



CINCINNATI BENGALS

APRIL 27, 2023

NFL DRAFT — ROUND 1

ZAC TAYLOR
Head coach
and
LOU ANARUMO
Defensive Coordinator

Initial comments ...

Taylor: "We took Myles Murphy, (a) defensive end from Clemson. We're excited about it. He's a guy I'm sure everybody says (about their first round pick), "he was a first rounder and we had a high grade on him, and we're excited to get him," but we truly mean that. You can never have enough defensive linemen. We feel like we got a really good one that's going to add to the mix for us, really help complement the guys that we have and really make that a strong as a room as possible. So we're really excited to get Myles in here."

What specifically about him do you like from a defensive line standpoint?

Anarumo: "(We) get a guy that brings position flex — he's played both outside and inside (and) can rush from different spots. (With) the teams we have to play and when we have to play them, the more rushers we have on the field at one time, the better we'll be. He's the guy who will fit right in with that in that moment."

How do you see getting him on the field this year?

Anarumo: "Oh, he'll be in a rotation right away. We play a ton of D-linemen, so he'll jump right in there and back up Sam (Hubbard) and Trey (Hendrickson) and, like I said, be in the mix with those guys. (He'll) be in the third hour rush package and whatever (else) we come up with there. I'm looking forward to get him going right away."

How did his pre-draft process kind of impact you guys? He was hurt and had to delay his pro day — how did that impact you?

Taylor: "We feel good about the tape that we had seen. He came in here on a visit, so we've met with him a couple times (and) felt really good about all the things that come with that. So again, (we're) just excited that he was there at 28 for us."

Did that make you more worried after he tested well that he might not be there at 28?

Taylor: "Oh, yeah — this wasn't a scenario we thought was going to play out for us, to be quite honest with you. Anything can happen, but in all of our discussions we had over the previous days, I didn't that Myles Murphy was going to be there at (pick) 28."

Zac, you've been big on intangibles, guys that love to ball. Is that how you would describe Myles Murphy?

Taylor: "Yeah. The guys that we've had come out of Clemson all fit that description. They do a good job with the program down there first of all — finding the right guys to fit them and what they embody, with all the championships they've played for. Those guys have really fit in well with us as well, and so I think Myles is going to fit in with us perfectly."

How much did defensive line coach Marion Hobby's familiarity with that program and with that room play into your evaluation of Murphy?

Taylor: "It doesn't hurt. He's obviously well connected there, and he's pretty jacked up about this (pick), too."

With all the good quarterbacks in the AFC, how important is it to have some more star talent, especially in first round with that pick?

Taylor: "I'll start and then I'll let Lou finish it. Just being an offensive play caller — wearing that hat for a second — the first thing you're looking at (on the opposing team's) depth chart typically is what their rush looks like. Anytime you see a lot of depth there and they can keep putting (pass rushers) on the field to effect the passer, that's the first thing you have to have a protection plan for, then you build on from there. So you can never have enough those guys that can play downs for you."

Anarumo: "Just to build on that, for generating a rush with just four (defensive linemen), that allows us to cover with more (DBs) obviously. So this guy is just going to be able to do a bunch of different things. We like guys like that we can fit in to different packages and different schemes. With his athleticism, we'll be able to use them in a bunch of different ways. We like that."

For two straight years, you've drafted a guy where you had a starter at that position in utilizing a take the best player available strategy. A lot of teams say that, but what makes it so important you guys got to really act on it?

Taylor: "You're getting guys that come in right away and help your team win. We're built for the short term and long term obviously, and anytime you can add D-linemen to the room that can come in and play, that's a good thing. We think this guy in the short term really helps us as well. It's always good to add to the rush, and we've got a lot of young guys there behind Sam and Trey, but you can never have too many of them. (We) let those guys come in and compete for reps and time. And with Joseph (Ossai) and Cam (Sample) and all those guys, it's a really exciting room for us right now, adding him into the mix."

Murphy is just 21 years old and was productive for multiple seasons at Clemson ...

Taylor: "There's still room to grow. I was a redshirt freshman in junior college when I was 21. I was the only guy in the dorms that could go to certain stores. To imagine a guy coming out, you know to go to the NFL at that age. I'm sure there's still room to grow there, which is a great thing. But like you said, he's played three effective years there at Clemson (and) done a great job for them academically and on the field. He seems very mature from our experiences with him. He'll fit right in. But again, he's still 21 years old and there's still some development to be had, and that's exciting"

Did you ever consider making any trades up or down before you made your selection?

Taylor: "There are always phone calls (in the room). You never know if it's just friends talking or what's going on, so I'll leave that to (Bengals Director of Scouting) Duke (Tobin to discuss)."

You took about a minute to make the selection. At what point in the first round do you say, 'This is our guy. We covet this guy. If this guy's here, we're going to jump all over this?'

Taylor: "I think that's what Duke does a great job of — laying it out and talking about it five picks before, four picks — I think it (may have been) eight picks before (in this case) when we really started the conversation. You're watching guys get checked off the board and sometimes it's a good thing, sometimes it's a bad thing. But we had a high degree of confidence that if he was there, we're going to take him and feel really good about it."

What was your reaction when Jacksonville moved back a couple of times? Were you were you paying attention at that point?

Taylor: "Yeah, I mean, they just kept doing that. You never know what's going on ... We had good players on the board for us, the No. 1 player being the one that we got. We felt good about being there at 28 and staying put."

You mentioned meeting with him a couple of times — what stood out in those meetings when you got a chance to sit down with him one on one?

Anarumo: "He's just a bright-eyed guy that loves football and comes across very mature for a young guy. We liked that. When it comes to crunch time, those players like that, (they) will be able to stand up and rise up in those biggest moments and big games and playoff games and things like that. His maturity stood out for sure to me right away."

At what point in the process did you zero in on Myles Murphy?

Anarumo: "We watched a ton of guys, and you rank them and put a little star next to somebody you maybe like a little bit more. We got a chance to look at him early. (Marion) Hobby identified him and the scouts obviously before that. Early on we liked him, and kind of stayed on him throughout the process. It worked out for us tonight."

Is there anything in particular about his performance that stood out as star-worthy?

Anarumo: "I just think how consistent he was, to be honest. You saw him through big games, whether it was maybe against a lesser opponent in college and he still came out and played with great effort and energy and was productive against the best teams that he played as well as maybe a lesser opponent, as I mentioned. You like to see that in guys, and he displayed that."

What makes defensive end such a premium position?

Anarumo: "You're going to apply pressure to the quarterback, and these great quarterbacks we have to play, if they're back there in a clean pocket, they're going to pick you apart no matter how well you're covering it. To move them around, get them off their spot, to sack and pressure them and hit them, that's the only way you really can affect these guys. He's just another one along the lines. We've got some darn good ones already, as I mentioned, with Trey (Hendrickson), Sam (Hubbard), Joseph (Ossai) and that group. This guy will jump right in there."

Myles Murphy is joining a high character group in the locker room. Is he adding to that?

Anarumo: "For sure. We certainly feel like we've done a great job of collecting the right type of guys. They have to be good players but also great men. He fits that mold perfectly."

What makes defensive end more useful than tight end?

Taylor: "That conversation didn't come from us. We felt good about taking another defensive end if he was there. There were

several positions open for us to take, and we feel like we have a really good roster and there's a lot of good players that can come in and play roles for us at a number of different positions — defensive end being one of them. We were fortunate he was there for us."

Did you identify improving the rush as the biggest offseason need?

Anarumo: "Anytime you're not high numbers-wise — we look at the collective outcome to it. You want to improve those numbers for sure, but as long as we continue to affect the quarterback and the quarterback rating, is something we do really well over the last couple years. If you're getting more sacks, that going to present bigger opportunities for us on defense to create field position swings. We want to get better there and he can affect that."

You can never have enough solid rushers, right?

Anarumo: "For sure, 100 percent. It's something that every team tries to do, and we're no different."

Does the style of today's quarterbacks impact the traits of defensive ends you look for?

Anarumo: "Guys like Patrick Mahomes, Justin Herbert, all the great quarterbacks we have to play, they're mobile guys. There's really very few that are just going to stand there. The more athletic you are, the faster you are, you can get them off their spot and now you're chasing them. The faster and more athletic you are, the better you're going to be at tracking them down. I think it just adds to the more speed that you have, the better you will be."

Did you look at this as an area to add a rookie contract at a premium position?

Taylor: "I don't know if that's the reasoning for it. We just felt like we had a great player there at a position that really impacts the other team's quarterback. That's really what drives the process there. We have a lot of great players on this team, and we want to add quality players that help us win championships right now."

MYLES MURPHY

Defensive end; Clemson

What was your reaction to being taken 28th overall by the Bengals?

"I'm just blessed, man. I just want to play football — that's really my initial reaction. I just want to play football and am blessed to be taken wherever. Wherever I'm taken, at whatever number, I just want to play football — that's all I want to do right now."

These visits kind of run all together, but when you left your visit with the Bengals did you have a good feeling you might be in play for them?

"I had a good feeling that they liked me. When I was there, I really loved the city, loved the coaches. I already knew the defensive line coach there, so I felt comfortable the whole time I was there."

What do you know about the Bengals edge rushers?

"Man, they go and get after it. That's what I love. Having (Trey) Hendrickson there, really just watching him rush the edge, he's just a menace on the edge. They let him do what he wants to do and have the freedom to get to the quarterback — I love that about them."

What do you do best?

"Really just getting after the quarterback, playing with energy, making the plays that people don't think I'm going to make. Even when I'm all the way off the screen, just making those plays, running them down the field, sideline to sideline, going to get to the quarterback, going to stop the run, and be an all-around dominant player."

Is there anybody in the league that you emulate?

"Oh yeah, Myles Garrett."

Why is that?

"Similar body types, similar playing style, rushing style. I just mimic all of my game after him."

Who was in the room, and describe the reaction in the room after getting picked ...

"I will say we did rent out an entire club, so we have about 175 to 180 people in here, so the reaction was very wild and loud."

With 170 people there, getting late in the first round, were you getting concerned that you might not go tonight?

"Yeah, those concerns were coming up, but I had to stay calm. I had the right people around me to calm me down, keep the faith really."

What is it like joining an organization like the Bengals considering where they've been the last couple years?

"It means a lot. Coming from a winning organization and joining a winning organization that knows how to win, that knows the mentality that what it takes to win — that's important. It's great to join an organization like that."

Along those lines, what's it like joining a team that was so close to winning a Super Bowl?

"They have all the pieces to be a consistent Super Bowl contender, AFC Championship contender. I just want to be that finishing piece, that piece that pushes them over and past that ledge of being a consistent Super Bowl contender to being a Super Bowl winner every year."

What do you think about coming to Myles Garrett's division?

"Regardless of what division I've got to go in, I've just got to go in there and get after the quarterback. In and out."

Did you stay close with Tee Higgins and Jackson Carman at all?

"I wasn't able to play with Tee Higgins. I played my freshman year with Jackson Carman. We'd text every once in a while, but it's great news I'm going to reunite with Jackson and build a relationship with Tee Higgins. It'll be good."

Have you talked to them what it's like being on the Bengals? Have they told you what it's like playing in Cincinnati?

"I talked to Jackson when he got drafted about what it was like through that rookie transition — what he did to make things easier, a little bit smoother. Things along that line."

Defensive Coordinator Lou Anarumo said in his press conference that he expects you to come in and contribute right away. What gives you the confidence and what in your career at Clemson leads you to believe you'll be able to contribute right away in your rookie year?

"That's been my expectation for the longest. Ever since high school, I've had a mission to come in and start, dominate every year that I was in college, and I still have the mission to come in and dominate every down. That's always been my mission, that's going to be my mission moving forward."

I imagine you've dreamed of this moment for a long time. Can you describe the phone call?

"I can't even explain it. There were a whole bunch of emotions going through my body. I was literally shaking on the phone call — I couldn't get too many words out. Really just excited, I'm just ready to play football."

Has Nick Eason, former coach with the Bengals, shown you anything from the Bengals during his experience coaching you?

"We would always watch tape of the Bengals from when he was coaching there. But as far as his experience with the Bengals, he didn't talk much about it, but he said he enjoyed it there."

Who was the best tackle you played against in your collegiate career?

"Joe Alt was a pretty good tackle I went against last season against Notre Dame."