



CINCINNATI BENGALS

APRIL 25, 2024

NFL DRAFT — ROUND 1

ZAC TAYLOR
Head coach
and
DAN PITCHER
Offensive Coordinator

Initial comments ...

Taylor: "Amarius Mims — fired up! Go for it ..."

What stands out about Amarius?

Taylor: "The potential that this guy's got is really — we're excited he was there at (pick number) 18. We think we're a great fit for him with acquiring Trent (Brown) and having Orlando (Brown), two veterans that can help with his processing along as he comes into the NFL. We're just really excited that he was there at 18 and that we get to have him in the mix."

How do you guys measure the traits that he has and what you guys are hoping you can develop into with that only eight starts versus a couple of the other guys who might have had more starts?

Taylor: "His traits are immeasurable if you've ever seen him walk through a door. Again, there's a lot there to work with that we're really excited about. We've had a lot of exposures to him face-to-face. We got a chance to interact with him in a lot of different ways and felt really good about his fit with us in the O-line room, with our team, what his future could bring for him — we think it's the right fit for us."

Pitcher: "I think the only thing I would add there is I think we're all the opinion that the only reason he's here for us to pick at 18 is probably because of the fact that he only has eight starts. Had he played this whole season the way he played in the tape we saw, there's a very low chance that we're even having an opportunity to pick him."

Obviously coming from Georgia and processing that he's gone up against our best defensive players every day in practice, was that something that was intriguing to you guys?

Taylor: "It was. You know, you talk to our scouts that go to that school and that's one thing they bring up. They witnessed that firsthand: The way they practice, everything that goes into them winning multiple national championships and always competing for titles. The guy's a football player and he knows what to expect when he gets to the NFL."

You mentioned mentorship a little bit. Is it helpful that he looks just like the other two guys in front of him (Orlando Brown Jr. and Trent Brown) in terms of learning how to play with that size in this league?

Taylor: "Absolutely. It's those guys that have similar measurables and have gone through a lot of seasons, won Super Bowls — the both of them. It's coincidence — we didn't set out to do this, but the way it's played out, it makes us look brilliant. But yeah, that is a good thing to have."

Personality-wise and you always have a lot of high character guys. What did you like about Amarius Mims?

Taylor: "We really enjoyed being around him. He was about the right things and things we want to be about. You could tell his love of football was genuine and pure. That's the feedback we've always gotten. So we really enjoyed our interaction, especially with him here in town."

You mentioned the lack of experience, but how much you value those two starts he had in the college football playoff?

Taylor: "Those are absolutely things we went back and watched and studied, the previous year's tape, because that's really where he got his first introduction to college football against really good opponents and good matchups for him. Again, I just think that what we've done at the tackle position allows us to take Amarius and get him ready to play, and so I'm excited about the addition there."

Is there a play that maybe jumped out when you were going through the tape that you really caught your eye?

Taylor: "There's a lot. I can't give you one example specifically, but we just liked the consistency of his tape."

Strictly pass-blocking wise, what stood out? Obviously, there's not a ton of starts there, but because you're going to throw the ball a ton ...

Pitcher: "I think the same reason we talked about why we like Trent (Brown) and Orlando (Brown Jr.) is the length. He has length and he plays with tremendous length. He's 340 (pounds) but he doesn't look like he's 340. He moves a lot better than what you'd expect a player of that weight to move (like). He stays in really good position. He's seemingly unaffected by speed and bull (rushes). He plays under control. He's comfortable. It's all the things that you want to see out of a guy that size to project to being a high end pass protector in the NFL."

How rare is that 340 but doesn't look 340 and he moves like that?

Taylor: "It's rare. We see him — he looks like he could add weight. I don't know how. He's a rare-sized athlete and we're fortunate to get him."

Can you tell us about process and when he rose up your draft board grade-wise and when did you really look at him as 'Hey, this guy is available here, we should take him'?

Pitcher: "We underwent an extensive process. We had a lot of these guys in the building. We made it a point that we wanted to get to know all of these high-end tackles. I think probably after meeting him here and just getting to interact with him and really understand what he was about — that's the biggest piece of this puzzle, right? It's so hard to predict this kind of success these guys are going to have. You have to feel really comfortable with the person and I think we felt that way when he left this building. We watched all the tape there was to watch. You combined those two things and we felt really good about the pick."

Do you draft a guy like this with the idea of him being a big part of your future and possibly the right tackle of your future?

Pitcher: "Sure. Any player that you're going to acquire with this type of draft asset has got to be a big part of your future. We believe he can be that and he will be that, and we're going to do everything in our power to put him in position to be exactly that."

Do you think he could kick inside and play guard if needed while he's being developed?

Taylor: "I won't get into all that right now with him, but we're excited about the traits that he's exhibited, and get him here and work with him."

What was going through your mind when six quarterbacks came off the board in the first 12 picks. Did that impact or affect the way you were feeling about your chances of getting Amarius?

Taylor: "Absolutely. Joy was the word that was going through my mind that I felt at the moment. I think any time when you're picking anywhere in the first round and quarterbacks are going and you don't need a quarterback, that's a very positive thing. We were obviously excited about that. And that's rare, six of them to go."

Is he just a right tackle or will he work at all at left tackle?

Taylor: "Absolutely in terms of, he's going to have to work both. That's just the way our young tackles come in here. Again, his primary experience has been playing right tackle. But just the way that these guys come in, we've got Trent (Brown) and Orlando (Brown) right now, which is perfect for our situation. So, he gets a chance to work both sides."

What kind of impact would it have long-term on the offense to have really solid tackles who can play at a high level and given what you all want to do. What does that open up for you and for Joe (Burrow) in the way the offense runs?

Taylor: "It's just great to have. Any time you've got a quarterback you want to protect and you can acquire the type of lineman that we've been able to add into our building with the free agent additions of Ted (Karras) and (Alex) Cappa, and drafting Cordell (Volson), and in free agency getting Orlando (Brown Jr.) and Trent (Brown), and now drafting another one. We feel really good about how we've built that line up and able to protect Joe and run the football, and do all the things that allow us to be a successful offense."

You use the term rare to describe his physique. How rare?

Taylor: "Just wait until he sits up here and answers questions tomorrow. I say that's rare because I've seen Trent (Brown) and Orlando (Brown Jr.) stretching in the weight room, so it feels a little more normal now. But you meet with a lot of these guys — 30 of them to be exact, that walk in my office, and they all walk out the same door. You find yourself staring at him as he walks out the door. He's impressive. He carries it well. He's got a great personality about him. I think you all are going to really enjoy talking to him, getting to know him. And again, we think he's got a lot of potential."

Is there a difference between raw and inexperienced and if so, which side does he lean toward?

Taylor: "I think he leans toward inexperience. I think they do a good job developing offensive lineman there at Georgia. They've got a really good track record of putting guys in the NFL — guys that can come in and play. He's gotten the experience in practice, even when he wasn't starting, (he was) playing against all these top draft picks, as good of a competition as there is out there. It's just an inexperience level, actually in games. But again, that's why we feel comfortable with how we're built with the two tackles we have, that we're the right team to take him on."

Did the six quarterbacks selected force you to reconsider anything before choosing Mims because there's so many great defensive players left on the board that maybe otherwise wouldn't been there?

Taylor: "No, because Duke (Tobin) and everyone involved do really good job organizing the board. Again, we're not shuffling it at the last second. Shockingly, we didn't have the quarterbacks in our top group to take if they were there, so it was leaving names up there that we really liked, like Amarius (Mims) That was a positive for us."

Is it hard to grade a player with just eight career starts?

Pitcher: "The bigger exposure, obviously there's more to see. But with Amarius (Mims), we just kept coming back to, it's maybe not as many snaps, but the snaps that were there, you saw a lot of the things that you want to see. You didn't come away from those snaps being like, 'Man, he left these two or three boxes unchecked.' So in general, to answer your question, yeah — more is better to be able to look at. But for him specifically, we saw enough in that sample size that we feel really good about the pick."

AMARIUS MIMS

Offensive tackle; Georgia

Take me through your visit here to Cincinnati and if you had any indication that you thought this could be the place for you ...

"I just remember just sitting at the office with Coach (Zac) Taylor and he was like, 'We want O-lineman that are winners.' That's all I remember him saying. And he was just like, 'Dude, if we're lucky to get you, we're going to come get you.' I'm just glad they came to get me."

You're obviously built uniquely. Are you aware of the fact that there's two other guys at tackle that kind of are built as uniquely as you?

"I'm definitely aware of it. I'm just glad to be part of the O-line. Just glad."

The first start you made in college was in the College Football Playoff against Ohio State. How much did your performance there give you confidence moving forward?

"Honestly, it was just more of the fact that if I could do good, especially against the level of competition Ohio State had, I just knew that game could boost my confidence and boost my game honestly. Every single day, I just try to put my best foot forward, just keep attacking in each game after that."

What does it mean to you that you come into a team that has a pair of offensive tackles that have won the Super Bowl that are built just like you and play the game the way that I'm sure you'd like to play it and you can learn from these kinds of guys? Do you look at it as a unique opportunity?

"100 percent. I can get behind those guys and learn from Trent (Brown) and Orlando (Brown Jr.) as much as possible. It was just wild watching both of those guys in college and now in the league and getting to be in the same room with them is just a blessing."

What's it like being on a team that has a guy like Joe Burrow and throws it a ton where the offensive tackles are required to be really good on a consistent basis? What's it like getting to be part of that offense?

"It's just wild because just watching Joe Burrow at LSU I was like, 'Oh my god. I would love to block for him one day,' and now that I have the chance to, it's a blessing. I just look forward to getting in and talking to him. It's almost like a little kid, getting to be around somebody you look up to at quarterback and say, 'You're one of those guys in college for me who I'd love to play with and block for.'"

Why have you been so natural in pass protection and picked it up so quickly?

"Just from my coaches, all the way from high school to college. I have to thank them for that. I got that from high school with my offensive line coach, Ryan McKenzie, in college with all of my O-line coaches. From Coach Eddie Gordon, Coach Matt Luke and Coach Stacy Searels, I have to thank them. Those were the guys that put the time in with me and helped me get to where I needed to be."

Did you begin today thinking this was one of the most likely possibilities for you?

"I just had an open mindset going in there. I didn't have any possibilities but I thought I had a pretty good visit with the Bengals. I'm just blessed to be in the situation I am in."

Why do you think you had a good visit?

"I just felt the energy. I felt like it was overall a good visit."

The Bengals picked you over some other tackles that had more starts and experience at the college level. Why do you feel like even though you have a limited number of starts, you were worth them taking at pick 18?

"I have no control over that. I'm just glad they decided to pick me. I'm just blessed, man."

Where was the draft party tonight? Who was there? What was the immediate reaction?

"It was in Atlanta. All of my family, my past teammates, past coaches and friends were here today. All I can do is cry. As a kid, I

dreamed of being in this situation. There's a lot of people in the draft, and for me to be picked at 18 is wild."

Zac Taylor just spoke to the media and described your athletic ability as rare. How much of your game is not just relying on your physical size and strength but technique, and how do you think that's going to grow in the NFL?

"It's definitely going to grow. Everybody's game is going to grow a lot. But like I said, I'm just very fortunate to come around a great coaching staff who can keep developing me and mold me into a player that's better than now."

Where do you think you have to grow the most?

"I really don't know exactly but like I said, that's something me and coach will talk about. I'm open to all options. My game is not perfect, but I'm going to get with a great group of coaches and we're going to work together and we're going to figure that out."

You have some incredible measurables. What do you think are the most significant measurables that make you the player you are? What's the biggest measurable that gives you an edge?

"I feel like just athleticism and being very versatile. I don't mind playing either side, any position, wherever they need me. Just the athletic part. There's a lot of big guys that can't move, and I feel like that's something in my game that gives me a step up and an advantage."

What are your impressions of offensive line coach Frank Pollack in your meetings with him?

"It was great. I definitely enjoyed him. We got on the board, we went to lunch, it was a great meeting. I'm glad to be in the room with him. Overall, just happy, man."

Have you put the ankle injury behind you?

"Oh, 100 percent. That's been behind me."