



TITANS DRAFT TRANSCRIPT

April 27-29, 2023



GENERAL MANAGER RAN CARTHON & HEAD COACH MIKE VRABEL APRIL 28, 2023

PRESS CONFERENCE WITH LOCAL MEDIA CONCLUSION OF ROUNDS 2 & 3

RAN CARTHON: Exciting end to the day, getting the players that we got. I'm excited about adding some more players to our organization that can help us compete and win some football games. That's really all I have to say. Coach?

MIKE VRABEL: Cool day, fun day. Again, continue to enjoy the process. Everybody just working together to try to figure out where we are in this particular point of player acquisition.

I think at every level, there was input from different people, scouting department, coaches, and then ultimately Ran and I making decisions that we felt like helped the football team.

Q. Were either of you, Ran or Mike -- the decision to trade up spots and go after Will Levis and make him your pick in the last year of Ryan's deal, why move up, and is Levis going to be backing up Ryan, or how are you going to play this?

RAN CARTHON: So to explain the move-up, again, is what we talked about Monday, what we talked about yesterday is trusting our board, and he was a player that was highly ranked on our board.

We had the opportunity to do so, so why not do it. It was a chance to improve our football team, and [Will] will start off as our third quarterback, and from there, it's on him.

Q. Mike, can you talk about the efficiency of the passing game in his career. He's not always been the most accurate guy and doesn't always seem to have made the best decisions. How does that translate into the coaching that you need to do and into the efficient play that you're looking for?

MIKE VRABEL: Well, when you look at completion percentage, 65 percent, two years in the SEC, what we felt like was over 30 drops, that probably would have led to closer to 70 percent completion. Every player that we bring in here is going to have a chance to improve and will have to improve.

Again, the decision making, toughness, accuracy are obviously things that we feel are critical with quarterbacks, and we think that the three that we have here are going to be able to do that.

Q. He was made available at 11 and you guys didn't take him or trade up to get him. Was that just a value perspective, or was that someone that you earmarked as your quarterback?

RAN CARTHON: It's a value thing. Again, he's a player that had we wanted to choose him at 11, we most certainly could have. Like we talked about last night, didn't expect for Peter to be there, and he was a guy that we highly coveted, so we were able to make that move. Happy that we were able to move up to get a player like Will.

Again, just playing the board. We were just talking on the way here, playing the board game. We're rolling the dice and playing the board. That's pretty much --

Q. How high was Will at that point on the board?

RAN CARTHON: I mean, had Peter not been there, Will was amongst the conversation. That's really all I can give on that right now.

Q. I think Ran may have misspoke when you said that Ryan would start off as a 3 --

RAN CARTHON: I meant to say Will.

MIKE VRABEL: Ryan will be the starting quarterback on Monday, Malik will be the backup, Will will be the third quarterback, and what I've told them is whatever happens after that will be up to the players. That's what it's always been here. That's what we always want it to be.

RAN CARTHON: Good catch.

Q. Will you keep three quarterbacks through the season?

MIKE VRABEL: Of course. There's a million scenarios that we'll have to work through between me, Ran and the staff and myself and everybody. We just are starting the off-season. We're two weeks into the off-season program. Looking forward to Phase II with the players that come on Monday, and then when we're able to get the rookies in here with rookie mini camp.

Q. You've talked a lot about player development. How much for Tim and Charles now is Will kind of the project and something for them to have a big role in?

MIKE VRABEL: That would never -- whether it's Will or Tyjae or Peter, our coaches, again, it's ad nauseam. We've been here going on six years. They have to be great teachers. They have to be able to develop the players at their position, and then they have to be able to make a connection with them and hopefully inspire them to do their job better. That's what their job is, and they're going to put into each player as much as that player will allow us, and we'll coach them as hard as they'll allow us. We're excited about the three players that we've added as well as the new players that we added in free agency, to be able to get to work with them on Monday.

Q. When you look at this wide receiver group and some of the options available, what's behind not picking a receiver to this point?

MIKE VRABEL: What's behind it? The same thing Ran discussed, it's taking a look at our board and seeing where things are. We know we have needs. We come into each phase of player acquisition with needs. It's certainly something we're going to continue to target.

Again, what the roster looks like today and what it's going to look like at the first part of September is probably a little different.

Q. What can you reasonably expect from a fifth-round receiver given the state of your receiving corps?

MIKE VRABEL: I think there's been players throughout the history of the NFL Draft that have contributed somewhat large success at every round. Whatever you say reasonable, I don't know what the number is. That's not how we want to approach this. We want to take a look at the board, see where things are, try to improve our football team, and I am going to speak for myself, I'm confident that we did that tonight.

Q. This franchise seems to have diminishing feelings about receivers. You traded A.J. Brown, you drafted Dez Fitzpatrick, you played somebody like Cody Hollister last year. Are you dedicated to the passing game with productive players like you've talked about?

MIKE VRABEL: Yeah, of course. We want to be able to throw the ball efficiently, be able to throw the ball down the field, be able to create X plays, and I'm confident that we'll continue to try to work on that, and we'll do it.

Q. Ran, you talked about bringing these QBs in for top-30 visits, getting them in front of you and diving into the person that the quarterback is. What did you see in Will when he came into this building that gives you guys confidence in moving up to grab him?

RAN CARTHON: Will is a diligent worker, extremely smart, extremely bright, puts a lot of time in to be a good quarterback, so you appreciate his ability to pick up concepts and things quickly, and just who he is, he's hard-wired. He's tough. His most recent offensive coordinator, Rich Scangarello, I had experience with in San Francisco so kind of knew how he operated within that system.

Then when we brought him here, our coaches and our scouting staff, we had good interactions with him, so just made it easy for us.

Q. (Inaudible)

RAN CARTHON: It's like Mike said. It's a myriad of things that you can contribute to whatever you feel was a lack of. There were the drops and things like that, so we talked about it, about other players. You don't want to just put it all on one person. You have to understand the full concept of everything that was going on.

Again, Will is here. Our coaches are going to work their asses off to help him improve, and we think that he will improve.

MIKE VRABEL: I think we can obviously be transparent. Kentucky was a much different football team in 2021 than what they were in 2022. If we protect him when he's out there at whatever point, if we don't protect him better than what it was, it's probably going to look the same, just like it is for every quarterback.

We try to look at the really good exposures, the great performances. We try to look at them what they look like at their worst, and then just try to pull the curtain and see what it looks like. But there was some really impressive performances against some big-time defenses in the SEC.

Now, there's some decisions that have to be better. Can't put the ball in harm's way no matter who our quarterback is.

Q. How much of this offseason was making sure you got a healthier football team? Spears has had some knee problems in the past. Are you convinced that his issues are past him and that he'll be fine?

MIKE VRABEL: Played a lot of really productive snaps. Didn't miss much time at all. Was a full participant throughout the week at the Senior Bowl.

I think both of us are comfortable with where we're at with Tyjae and what his availability will be going forward. Now, that may change, but feel good about where it is right now.

Q. Ran, with you on Tyjae, what stands out about his skill set when you watch him play and how you feel like he's a complement to Derrick?

RAN CARTHON: Oh, he's a three-down runner, he can run between the tackles. He's elusive; he can make guys miss, as well as contribute in the passing game. He catches the ball well out of the backfield, is a good route runner. Just another guy that can do it all for us, and you can put him in the game in any situation and there will be some production there.

I just want to say something real quick. Today, as yesterday, these kids are living their dreams, having their name called, realizing a dream and being drafted, and I don't want these interactions between us to always feel like we've got to take a

negative turn. This should be a joyous moment for us to praise these kids. This is a moment, these kids are going to see this, and this is a moment for them and their families to rejoice because it's only going to happen once.

We joked earlier about – Jim and I joked earlier about me not being drafted, and that's a moment in my career I can never get back. Coach was drafted in the third round. It's a moment he'll always remember, so let's keep that in mind when we're talking about these kids and where they've come from because a lot of these kids have overcome a lot to get to this point, so let's keep that in mind in moments like this.

There will be other times to critique what they've done. These kids haven't seen stepped on an NFL field yet, so let's keep that in mind. This is a moment for them and their families to have something to be proud of and enjoy this moment.

Q. Could you circle to the wide receiver topic; is the fifth-round miracle-pick plan the best way to get explosive at wide receiver and to give your quarterbacks dynamic receivers to go with Treylon?

RAN CARTHON: Rolling the dice, playing the board. That's what we're doing. We're going to take the best available player in the fifth round. We hope that it's a receiver because we're going to continue to address our needs. If we take a receiver in the fifth round, it's a player that we feel can contribute to our team. Like Coach said, it's players that have come into this league that have performed at high levels in all rounds of the draft. We don't look at it as a fifth-round guy that's not going to be able to come in here and contribute. Everybody that we bring here will have the opportunity to earn it on the grass.

Q. Did you have some receivers that you maybe had eyes on that went about five or six picks before you made that pick at 81?

RAN CARTHON: Is there a specific one?

Q. Well, the two from Tennessee.

RAN CARTHON: I knew we were going there. Again, it's playing the board. Like we talked about yesterday, we're always fielding calls, we're always making calls to try to move around and do things to improve our football team, and we've got to take it as it comes.

But we're always looking to improve our football team at every stance we get.

Q. Do you ever let need overtake the board at all?

RAN CARTHON: We play our board. Like go back to yesterday; just so happened at a position of need, a best player was there, so we were able to do that. We're going to continue to do that.

Again, if there was a camera full-time in there, you would see the constant communication that we have going on between picks and understanding value and where different people fall on our board within picks, so this isn't -- we don't go in locked in in one spot, and that's how we're going to be.

Q. One of the advantages of bringing Levis in here, you get to sit down and work through the interceptions and everything. How did that process go for you guys as far as him being able to explain what happened and what he could have done differently?

MIKE VRABEL: Great. Had a lot of great exposure with Will at the combine, the pro day, here. I think that with any player, when there's a mistake, it's how you allow them to make mistakes. Can they explain it? Hey, here's what I was trying to do, it was fourth down, I'm trying to feel like I've got to force the ball in there, and if they can't explain it, then that's what you have to come in as a coach and figure out why those things happen.

We did that with a lot of different situations with every quarterback, whether it was situationally, third down, red zone, interceptions, times where we felt like that was a bad decision. We did that with all the quarterbacks that we met with.

Q. Obviously Ryan has been through this a lot in his career, knows the lay of the land. What kind of message and what kind of -- how do you want the league to approach the fact that another quarterback has been brought in?

MIKE VRABEL: That's our job is to bring in competition at every position. That's not a secret. I hope that by now that everybody understands that we have to prove our value to this football team each and every day, and I've said that to every player on our football team, to every coach, and that's what our goal is. They're going to come in and compete, and the players ultimately will determine their role.

Q. Ran, probably tonight still some work to do, look at the board and in the morning, but how do you think it stacks up as far as needs that you have and what's left?

RAN CARTHON: I think Coach said it as we were leaving the draft room talking to the staff, tomorrow is where the fun begins. Tomorrow -- and it's still what Coach said -- our scouts in the room tomorrow, it's their day, and our coaching staff and our scouts have put in a ton of work. I feel really confident in the work that they've done and the players that they've identified for us as future picks or future signed free agents, so I feel really good about where we are in the process and have the utmost confidence in our coaches and scouts.

Q. You kind of touched on both you guys followed your own path to the league. What advice do you give some of these guys that are in the league for the first time, everything is new, probably overwhelming at first? How do you try to get them to settle in and get comfortable?

RAN CARTHON: For me, it's fairly simple. Put your head down and work and just eliminate the distractions. It's really that simple in my mind, when you come in and you're young. It's all about putting in the work and learning as much as possible and taking advantage of the resources.

Prior to me coming here, Coach has brought in a lot of resources for these guys, both on and off the field, that are going to make them better people, better players, players not only here but just around the league. You have to just take advantage of those resources and apply your work ethic to it.

MIKE VRABEL: If the NFL Draft is the best night of their NFL career, they're not going to have a very good career.

Q. (Inaudible)

RAN CARTHON: I'll say him developing into -- that's all on him. I can have all the predictions, all the comparisons, but if he doesn't come in and put in the work, which I believe he will, then all my predictions will be for naught. It's just like I said, just come in, put your head down and work, I believe he'll do that, so what he becomes in his career is totally up to him.

Q. You talked at the combine about how important those comps were in painting that picture. Who's the picture?

RAN CARTHON: You tell me. I'm just saying from a standpoint -- I'll say it this way: Our comps that we give are usually within our draft room to kind of paint the picture for us. I think Will Levis is Will Levis, and I think that's the best he's going to be. It's the best Will Levis.

Extremely happy for him. Had a really cool conversations with him. As soon as we called, you could hear it, it was really a cool story. He literally had just walked in his home from traveling back from Kansas City, and --

MIKE VRABEL: Bags in the foyer.

RAN CARTHON: Bags in the foyer still, and I just kind of told him, he was telling me about his travels, I was like, hey, none of that means anything because we're bringing you to Nashville. But to answer your question, we can say and call him everybody you want to, but I think in the grand scheme of things, he's going to be a best Will Levis.

Q. You talked about staying in contact with Ryan (Tannehill) and communicating with him all the way through. Do you have to even let him know you're going there or do you communicate with him that pick and how do you want him to approach his job moving forward?

MIKE VRABEL: Reached out to Ryan. Those things happen pretty fast. Would say that was able to reach out to him and then ultimately have a conversation with him and explain to him what I told you and some other things that obviously will remain between Ran and myself and Ryan, and expect him to compete, just like Ryan has done every day since he's been here, and what Ryan did was come in from another situation, put his head down, learn our playbook in probably a week, push the starting quarterback in his own way, prove to the football team that he was ready, and then when given the opportunity, took advantage of it.

I would expect him to continue to do that and be the consummate pro, compete for his job, and I would expect Malik and Will to do the same thing.