



CINCINNATI BENGALS

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NFL DRAFT — ROUND 4

DAN PITCHER

Offensive coordinator

What stands out Erick All on tape?

"Very well-rounded skill set. Size, athleticism, contributor in both the pass game and the run game. He's physical. We think he can be really an all-around tight end that can help us in all phases."

How big of a question mark is his health given the past injuries?

"He (has had) a couple of unfortunate deals for him. We're very comfortable with where he's at in his recovery and how he's attacking that. We think he'll be able to contribute for us and we feel good about that."

Iowa is a bit of a tight end factory in terms of the talent it produces for the NFL level. Was that a factor in considering him here?

"He was a captain in Michigan before he even gets there, which is a big deal. He goes to Iowa and he's having a hell of a season. And again, we've referenced obviously, (he) suffers an unfortunate injury, but they know how to coach that position. It's very clear based on the guys they are producing in this league and we think that he fits that mold."

Has the tight end position in the NFL recently in terms of pass catching changed the way you guys have evaluated that position?

"I don't know that it's changed it. I think you're always evaluating it within the context of what you expect that person to do in your offense and who's already in your building. With a guy like Erick, I think he's attractive regardless of what your offensive attack is. He'll provide you some versatility that way. Certainly, we want guys that can run and catch. That is a major way for that position to impact the game and he falls in that."

How does he complement Mike Gesicki, Drew Sample and Tanner Hudson in your tight end room?

"I think he really fits there because as I mentioned before, he can be the F in 12 (personnel). He can be the single tight end on the field in 11 (personnel). He's got experience in wing sets, in multiple tight end sets, where he's done a lot of that. So, he's a guy you can play on the move, he can play the point of attack — he truly is versatile."

Was him being a captain at Michigan a big deal? You've now got one on offense and one on defense ...

"Yeah. It's a big deal. That means something to come from a storied program like that and to have been given that honor from the people there — his teammates and his peers. We always are looking to add guys with high football character and he fits that mold."

What does he do well as a pass catcher in particular?

"For a big guy — he's 6-4 and change, 250 (pounds) — he can move and separate and change directions. He's got a big catch radius. He attacks the football aggressively. He's tough to tackle. Really, you throw on his target tape from this year and there's a lot to get excited about. I think he can bring that to us early in his career."

From a health standpoint, do you expect him to play this season or is it too early to tell?

"I think so. I can't sit here and give a timetable as to when he's going to be available to us. I just know that that organizationally, we feel comfortable about where he's at right now and he's going to continue working hard to get back on the field."

When you got the opportunity to spend time with him, was there anything you learned about him in that moment that you didn't know based on reports?

"I think it just confirmed what we felt, which was that we had an intelligent, super competitive guy. That's what you see on tape. To have the experience in the two programs that he's had, you expect that. You see it on tape, and then you meet the guy in person and it confirms all those things. So, we weren't surprised by anything. He just let us know that we were on the right track."

What is important to Joe Burrow with the tight end position? What's maybe different what he expects out of his receivers as

opposed to his tight ends?

"Number one, we need really competitive guys who are trustworthy, who are going to be where we expect them to be on time. That's a given — you have to be able to that to be able to contribute in this offense, and I think Erick is going to do that just fine. And it's a plus when this guy can run down the seam and he can reach and catch, and he's tough to bring to the ground. You add that to the fact that we can use him in the run game like I've referenced, and it's a complete tight end. And that's what he's going to be for us."

With the tight end position, how important is it to assimilate quickly and pick up what you guys are doing quickly?

"I think in all positions, that's important. I think the tight end position may have more on its plate than any other, because of how integral they are in the run and the pass scheme. They have to know it all and they have to be able to function quickly within it all. That's why traditionally those guys are smart, high character guys, because they need to be. He'll need to pick up quickly, but he will."

How much was tight end a position of need?

"We had three prior to this selection. We had three guys under contract that we feel really good about. You need more than that, so it was certainly something we identified as wanting to add to that group, and we're really happy we get a chance to add Erick at this stage."

Do you think you'll play more 12-personnel than you have in the past, or is that something under consideration that you'll play more, because you need to have tight ends that can do a lot of things?

"Yeah, it's helpful. It's good when you can have guys on the field that make you equally as dangerous in the run and the pass game, and we feel like he fits that mold. He'll help us in that phase, but the other guys we already have here in Mike (Gesicki) and Tanner (Hudson) obviously can do a lot too. We're just glad to add to that group."

Bengals tight ends coach James Casey is very big on trying to find guys who can do both. Is this a James Casey guy?

"No doubt. I wish you could see James right now. James is fired up, and we love bringing these guys in, in large part because we know how James is going to coach them. James is an outstanding coach, and he's going to get the most out of Erick, so we're really excited."

It seems like three of the guys — Tanner Hudson, Mike Gesicki, and this kid are pass catchers. Is this kind of evolving into what Joe Burrow's type of tight end is?

"I would characterize this player as an all-around tight end. I'm not discounting his ability to impact the pass game, I'm just making sure we respect the fact that he's a physical guy that is also going to help us in the run game. He's just a really good player and we're happy we got to add him."

How rare is the size, pass catching ability, and ability to block well? I'm sure you guys had a higher grade on him than where he was at with the medical background ...

"Yeah, usually you're living in one of those two worlds, and when you find a guy who lives adequately, or more than adequately in both, then that's a big deal. And he checks that box."

Was he fired up about being drafted by his hometown team?

"Yeah, I think he's really excited to come be a part of this organization. I think it's always helpful when these guys have a ready-made support system around them, but we would've taken Erick All if he was from Hawaii. We didn't take him because of that, but it's certainly nice that he gets to come home and now be a contributor to his hometown franchise."

ERICK ALL**Tight end; Iowa****Congratulations on being selected by your hometown team. How does it feel?**

"It is kind of surreal. I'm at my high school stadium. Everything kind of came back in a circle. I'm excited."

What was it like getting the call from Zac Taylor?

"I was doing a workout so it kind of caught me off guard. When I got the call, I thought 'no way,' and I just couldn't believe it. I had to make sure I wasn't getting prank called for a second. It was crazy."

Who are you working out with?

"My best friends at my old school, Hamilton. We are all working out."

Why were you working out now? Did you think you might go later?

"I had to move around. I was nervous."

How is your knee?

"My knee is great. I'm going to be back and ready for training camp."

Do you think the football injury Gods are going to start being kind to you?

"Hopefully the injuries are out of the way and we can just focus on football."

How hard has it been to deal with the injuries you've dealt with the past few years?

"It's not hard at all. If you love the game it makes it easy for you. The only hard part about it is you're not there with your team and playing and winning. That's the only thing about it."

The coaches praise your versatility. What is the strongest part of your game?

"I'd say just being able to do everything, being versatile is what I think is the strongest part of my game. Just being able to do what the coaches ask me to do and being coachable and doing it how they want it to be done."

Tell us more about your back injury. Do you have any questions about it moving forward?

"My back injury, I had a herniated disc. It started right before spring ball, and I tried to play through that and it kept getting worse and worse. I ended up having to get surgery after our third game of the season. Ever since surgery, I've been good. I had a little lingering pain after with my nerve and everything, but everything is good. My back isn't a concern anymore. My back is completely fine and normal."

Did you grow up a Bengals fan?

"No, I grew up a Cowboys fan."

How different is it being drafted by a team you grew up watching, coming full circle?

"It wasn't like we weren't watching. We'd watch them and cheer for them, but all my family has been Cowboys fans. Watching the Bengals was like rooting for your hometown team. The Bengals are a crazy good team now, and I'm just ready to be a part of it and compete and win a Super Bowl."

Ever come to a game here?

"Yeah, I used to come to games all the time."

Any of the games stand out?

"I haven't been to a game since I was like 12 years old. I can't really remember much of them it has been so long. It was more about being with my family at a football game. That was just fun about it."

What stands out most about your time with the Bengals and meeting with the staff?

"I was home and when I went on the visit, what stood out the most was just meeting with the tight ends coach and going over film, and he was just coaching me up on things. That is what I enjoyed most from the meeting."

You finished at Iowa but played at Michigan. So you know some of the Michigan alum on the Bengals, right?

"Yeah, they were calling me and I also have one of my teammates that I played with at Fairfield. To reunite is pretty cool. I'm enjoying this and being with the family again."

How much are you looking forward to having Joe Burrow as your quarterback?

"It's just crazy hearing that. I don't even know what to think. Just play hard, compete and win. We're going to get a Super Bowl out of this."

What did playing at both programs, Iowa and Michigan, do to prepare you being drafted today?

"I wasn't really a tight end when I got to college. When I got to Michigan I was taught pretty much everything. I was a receiver doing it but it was different doing it as a tight end in different formations. At Iowa, they taught me more tools and different ways to run routes. They added that to my game."

Why did you go to Iowa?

"I fell in love with the program, with how they set their standard there. I went to a bowl game practice and it's a month before the game, and guys are out there flying around, hitting each other, no goofing around. Guys are just locked in. You just felt this contagious love of football that rubbed off on me and I knew right then and there that was the school I wanted to be at."

You were working out when you got the call. What did you do next?

"I was in the other room, so I walked in and my heart was pounding. Everyone was cheering and my mom started hugging me and a few tears came to my eyes. It's just crazy. I didn't really know what to say."

You sounded star-struck when asked about playing with Joe Burrow. Is it hard to believe that guy is about to be a peer?

"It's just crazy. I remember watching the man at LSU just doing his thing. He sets the standard for the quarterbacks in the league. It's going to be crazy catching the ball from him. Being in a room with (Mike) Gesicki, that's another thing that's insane, too."

When you decided to go to Iowa, was it being known for developing tight ends part of the decision-making process?

"Yeah, that was for sure part of it. It really had nothing to do with that. I fell in love with the team, the guys and that's where I wanted to be. Tight ends who love football and love that feeling of being a team like that just end up at Iowa, and they just so happen to be the best of the best of the best. I wasn't really thinking anything like that when I made the decision. It just so happened."