



TITANS DRAFT TRANSCRIPT

April 27-29, 2023



GENERAL MANAGER RAN CARTHON, HEAD COACH MIKE VRABEL AND ASSISTANT GENERAL MANAGER, STRATEGY CHAD BRINKER APRIL 29, 2023

PRESS CONFERENCE WITH LOCAL MEDIA AT CONCLUSION OF NFL DRAFT

RAN CARTHON: Good evening, everybody. Wrapped up today. Feel really good about the guys that we brought in. We took Josh Whyle in the fifth round. Josh is a guy we think can come in and compete for a spot. He's a versatile guy. You've heard us talk about that a lot lately. In terms of guys with versatility, we think he can play Y, we think he can play F. So got him as a contributor.

Then Jaelyn Duncan, tackle, has played some left tackle, played a little bit of right tackle this year. He's a guy that we envision having a ton of upside. Really, really athletic, has some high-end traits that we'd love to work with and develop and look forward to working with him.

And then to close things out, our man CD (Colton Dowell), UT-Martin, a kid that's put it all on tape. We had a chance to visit with him here during local day and he was really impressive. So I was really glad to get him. I think he has a ton of upside as well. You guys have met with me and Vrabels these last couple nights, you guys obviously know Vrabels very well. This time we have our assistant GM Chad Brinker here who will be in front of you guys for the first time. So I want to welcome Chad. And also just want to say thank you again to our staff downstairs, Ryan (Cowden), Jon Salge, our coaches. We talked about it this morning, the way our coaches and our scouts have worked together these last couple weeks is amazing. I've been a part of some really good processes and this was a really good process and one of the best I've been around in terms of those guys working together, creating the list and the way we had it tiered and then their ability to actually go out and execute and get some of these kids. And then the guy to my right I was just telling him when I came up here, had he recruited me coming out he might not have wanted to come down to Key West to come get me (laughing.) But I definitely would have come and played for him. I've never been around a guy that takes so much passion in talking to these kids and getting to know these kids and recruiting these kids in college free agency so thanks to you too, coach. Guys?

Q. Ran, all six on the offensive side of the ball, with as that the plan trying to focus on offense or did it just play out that way?

RAN CARTHON: It honestly just dawned on me about 30 minutes ago that it was all offense. We were just playing the board and every time you came up at a pick I guess the way it was stacked and it was ranked your eyes went to the left and the way our board is constructed and healthy conversation on every pick. Everyone that we took off the board at wherever we took them we felt convicted. It just so happened to be all offense but it wasn't a designed plan or anything.

Q. Seemed like everything every pick you made were highly athletic guys. How much did that athleticism play into your evaluation process?

RAN CARTHON: I think you're always looking for guys that are athletic and have athletic skills and traits to develop. That gives you guys that still have growth in their bodies. And as you guys know with this league, I mean it's growing rapidly, these positions are getting more and more athletic, bigger, stronger, faster, longer. So we wanted to be able to bring those players in here to compete.

Q. When you look at skill position players from below the Division I level, how much does productivity play into it because Dowell certainly seems to have a lot of good numbers that's put up?

RAN CARTHON: Well I mean when he had to play Power Five competition he played well and proved well. Then when we brought him in for local day and he was amongst the other Power Five guys that we brought in here locally he stood out and looked like a Power Five to us. It just so happened that he was at UT Martin.

Q. Your relationship with Luke (Fickell), how much did that help you with familiarity when it came to Josh, who said he met with you a couple of times over the past year.

MIKE VRABEL: We've been to Cincinnati. We've been there for pro days in the past. And he's a local kid and somebody you get to know having been there, kind of followed his career I think just the last couple years, being a local kid growing up in Cincinnati and deciding to stay there. So he's been consistent and the versatility as Ran mentioned is something that I think we're excited to work with.

Q. Ran you said when we talked to Colton Dowell you said you thought he had run a 4.40 and 4.41, 40. Are those times you had him at?

RAN CARTHON: I don't know off the top of my head. I know he did run well and we felt and saw his speed when we saw him live and that speed showed up on tape. I don't know off the top for my head what it was.

Q. I know Jaelyn came in on a 30 visit. How much did that help kind of getting to know him through the process and how you feel like you have added to the competition --

RAN CARTHON: You said Jaelyn?

Q. Yeah. And him pairing him with Skoronski coming in, how do you think that helps the competition up front?

RAN CARTHON: Jaelyn was a guy that we brought in on a visit. We've had some productive visits with him throughout the process. I met with him at the Senior Bowl originally and this was our first exposure to him in person. Then we brought him in here on a top 30, it was just a truly awesome visit. Really, really got to know him. It was a great day. We had great day with him. And then Coach Vrabel and I both having a relationship with Coach Locksley down at the University of Maryland, we were able to get on the phone with him and ask any other further questions that we may have had. So it was good getting to know Jaelyn throughout the process.

Q. Chad, part of what you brought here is analytical eye. Can you talk maybe to the role analytics played in sorting through the board as you said it and maybe narrowing the focus on some of these guys?

CHAD BRINKER: Analytics is part of the process. It doesn't drive the decision making, it augments the decision making. So it just helps us make better decisions. We're still building a lot of this stuff out here. There's a whole thing from data management to predictive analytics to the information system and how that gets translated to the staff and to us and helping us in our decision-making process. So we use it, it's part of the process.

Q. Is there maybe an example of an analytics element that pulled you towards any of these guys?

RAN CARTHON: Not an exact example. Like Chad said, it's a part of it, right. So we trust our scouts and our coaches' evaluations and then we use the different cognitive testing that we talked about. And like Chad said, some of this stuff we're still building out and we have things to still work through. But again, any analytical component that we have that comes from Adam (Bondi) or Matt (Iammarino) we consider those things in terms of researching guys' backgrounds in terms of injury history and how those predictors set up. As well as how their numbers may stack at positions at certain times. Just different ways to run the data. So we take all that into consideration when we're using these guys.

Q. To follow-up on that Chad so your model of injuries is also a part of that is that correct and can you explain how that works?

CHAD BRINKER: Yeah, that's correct. There's a couple things we're going to use it for and we have been and it has to do with the salary cap as well as the injury model that we built. And those things are in process. So we're a little bit head on the salary cap side we're going to continue to build out the injury prediction model. So we're in the middle of doing that now.

Q. Mike, how much does this class help towards your goal of getting faster as an offense?

MIKE VRABEL: Well I think there are some guys that really, that do that and again there's some, these were really easy choices as we looked at it and looked at the board. Excited to work with this group. I think they all bring a little bit something different whether it's some versatility or just looking at Colton at the end as big, fast, for you Volunteer fans played pretty well against them. And Jaelyn, just extremely athletic as Turron put it. And then we talked about some of the players that we drafted last night and then even in this post-draft process. I think there's a large group of players we're excited to work with, whether that's skill players or defensive linemen and we do think that there are some players that can run and ultimately the play speed is what's critical. But it was a great process.

Q. How heavily do you feel like you guys will have to be in the undrafted market, especially on the defensive side of the ball and maybe at receiver where you only drafted one guy with only six picks?

MIKE VRABEL: Yup, that's all happening. It's finishing up right now. I think we're pretty close. But we won't probably be at 90 or 91 tomorrow. You don't have to be. I don't think there's any reason to just, we all agree, sign just to sign. But a lot of these guys were targeted and really feel good about that post-draft process that we've done well at. The coaches, the scouts, working together, communicating with players, communicating with us and communicating with the agent.

Q. What is first for these guys as far as scheduling goes? When is the rookie camp?

MIKE VRABEL: I think the first time they can be in here is next Thursday into our building. I know the players will communicate with them and get them in here and have some of the post-draft guys go through a physical at much greater length than what we've done. But we've had the ones at a combine and had the ones on local day. But they will go through a physical, they will meet and then we'll practice here for a couple days and then they will start to incorporate themselves into what the veterans are doing for that last week of phase two.

Q. You said the fun started today in terms of the scouts having maybe more say or flexing their muscle if you will. Can you tell us a little bit about the role they played in these picks?

RAN CARTHON: Yeah, so each one of these guys and it's really been like this throughout the whole entire process is when we're sitting there and we're looking at the board and as the board starts to take shape you tend to look at your scouts and, 'Hey, man, talk to me about this guy. Give me...' you know, and you listen to what they say, right. The report is there, you can read the report, but you listen for them to see if they have conviction on these guys. We do the same thing with the coaches. Spent time with the coaches this morning going through some guys that were sitting there in different clumps and we watched a couple guys together just to see how the coaches felt about bringing guys along. Then, like I say, you really get to this undrafted process and that's when it gets really fun. You know sometimes you walk out of that undrafted process, you lose a guy late or you don't get a guy that you're targeting and it almost feels like the whole day is blown, you know, no matter who you drafted, because it's so much passion and you feel the urgency of guys and the collaboration, you want to bring it home and if a guy slips through it almost feels you feel defeated sometimes.

But like Mike said, all in all it was a great process, we feel really good about some of the guys we got. Some of the guys we targeted, but it's, you know, a huge shout out to our coaches and our scouts for that.

Q. In regards to the receiver position I assume that you guys were really patient and able to come away with someone that you were really happy with. What was had to do with that, like was it the depth of the class or what allowed you to be so patient at that position?

RAN CARTHON: I think always you have to be patient. We talked about it not just taking a guy to fill a need. We want to get the right people and the right players in here that will help this program. But also understanding the board and value and if there's a valuable player that can help us and contribute and we have a clear vision for it, and it's standing out then we're going to take that guy as well. And again, like coach said, we don't have to be at 90 tomorrow. There's still a million more ways we can go about acquiring guys to help us. So we just got to let this full process take shape. We don't have to have the roster at 53 until September. So we've got to continue to let this process go. We have free agency first, we started there, now it's draft season and still there's still players that are going to come available to us and it's just all a part of the process.

Q. You guys have been acquiring a skill set a little bit and maybe how it differs from Chig (Okonkwo), (inaudible) are they different enough that they can both be used together?

MIKE VRABEL: Yeah, we think that Josh has the ability to maybe put on some weight, he's done that, played at the line of scrimmage. I think going through some of the training he's probably gone down a little bit but I know that he feels comfortable in his frame to add and to lose, to figure out what the best playing weight is for him. And I think he has shown to be physical, I think he's shown to be able to make plays in the intermediate part of the field. So I think that there is a level of versatility and we talked about that. So we'll kind of see where he best fits, but absolutely him and Chig could play on the field at the same time together.

Q. Not rushing to get the very last player on the 91, but the last couple years that you guys have been filling out the roster you all the way through September and into the season?

MIKE VRABEL: Well yeah, we'll do that.

Q. With injuries and stuff?

MIKE VRABEL: And we'll do that. We're going to get to 91. I mean it's just, we're talking about a couple spots here and there instead of just grabbing -- you get to a point down there it's like the wild west down there after the draft ends. So when you have, when you look up and you're like, okay, we need 20 spots, you know, you're not going to take the 97th corner just to get the 91 or whatever it may be. We've targeted guys, our coaches and scouts have watched a lot of film we've had communications and so you miss out on some of those. You think you're going to get some of the players and you don't. And it's competitive and it's unfortunate, but you can't just go down to the bottom of the list and take somebody that you've never heard of and bring in here. But we've, you know, we've got extensive lists and so maybe we're going to be a few short of 91, it was just saying that you don't have to fill up every spot. We feel good about these players that we were able to sign in the post-draft process, same way as we felt good about the ones that we drafted.

Q. You and Ran both referred to the picks in the moment as easy choices for you guys. Is that typical of drafts you've been a part of in the past and what made it that way for you?

MIKE VRABEL: There were some players that kind of stood out on lines that separated themselves. Could have come off that and probably dropped down a rung and got into that other pond. But the players that we've took at certain levels were kind of sticking out by themselves. And Ran mentioned you kind of looked to the left and there was a player that was still there, felt really good about them and spent time with them and were able to make the pick.

Q. Chad, in terms of analytics again, how has analytics changed the way you evaluate a quarterback and what part of analytics stood out with the pick of Will?

CHAD BRINKER: I'll guess I'll say this. Ran brought me in here because of my background of having the college experience, the pro experience, and salary cap experience and analytic experience, and also playing the game.

Now, I think that there's -- when you look at this decision-making tree, like I think of the experiential intuition. That's traditional scouting. You can't take the collective wisdom of the scouts and the coaches in the room and just throw it out. That's a major, major part of the decision-making and the process.

But I do think you look at the exploratory analytics or descriptive analytics and then there's a predictive component of it as well. So I mean, all those things -- if that's getting to the question you're asking, yeah, all that's being brought into the decision-making as we look at these players. We have this communication and we talk about it, but at the end of the day, it's about that tape, you know, can the guy play.

Q. I understand why you like Colton and know you brought in one free agent, but for the things you've talked about the wide receiving corps, is that enough turnover to get out of that group what you've talked about?

MIKE VRABEL: Going into Monday, it will be, yeah. We're going to continue to explore and find ways to improve our roster and make it as competitive as possible. So on Monday, it will be. We felt good if -- for us to add a receiver we would have come far off our board at those certain levels. That's what I'm happy about. You guys are going to trust us. We're going to put players in here that are going to help us win.

Q. That last part kind of goes back to the previous question. You're going to find ways to improve your roster. Free agency is over and the draft's over. Aren't those the places --

MIKE VRABEL: No, free agency is not. They're going to let us sign free agents Monday. They will. Chad will. Ran will. They will let us sign free agents on Monday.

Free agency is going to go all the way up until the season starts. There will be players that are on other teams that will become available Monday. Take a look. It will be a real large waiver wire. We'll scour that. We'll continue to look for trade possibilities and opportunities. Chad and Vin (Marino) will help us with the salary cap, find ways to open up salaries so that we can potentially sign other players. There's been a pretty good process here and I'm excited about it.

Q. In the current receiver room, Mike, a couple guys coming back, Kyle Phillips, Racey McMath. What do you think you can get from them this coming season?

MIKE VRABEL: I think that will be determined by the efforts they put in and Kyle's ability to come back and maintain some consistency that he had early on and through training camp.

Racey knows that this is a critical point in his career and he's got to continue to play and improve and be big and fast and help us and adjust to the football down the field and do some of the things that he did in training camp last year before unfortunately he got hurt.

So those are two guys that we're excited to work with. One is really quick in the slot and the other one is a big outside receiver that is starting to improve and knows that he needs to continue to take steps.

Q. You mentioned the analytical model and how that -- regarding injuries. How does that impact like the way you look at a guy like Spears, with the history of injuries, how does that impact you guys all being comfortable making a selection like that?

CHAD BRINKER: Well, I think, first and foremost, you go to your medical team. That's where it starts. You've got to trust your medical team and their evaluation. Obviously we selected that guy because he's a great player and we felt really comfortable about where he was medically.

And then of course, yeah, you look at all the other factors, how many games did they miss, how often were they injured. Just there's a variance of things that we look at throughout the process. We felt really good about that running back.

Q. When you first got here, you told us about the Eureka moment with Mitchell and his tape. Did you have anything similar in this pre-draft process with any of the guys you guys picked just kind of falling in love with them?

RAN CARTHON: Yeah, I don't know if it was -- again, for me, I can't take credit for the Elijah Mitchell thing. Again, it was the work of our coach, our coach on the defensive side, and our analytics guy.

But coming in and looking at all these guys, there's something to love about each and every one of them. Again, we talked about getting the right people in here, but I think if you go through this list, all six guys, like there are traits in each one of these guys that they can contribute to our team. Like Mike tells everybody, it doesn't matter how you got here, it's what you do out here on the grass.

So we see these traits and hopefully these guys continue to grow and develop out here on the grass when they get here and they will create their own way.

Q. Mike, you talked about Duncan, but I'm getting the sense there's a lot of upside there. What's he got to do to reach that level? What's he got to refine?

MIKE VRABEL: He has to show up and be the person that we saw and everybody in this building saw on that 30 visit. It was a special player that showed up there that day. That was one that was engaged, that had gained significant weight and looked really good, had put weight on and put strength on. That's what he has to do.

And everything else, we'll take care of everything else. We'll push him, we'll teach him, we'll coach him. But if he shows you up -- if that person shows up every day, we'll be excited to work with him.

Q. Ran, obviously this year wasn't the way it will be in future years for you, given that you came in kind of late, I guess, in the process. How much different do you think it's going to be for you moving forward having gone through this now, and now you'll have a full year before the next one of these?

RAN CARTHON: J-Rob and I, our backgrounds are similar in terms of the systems that we were taught under. So some of the things conceptually are kind of similar.

But more than anything the process here is really good. It's not about me. The process is systems that I think work, because it's our scouts that do a lot of the work and a lot of the core things that we want to do. So it's about Chad and I collaborating with our current scouts about what works for them, what makes for the best and most efficient process for them to continue to getting us the best information to help us make the most informed decisions.

So once we get through this next week or so, we'll sit down as a group and we'll kind of start ironing out how we're going to do things moving forward. But, again, it's about creating the best environment for those guys downstairs right now to make us better.

Q. Ran, how would you describe what the activity is like as far as trades, teams trying to engage with you, you trying to make moves, and how you think all that -- you handled all that as a first-time GM?

RAN CARTHON: I told you guys last night, I'm lucky to have an experienced guy like Mike. There were several moments where I'm thinking something, I look at Mike, I look at Chad, and we're like, hey, what do you think? Asking them for their genuine advice and their thoughts. And both guys were very, very helpful. There was no decision that was made throughout this whole weekend that was singular. It was just us working together.

Some of these picks we had people on the phone wanting to come to our spot. There were thoughts of maybe us going back, trying to play the board and see if guys would be there. But at each turn that we had to pick, we were convicted about someone. It was -- I won't get too particular or specific, but there were at least two picks that we made this weekend

where we had a team on the phone waiting on us to say yeah or nay, but we look up there on the board and we felt convicted about a guy. So it was one guy telling said team no while the other guy was calling the player.

Q. Going back to when you were younger, the TV on the dresser, you always wanted to do something like this. Having gone through it, is there anything that kind of surprised you or what do you think of the overall experience?

RAN CARTHON: Definitely a cool experience. I won't say anything surprised me. I've been fortunate to be under some really good GMs that all did it different ways, and I always watched and paid attention in those moments. I said it last night, I just wanted to act like I've been here before, you know, and not try to get too high, not try to get too low, but just stay in the middle and try to be consistent throughout it all.

There were a couple spots where, in my mind, there was a player there that you would love to get and that player comes off the board and it's -- you hit that damn and it hits you in your chest a little bit, but you got to keep rocking, got to keep pushing forward, and we did that. And at each turn, there may be a player there that you like or that you were hoping is going to be there, but there's also a player there that you're like, hey, I like this guy just as much and it just -- everything just fell accordingly. Maybe a one-off this year. Next year, future years, could be crazy. Again, I'm thankful and grateful to have the experience in these two guys that are flanking me to lean on.

Q. You enjoy the kind of story line -- I know you picked him as a football player, but the story line of a guy like Dowell, small school, like that, managed to work out, make impression for you guys. Do you like seeing that kind of thing happen for guys from smaller schools?

RAN CARTHON: Yeah, I mean, again, we're in a player acquisition business. You know, however that comes -- you know, there was that term back in the day, the diamond in the rough. That doesn't exist anymore. The way these scouts work, if there's a good player out there, we're going to find them. And with a guy like him, it was a cool phone call. He's right here locally, right down the road. And to hear a player say, This was the phone call I was hoping I was going to get. Not just a phone call of being drafted, but wanting to play for your team and feeling good about his one visit here coming away from here really wanting to be here, how it says a lot about what coach has built in terms of the culture, and it says a lot about the people we have here.

Q. What would you say to your new fan base about the collective guys that you've got in this class?

RAN CARTHON: I think we have great people, first and foremost. I think we have really good players that will all work. They're all going to put in the work. They're all going to come here and hope to live out their dreams of playing in Nissan Stadium on Sundays, and we're excited to have them.