



## CINCINNATI BENGALS

APRIL 26, 2024

NFL DRAFT — ROUND 3a/3b

**ZAC TAYLOR**  
**Head coach**  
**and**  
**LOU ANARUMO**  
**Defensive coordinator**  
**and**  
**DAN PITCHER**  
**Offensive coordinator**

**During this process, what stood out about Jermaine Burton? We saw your reaction after you got the pick in, and clearly you were excited ...**

Taylor: "Yeah, we think he's a great receiver. Both these guys we're about to talk about, we used every exposure we could to get to know them better. Top-60 at the Combine, 30 visit here in our facility — we wanted to get a chance to talk to them face to face, learn more about them, and felt really comfortable with these guys. Specifically about Jermaine, the tape jumps out at you. We love the tape, we got to know the person and we feel really good about the pick."

**There's a background with Jermaine and the incident that happened with the Tennessee field storming. What was your discussion like on that, and how did that get talked down in the room?**

Taylor: "Yeah, it went straight. It was something that we talked about with him just to hear what he had to say about it. Again, we did our research on all these guys that we've talked to and made sure we're aware of every incident they've been a part of. There's certainly maturity things that come with some of these guys coming out of these colleges, and that's one of the things he'll continue to grow with."

**What about the answers he gave you throughout the process made you comfortable with the pick?**

Taylor: "We felt good. We picked him today. We felt good about our interactions with these guys."

**What about McKinnley Jackson stood out and why'd you like him here at this spot?**

Taylor: "He's a guy we've talked a lot about. He fits a good spot for us. Three hundred thirty-pound nose guard — there's not a lot of those in the draft. He's a guy that we had rated highly, and he was sitting right there for us in the third round, so it was the right spot to take him. That was a guy we felt really good about getting in here."

**You were thinking you might get two defensive tackles in this draft, and you get them both tonight. How big of a surprise is that, and how does it change you?**

Anarumo: "You add a big nose (tackle) that we needed. You added the athletic guy in (Kris) Jenkins earlier, so we just really added some depth to that room, which we needed, and feel good about both players. They both have different skill sets, but they fit us very well."

**Is McKinnley Jackson he a pure nose tackle, or is he a guy that can move around?**

Anarumo: "He's played a little bit of everything, but he's really a two-down nose, is kind of what he is. But he has played across the board, but his home is closer to the ball — shade, nose, zero nose — those type of things."

**How does Jermaine Burton fit alongside Ja'Marr Chase and Tee Higgins?**

Pitcher: "He'll fit great. He's explosive. That's really our job now, is how do we mix and match those skill sets, but what he brings to the table with regard to the threat that he's going to pose to the defense, how are they going to have to respect all three of those players and the explosiveness they bring. We'll figure that part out, but he'll take care of the hard part which is separating from defenders and catching the football."

**Can he play inside?**

Pitcher: "Sure, absolutely."

Taylor: "I think really with both these picks, they've allowed a lot of flexibility in those rooms — receiver room, D-tackle room. We've got a lot of guys that can play football. Even outside of the guys that we talk about as starters necessarily, now we've got an opportunity to find roles for a lot of different people and we feel like we've got a lot of talent in both those rooms, which is exciting."

**With the explosion of Jermaine Burton, was it a lot of over-the-top stuff, or is he kind of a catch, break a tackle, and YAC guy?**

Taylor: "All of the above. Well-rounded tape, super competitive, plays with a lot of energy. I didn't have any drops on his tape this year. (He) goes and fights for the ball, shows a lot of different things that he can do outside and inside, finishes plays in the end zone. I really like his competitiveness and his energy, and I'm excited to get him in that receiver room with us."

**It was a deep receiver class. How many receivers put out that type of film that he did?**

Taylor: "We've had a high like for him since the start of this process. We go through a process, especially with these receivers, where we've got a lot of former quarterbacks and receiver guys, so there's as many opinions on these guys as possible, I think in any position we've got. We extensively watch these guys many, many times and came away with a lot of love for his game."

**Jermaine Burton averaged over 18 yards per catch in four years in the SEC. How rare is that?**

Pitcher: "He's a legitimate 'take the top off' deep threat, but that's not all he does. He's a threat over the middle of the field, he separates on abrupt breaking routes, he finishes on the football in difficult situations. He's a complete player."

**Can Jermaine Burton play in the slot?**

Pitcher: "He's played in the slot. He'll have an opportunity to do that for us here. As I mentioned before, we'll mix and match those guys. That's the fun part. We'll create mismatches and he'll be a good player for us."

**How much comfort is there having Ja'Marr Chase and Tee Higgins show Jermaine Burton how to be a pro considering some of the off-the-field questions?**

Taylor: "I think we've got a really good setup for any of these guys coming from college that need a chance to see how a pro handles themselves and what they do, and that's why we built it the way we can. Again, I have high expectations for these guys we just drafted to come in and be a pro immediately, but I've also got so much respect for Troy Walters. I could go through, as I think in my head, every receiver in that room is going to impact guys the right way and affect them in a very positive way. I think that's pretty rare to be able to say that, but I can go from top to bottom. It's turned into one of the deepest receiver rooms in the league with talent and with character, so I'm excited about that group."

**Why was getting a true nose tackle important?**

Taylor: "I don't think you ever go wrong adding to your defensive line. As a head coach, as an offensive play caller that faces these guys every week, and you have to prepare for them, depth at defensive tackle, defensive end is critical. If you don't have it, if all of a sudden you come up short, it doesn't matter what's going on behind it. I think that's the number one thing to take the pressure off the back seven, is to add to your defensive line and we had the opportunity to do that today. It makes me sleep a lot better at night."

**Some years you draft more developmental players. Through these first three rounds, how do you assess their potential to come in and contribute right away?**

Taylor: "They all have the potential to do that. They all have to compete. They're not leapfrogging anybody. Again, I feel really good about the position groups we're adding them to, and the guys in those rooms are going to fight like crazy. We've got guys who are starters in those rooms, and guys who we've drafted and developed that are still going to compete to beat these guys out. I think it's going to be tremendous competition for us. That's the best way to build your team is through competitiveness at the position."

**How do you feel about your depth at cornerback? Will that be a position you'll look to add to tomorrow?**

Anarumo: "We'll look into everything. I feel good about it right now. We've got multiple picks tomorrow, so we'll see how it all shakes out. But I'm excited about what we've done so far, for sure."

**McKinnley Jackson was a two-time captain. Talk about those intangibles that he and Kris Jenkins bring ...**

Anarumo: "Anytime you're getting these guys that come from major universities and their teammates pick them as a leader, it says a lot about them. It's another piece to the puzzle and we're glad that we're able to get both of those guys that are both, as you mentioned, captains."

**Nick Saban seemed excited on the ABC broadcast about the Jermaine Burton pick. Did you talk to him?**

Taylor: "No, I did not talk to Coach Saban. Tommy (Rees) works for Cleveland. I don't think he was going to give me great insight."

**JERMAINE BURTON**

**Wide receiver; Alabama**

**What was the call like when the Bengals picked you?**

"I honestly didn't know how to feel. It's truly a blessed feeling. I thank God and I'm ready to work. They made the right decision."

**When teams were talking to you throughout the pre-draft process, what did you want to prove to them the most?**

"My passion comes from football, and I put in a lot of work. I have a lot of emotion that goes into this game. I express myself a lot through football. I just want to play. I don't care about anything else. Nothing else matters to me."

**T.J. Houshmandzadeh shared after making the pick that he had worked with you. Can you share a little bit about your relationship with T.J. and what you learned from him?**

"It's honestly amazing having T.J. train me the past few years, even going into college. Working with him is honestly great. Just to know his history, his background with the game of football, his knowledge on it and to see the way he thinks. The way he puts it into the drills, the way he talks to you and his terminology, it really helps me. We also developed a relationship to the point where we talked about other things — just life things and a lot of maturity and growth."

**After the pick on the TV, a couple of the analysts said the talent is clearly on tape, but one of the reasons you were still available was some off-the-field maturity issues. What would you like to say to people who might question that after this pick?**

"I'm Jermaine Burton and I just want to play football. I do this for my mom and sister. I have a lot of passion that comes from behind my history and what I've been through. I just want everyone to know that. I just want to play football and want to do this for my family."

**From a football standpoint, the Bengals have a hole with Tyler Boyd no longer here at slot receiver. How comfortable are you inside? Obviously, you played a lot outside as well as a downfield threat ...**

"I'm actually comfortable playing both inside and outside. I'm versatile and can do a lot of great things to help the team. I just can't wait to put my talent first and go head in."

**What are your best routes?**

"I love all routes. I love going deep. I enjoy playing all routes because behind every route, there's a certain knowledge. You don't run the same route the same way each and every time. There's different knowledge of each route, and I enjoy all of it."

**How would you describe your game?**

"Physical, passionate, energetic — just want to win."

**How do you fit in to an offense that has Tee Higgins and Ja'Marr Chase already?**

"Very well. Those guys have great skill sets and unreal talent and ability. I feel like we can all correlate with each other and really do some big things."

**How would you describe Joe Burrow, your new quarterback?**

"Amazing. I have no words. I'm honestly more than blessed to have the opportunity to play with Joe, get to know him and build a relationship with him. As far as any player on the team, I just look forward to building a relationship with anyone and everyone because the more comfortable I am with the team, the more comfortable I get as a player."

**Do you think there's something unique or special about offensive football in the SEC?**

"Yes, 100 percent. The SEC is a very physical conference. You have to have your head on your shoulders and come ready to play every game. It's honestly just a blessing to play with a lot of great talent and against it. There's a lot of attributes of playing in the SEC."

**How do you think you've matured in the last four years?**

"Just overall. I don't think anyone is the same person or same player from the time they walk in as a freshman to their senior year. Maturing in ways as a young man. Getting to know myself more, knowledge on life. Just living life."

**Zac Taylor was noticeably excited on the broadcast after they picked you. What have your interactions been like with him and the team?**

"Amazing. Each and every person I met on the team seemed great. I was excited to meet everyone. It was an honor to meet everyone, especially with him. He's definitely a light in the room and has a real energetic personality. I'm excited to get around him. I can't explain how excited I am right now."

**After those visits, did you think that you would end up in Cincinnati?**

"One hundred percent. Just based off the visit — the visit was amazing. It was honestly one of my best visits I've been on. It was truly amazing. Everyone had a great vibe. I feel like I connected with everybody."

**Can you explain what happened with the Tennessee fan and is that something you've had to explain to scouts when they ask you questions about it?**

“Yes. It was something I had to move past. It was a very emotional, passionate game. A lot was on the line throughout the season, and I moved on from that and learned from situations like that. We played LSU two weeks later and the same thing happened, and I was one of the first guys back in the locker room, so I clearly separated myself and understood what was at stake and didn’t want to take the opportunity for granted.”

**How did working with T.J. Houshmandzadeh come about in the first place?**

“I came out to California to work with JT Daniels back when I was at Georgia. We came out to California and were on the field working, and they had a receiver trainer and it was T.J. From that day forward, we created a relationship and I stayed consistent with him because he was out here in California and I’m often in California. Each and every time I’m out here, I pull up on him every day or every other day and continue to work with him.”

**Are there receivers you study or even try to play like?**

“Yes, I watch a lot of receivers. I like to work out stuff on my own so I can improve areas I want to improve, whether it’s running routes and disciplining routes. But yes, I 100 percent do, especially with zone coverage defenses. I like to see receivers work up to their zones.”

**You worked with T.J., he announced your pick, you’re coming to his former team. Does this all seem like karma or something?**

“That’s honestly kind of crazy if you think about it. I just look at it as a blessed moment. I’m embracing it all in. I can’t wait to continue to work with T.J. Overall, it’s just a blessing. I’m just happy to be here.”

**How well did you get to know Amarius Mims during your time at Georgia? Have you stayed in contact?**

“Yeah, we had a couple visits together. I was at the Chargers with him, and we actually had our Bengals visit together. So, I was around him a little bit more. I wasn’t around him as much at Georgia because he had just came in. But yeah, we connected. Just a lot of joking about the process and how crazy it is that we are in this moment. I’m happy for him, as well.”

**McKINNLEY JACKSON  
Defensive tackle; Texas A&M**

**When you met with the Bengals, what was your biggest takeaway? How did the visit go?**

“It was one of the most genuine (meetings). Just sitting me down, talking to me as a player, as a man and as a person. I felt like, one day, I could be a Bengal.”

**What do you think you did well at Texas A&M? What do you feel you excelled at?**

“Being McKinnley Jackson. Being a great team leader, a great person, a great player — just helping everyone get to where we wanted to go — and being accountable, being a leader on and off the field. Whatever I could — do everything right and try to help everyone at the same time.”

**What’s been the key to your success as a run-stopper?**

“Elijah Robinson, honestly. Every day, ... (I) thank him. He’s one of the reasons I was able to get to where I’m at.”

**How do you think your game will translate to the NFL?**

“At this point, it’s a business. I hope everyone appreciates what I bring to the business.”

**What were your expectations coming into the draft? Did you have a round in mind where you thought you might go?**

“No sir, I didn’t know where I’d get drafted. I just knew I was going to get drafted. I put the work in. What I have right now is what I earned.”

**A lot of guys raved about Terry Price over the years. In your time that you got to work with him before he passed away, what was your biggest takeaway working with him?**

“One of the things he taught me was how to live life — how to love his players, and love his kids. I thank him and Coach Elijah Robinson for building me (up) to where I am today. We didn’t spend as much time together one-on-one, but when we got to spend time with (each) another, he treated me as one of his own. He put me around a bunch of guys and brought us (all) together. Those are going to be my teammates and brothers for life, so I want to thank those guys.”

**How much do you know about the Bengals’ defense and can you think about how you might fit in?**

“I’m glad to be part of it. I play football. It doesn’t matter what it is. I do the dirty work. I want to get into the playbook and help bring us a championship.”

**How aggressive are you with your game?**

“Too damn aggressive. Some people say I do too much. Sometimes you have to tell me to chill out. But I’d rather do too much

than too little.”

**How many people do you have there with you right now?**

“I lost count honestly (laughs). I think half my city might be out here right now.”

**Are you at a venue or a house?**

“I’m at a venue.”