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Chargers General Manager Tom Telesco Draft Availability

Thursday, April 27, 2023 ⚡ Westfield Century City ⚡ Los Angeles, Calif.

On selecting WR Quentin Johnston:

"He's big, strong and fast. That's a good way to start it off as a player. Great work ethic that we love. We know all of these players that are drafted. They're all talented, but once they get in this league, it takes a lot of work to get to where you want to go and keep improving. He has some physical characteristics that we think he can add to our offense in a different role. We're trying to give [QB] Justin [Herbert], our whole offense and [Offensive Coordinator] Kellen Moore a lot of different styles of players to use in different situations. We think he can fit that."

On what Johnston does differently:

"We love his run-after-catch skills. He's a big receiver, but he has really quick feet to change directions — so he can not only try and make somebody miss to make yards but also, he's big and strong to pull through some tackles. I think that's one element to our offense that he can add that would really help us. Skillful receivers on the outside — this is a passing league. The more receivers we can have, the better for our quarterback. We're happy to have him."

On drafting offensive players in the first round the last three years:

"We drafted a tackle two years ago, a guard last year. I said, 'Those aren't the most exciting picks, but they were needed picks.' You're always thinking about your quarterback. You think about your offensive coordinator — our new offensive coordinator that's here. It's not that we're not going to look at the defensive side of the ball. Certainly, as you're building your offense, we're building it around our franchise quarterback."

On the run on receivers coming late in the first round:

"I kind of thought it would be in the back half of the round. That was kind of our prediction, I guess, you could say."

On Johnston's work ethic:

"It went well beyond the combine interview, but when you meet him, his work ethic just really stands out. You can tell he was raised the right way. He was a big recruit out of high school in the state of Texas, which means a lot. He was a three-sport player in high school, which you don't see very often, especially for such a high-level player. Then, he played right away at TCU. We like guys that can come in and have a desire and drive to be great. He has that and he knows that. When you're coming in as a young player, especially him coming into our receiver room — I told him on the phone, 'It's a stacked group as it is right now. You're doing to add to it.' We just love the makeup that he brings, his intangibles as well as his talent."

On Johnston's ability to catch:

"I think his catch rate was about 89 percent in college. If he could get that two or three percent higher, that would be great. Like I said, all of these players coming into the league — from the first pick to the 31st pick today — they all have something as part of their game that they have to work on. That's nothing new. We thought we're going to be just fine.

"That was kind of a common theme with a lot of players in this year's draft. He's got big, strong hands. He can catch it. We've watched him catch it at TCU. We're not overly concerned about it. It's something that he'll probably keep working on, but when you're big, fast and strong, I think you're going to be okay."

On the excitement in the draft room:

"Pretty good. I know our offensive coaches were really, really happy. They were ecstatic. On the opposite side of that, you have the defensive coaches waiting for tomorrow. There was a lot of excitement there, especially from the offensive coaches."

On if there was a consideration to trade down:

"Yeah, I was on the phone with a couple of different teams. Nothing really worked out."

On if he's 'surprised' at the players that are still available going into Day 2:

"You know, I haven't seen. I walked over here and saw [Georgia OLB] Nolan Smith just got taken. I'm not even sure after we picked. I'll kind of reconvene tonight and see where we are."

On how Johnston is different than WR Mike Williams:

"First off, that's not a bad thing if he's like Mike Williams. Mike Williams is a really good player. We drafted him in the first round. With Q [Johnston], he's 6-3, 210 [pounds]. He's explosive, he's fast and he's strong. He'll bring his own element to our offense. I wouldn't compare him to anybody yet, but that would be a pretty good comparison. We're trying to add some more explosive plays to our offense. It's never going to be just one thing that you do. We brought Kellen Moore in. Kellen's offense is going to bring some more explosions with it and then adding this receiver in the draft, who had a ton of explosive plays in college — both on long balls and on short passes that he took the distance. I think he can add there."

On Johnston's speed:

"We certainly look at 40 [yard dash] times. That's important, but we also look at 10 [yard dash] times, acceleration, GPS tracking and explosive jumps, vertical and broad. You kind of add all of that up and see what your eyes see on tape. He can really get behind people."

On if Johnston is an outside receiver as compared to playing in the slot:

"I think, right now, probably outside as a young player. I wouldn't put a ceiling on it right now."

On if it was 'always going to be a receiver' picked by the team:

"You don't go into the draft saying, 'Hey, this is the position that we're going to take.' We've never done that before. We didn't do that today. As we got about six or seven picks away, we kind of saw what our group was with that pick. Do we want to trade out? Do we want to stay and pick? We decided to stay and pick because none of the trades really worked out for us. We kind of took it from there. It wasn't like we went in saying, 'Hey, that's the position that we're going to take.' I will say there were probably more offensive guys in the bottom half of the first round for us than defensive guys. It's just the way that it worked out."

On if Johnston could step into a starting role early:

"I don't know, we'll see. We'll see. He has to earn it, but also there's only so many balls to go around. We'll kind of see how it plays out."

On Johnston's route running:

"It's not bad. Again, all of these guys are going to get better as they go. He has explosive quickness to plant and cut. You kind of pair that with the size and it really stands out. He can run between short, intermediate and deep routes, but he has the ability to put his foot in the ground. His foot quickness is really of a smaller receiver than a guy that's 6-3, 210, which you need to have. We think he has that. He'd have to work on a little bit more at this level, a little bit of savviness to kind of set some people up and break out of it. At the college level, he's so talented that he can either run away from you or just make one cut and separate. He'll start to learn to get a little more savviness to it at this level. That takes years."

On the players available at No. 21:

"It was probably a better offensive group in the first round — at least how we had them — than defense. It's hard to say. There are a lot of people in this process between myself, Brandon and then you have all of the assistant coaches. You have a huge scouting staff. You have directors. Then, we have all of the other information that we have that goes into it — the character, the background, the medical, psychological testing. There's a lot that goes into this, trying to decide what player we think fits us the best. It's not an easy process. The goal is to be right more than we're wrong. My job is taking all of that information from all of those people and all of the testing that we do, and try to figure out, 'Okay, who's the best guy for us at this pick.' That's what we ended up doing with Q."

On Johnston joining the wide receivers room:

"It's going to be tremendous [for his development]. He can watch what [WR Joshua] Josh [Palmer] went through. I think that's a really good comparison, what Josh went through from college to his first year as a pro. To walk in the room with Mike Williams and [WR] Keenan Allen, it can't get much better than that. He's 21-years-old. He's a young player with just three years in college. He isn't one of these kids that played five or six years with the COVID rule. He's still really young. He has a lot of learning to do, especially at that position. To step in and watch guys who have done it and done it at a high level that are really masters of their craft, I think is really going to help them."

On if Johnston can help at returner:

"I wouldn't think so."

On the differences in his game from 2021 to 2022:

"It was a different offense, and then the team. They were loaded. It wasn't a surprise that they beat Michigan. They had a lot of big-time NFL players on that team. It was a little bit different of an offense this year and he was the focal point of it in the passing game. The quarterback did a great job of getting him the ball down the field to him. We'll watch him to continue to develop here."