Kizer, bringing in (Clemson's) DeShaun Watson, Pat Mahomes, (Miami's) Brad Kaaya – getting the top quarterbacks all in that meeting room so you can learn more about them.”

5. What is your bold prediction?

Miller had an interesting choice for what will leave experts talking as they leave Indianapolis.

“I think the speed of the cornerbacks this year. I've spent the last few days evaluating this cornerback class, and it is ridiculous. This is a tremendous corner class. I will say, when it's all said and done, there could be seven, maybe eight of them that go in Round 1 just because of how incredibly talented this class is.”

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***Further proof that 49ers, Shanahan won't draft a QB at No. 2***

By Jon Wilner, San Jose Mercury News

Kyle Shanahan won't select a quarterback with the No. 2 pick, according to the man at the center of one of the most controversial draft choices in NFL history.

Charley Casserly believes Shanahan, the 49ers' rookie coach, will wait until later in the draft to grab a quarterback. (And, as the rumor mills have told us, he may have already added a long-term answer or stopgap via trade by then anyway.)

Why? Because of Shanahan's role in the Houston Texans' decision to pass on USC running back Reggie Bush with the No. 1 pick in 2006.

The franchise instead selected defensive end Mario Williams, which proved the correct move: Williams became a four-time All-Pro, while Bush has been a mediocre player for five teams.

At the time, however, Bush was coming off an epic college career at USC and viewed as a franchise-changing talent. There was immense public pressure in Houston to pick the Heisman Trophy winner.

Casserly, the Texans' general manager, asked each member of the coaching staff for input, including a 26-year-old rookie assistant in charge of wide receivers.

“I went around the room and asked all of them who they thought we should draft, and I started with Kyle because he was the youngest,” Casserly, an analyst for the NFL Network, recalled Wednesday.

“Kyle said we should take Mario Williams, because he was the best player for the franchise.

“Think about that. He was an offensive coach, we needed a running back, and he said we should take the defensive player ... That's why I always thought he would be a head coach, because he can see the big picture.

“Eleven years later, it will be the same thing. There's not a (quarterback) worth taking” with the No. 2 pick. “Maybe they'll get lucky with one later in the draft.”

Casserly recently produced a mock draft for NFL.com. His pick for the 49ers: Alabama defensive end Jonathan Allen.

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***49ers could use help at tight end, but other positions more important***

By Nick Wagoner, ESPN.com

SANTA CLARA, Calif. -- The free-agent market is scheduled to open March 9 and teams may begin negotiations with those poised to hit the market beginning March 7. We'll count down to that with a position-by-position look at what the San Francisco 49ers have in place, who is set to hit the market, what the team needs and who might fit the bill.

Position: Tight End

Under contract: Vance McDonald, Garrett Celek, Blake Bell, Je'Ron Hamm

Pending free agents: Jim Dray

What's needed: Had the 49ers not struck an agreement on a new deal with McDonald near the end of last season, this would undoubtedly be near the top of their list of needs. But they did manage to keep McDonald, an important move on the heels of his best NFL season. Although he missed five games because of injury, he had 391 yards and four touchdowns while averaging 16.29 yards per catch. Had he played all 16 games, those numbers would have been more impressive, but it was at least a step in the right direction.

Behind McDonald, the Niners have a solid if unspectacular backup in Celek, who had 350 yards and three touchdowns while offering solid blocking on the edge. Bell and Hamm didn't provide much in the offense, combining for six catches for 98 yards. Hamm did offer some value on special teams, though, which could earn him another look.

By no means are the 49ers set at this position, and if they were able to land another solid target in the receiving game, it would be more than welcome. In looking at the market, New England's Martellus Bennett is clearly the best option available. He can do a little bit of everything, and he'd instantly be the best target the Niners have, regardless of position. But Bennett figures to command big money on the open market, and the Niners might be more inclined to spend that money elsewhere, especially since Bennett is 30 and unlikely to be in his prime by the time the Niners could be competitive again.

A more likely possibility is that coach Kyle Shanahan would want to reunite with Jacob Tamme. Tamme was solid for Shanahan in Atlanta, and though he's 32, he could be quite helpful in a leadership role, helping his teammates learn the ins and outs of Shanahan's offense. The Niners could also look to the draft for help and begin developing options in what is considered to be a strong draft for the position.

Possible fits: Martellus Bennett (New England), Jacob Tamme (Atlanta), Levine Toilolo (Atlanta), Luke Willson (Seattle), Mychal Rivera (Oakland).

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### ***John Lynch doesn't think the 49ers are as bad as their record says they are***

By Curtis Crabtree, ProFootballTalk.com

The San Francisco 49ers crashed and burned to a 2-14 record last season that led to the firings of Chip Kelly and Trent Baalke as part of a complete shakeup of the team's front office.

However, new general manager John Lynch doesn't believe the 49ers are nearly as bad as that record suggests. In an interview with Bob Fitzgerald and Rob Brooks on 49ers flagship station 1080 KNBR, Lynch said there are certainly areas of the team to improve but he doesn't see a 2-14 roster either.

"We've got some strides to make on this roster, but I can also tell you (that) I don't look up at the film we've been watching and see a 2-14 team," Lynch said, via Matt Barrows of the Sacramento Bee. "I see some pieces that are hard to build, you know? A great example of that, I think, you look at our offensive line and our defensive line. I'm actually excited about those groups. And those groups are where, I believe, football games are won and lost. It starts there."

Offensively, the 49ers were 27th in points scored and 31st in total yards. The Los Angeles Rams were the only team less capable of moving the football. They were even worse defensively, ranking dead last in yards, rushing yards and points per game allowed. Of course that team will not be the same team taking the field for the 49ers in September. The roster could look significantly different between now and then.

As Bill Parcells said once upon a time "you are what your record says you are." Lynch inherited a mess even if he isn't saying so publicly.

"Do we have some places — probably the ultimate position, quarterback — where we need to improve? Absolutely," Lynch said. "And we're committed to doing that. But there's some pieces there that have me excited, have Kyle (Shanahan) excited. So there's a long list of things, but we're working hard at all of them."

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***GM John Lynch on 49ers: We're better than a 2-14 team***

By Kevin Patra, NFL.com

The San Francisco 49ers owned one of the worst rosters in the NFL en route to a 2-14 season, in which they beat only the Los Angeles Rams twice.

New general manager John Lynch doesn't see a team that is as bad as that record might indicate.

"We've got some strides to make on this roster, but I can also tell you (that) I don't look up at the film we've been watching and see a 2-14 team," Lynch said on KNBR-AM in San Francisco on Wednesday, via the Sacramento Bee. "I see some pieces that are hard to build, you know? A great example of that, I think, you look at our offensive line and our defensive line. I'm actually excited about those groups. And those groups are where, I believe, football games are won and lost. It starts there."

It's no surprise Lynch is attempting to spin positive. There certainly are some good players on the 49ers' offensive and defensive lines. Joe Staley, Arik Armstead and DeForest Buckner immediately jump to mind.

Those groups also had plenty of bad. The 49ers' O-line gave up 47 sacks last season, third-most in the NFL and became a turnstile once injuries mounted. The Niners' defensive front allowed an NFL-worst 165.9 rushing yards per game -- more than 20 yards a game worse than the woeful Cleveland Browns.

Taking over a 49ers team stripped of talent after years of bad drafts and early retirements, Lynch knows he's sometimes putting lipstick on a pig when he attempts to spin positive.

"Do we have some places -- probably the ultimate position, quarterback -- where we need to improve? Absolutely," he said. "And we're committed to doing that. But there's some pieces there that have me excited, have [coach] Kyle [Shanahan] excited. So there's a long list of things, but we're working hard at all of them."

Lynch might not see 2-14 bad, but most watching the 49ers last season would disagree. San Francisco was one of the least entertaining, most talent-poor operations in the NFL in 2016. Its games were maddeningly dull on balance. Without a QB solution on the horizon and many other holes on the roster, San Francisco could be right back in the cellar again next season. The big rebuild is the reason Lynch and Shanahan got six-year contracts. They all know this isn't a quick fix.

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***Zierlein mock draft 2.0: 49ers, Bills address QB issues***

By Lance Zierlein, NFL.com

RANK 2

49ERS

Mitch Trubisky - QB, North Carolina: While he has only one season of high-end production, the tape shows a player with an NFL arm, throwing anticipation and poise. Trubisky might have the toughness to learn on the go as an early starter.