

SUNDAY, APRIL 27, 1986



N.F.L. DRAFT: 1986

Teams Seek Answers To a New Set of Questions



The New York Times/Michael Zagaria

Tony Razzano, 49ers director of college scouting, prepping for draft.

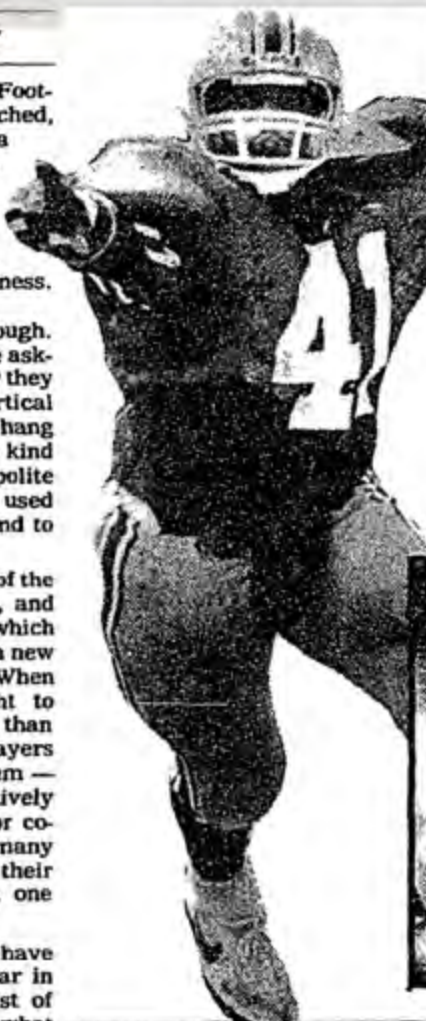
By MICHAEL JANOFFSKY

IN the old days, as a National Football League draft approached, teams worried more about a prospect's size and speed than his financial demands and social habits. Scouts were satisfied knowing about a quarterback's arm, a receiver's hands and a defensive back's quickness. Things like that.

These days that's not enough. These days, the N.F.L. clubs are asking other kinds of questions. Now they want to know about agility, vertical jumps, percentage of body fat, hang time, who his agent is and what kind of "citizen" is he, which is a polite way of asking, "Has the kid used drugs?" And if so, what kind and to what extent.

With respect to the last, some of the answers have been frightening, and that's why this year's draft, which will be conducted Tuesday, has a new and disturbing dimension to it: When the scouting combines brought to New Orleans in January more than 300 of the best draft-eligible players for timing and testing, 57 of them — almost one in five — tested positively for drug use, including three for cocaine. Never before had so many players shown traces of drugs in their systems, and never had even one tested positively for cocaine.

Those startling developments have tainted the proceedings this year in that each club was given a list of those who tested positively and what



Bo Jackson, above, rated the best running back since O. J. Simpson; Keith Byars, left, is a question mark after foot surgery; Jim Everett, the most highly regarded quarterback.



Associated Press; United Press International

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those who tested positively and what was found in their systems. Several teams have said they would not draft any of them; others have said a player's drug use would have little or no effect on how he is evaluated.

All that remains to be seen. But many personnel experts and player agents agree that a player on the list faces the distinct possibility of being drafted on a round below what his football abilities would otherwise dictate — if he is drafted at all. An attorney who represents one of the players who tested positively for cocaine acknowledged that he had sent a letter to each of the teams, promising that his client has no drug problem.

"I would say the whole league is disturbed over the drug issue," said Dick Steinberg, the New England Patriots' personnel director. "Every-

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Top Players by Position

QUARTERBACKS

Jim Everett, Purdue
 Chuck Long, Iowa
 Jack Trudeau, Illinois

WIDE RECEIVERS

Tim McGee, Tennessee
 Mike Sherrard, U.C.L.A.
 Walter Murray, Hawaii

TIGHT ENDS

Willie Smith, Miami (Fla.)
 Carl Hilton, Houston
 Scott Gieselmann, B.C.

OFFENSIVE LINEMEN

Jim Dombrowski (T), Virginia
 John Rienstra (G), Temple
 James FitzPatrick (T), U.S.C.

PLACE KICKERS

John Lee, U.C.L.A.

RUNNING BACKS

Bo Jackson, Auburn
 Keith Byars, Ohio State
 Reggie Dupard, S.M.U.

DEFENSIVE LINEMEN

Tony Casillas (DT), Okla.
 Jon Hand (DE), Alabama
 Leslie O'Neal (DE), Okla. State

LINEBACKERS

Tim Harris (O), Memphis State
 Tim Green (I), Syracuse
 Joe Kelly (O), Washington

DEFENSIVE BACKS

David Fulcher (S), Arizona State
 Roderick Jones (CB), S.M.U.
 Mark Collins (CB), Cal.-Fullerton

PUNTERS

Lewis Colbert, Auburn

Jets and Giants Study Picks

Trades Could Change Options in Early Rounds

By FRANK LITSKY



In Tuesday's National Football League draft, the Giants will be looking for help at many positions — defensive line, inside linebacker, defensive backfield, wide receiver and running back.

So whom will they choose in the first round? Maybe an offensive lineman. It's that kind of a draft.

"This is not a blue-chip draft," said General Manager George Young of the Giants, "but a strong blue-collar draft. A lot of people think there's better quantity than quality."

The strongest positions in the draft are offensive line (tackle and guard) and running back. The Giants are not looking for help in the offensive line. In fact, three offensive linemen who missed last season because of injuries — William Roberts, Brian Johnston and Damien Johnson — are returning.

Because the Giants reached the playoffs last year, their first-round choice will come relatively late in the draft, 19th among the 28 teams. Most of the blue-chip players will be gone by then, so if the best player available is an offensive lineman the Giants probably

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Offensive Line Presents No. 1 Area of Concern

By GERALD ESKENAZI



These are the times that bring a boy's mischievous grin to Mike Hickey's freckled face. Just what devilish thing is Hickey, the Jets' draft maestro, going to do now?

The Jets, who choose 22d in the National Football League draft Tuesday, need help on the offensive line — the draft's deepest position — and linebackers, along with a healthy running back and defensive back.

As the club's player-personnel director, Mike Hickey is the fellow who pleaded the obscure Ken O'Brien's case in 1983, and the Jets made him their No. 1 draft choice.

But this is 1986. What will it be?

"I plead the Fifth," said Hickey, retaining the close-to-the-vest posture that marks the Jets. Coach Joe Walton refused to say whether the Jets would even consider drafting any collegian who tested positively for illegal drugs.

But when Walton was asked about the offensive line, he tightened his lips. Walton has been a remarkably aggressive coach the last few seasons with the Jets. He dismissed people when the club did badly

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Teams Are Looking for Answers to a New Set of Questions

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body should be disturbed."

Such goings on have deflected attention from the usual frenzy and intrigue that makes each draft distinctive. As the 28 clubs completed their work on this one — flying in a player for one last look, checking with a coach for one more fact, rearranging their draft board once more — the major story lines remained the same: What will happen to Bo Jackson, the outstanding running back from Auburn who figures to be the first player taken? Who will get the unusually large number of good running backs, offensive linemen and defensive linemen? And, which clubs will get the best quarterbacks?

The Tampa Bay Buccaneers have the opening pick. Strange as it may seem, that could be a problem. Jackson has not only been hailed as the best football player coming out since O. J. Simpson, he is also highly regarded as a future star outfielder in major league baseball. That's why he has said he will wait until the baseball draft in early June to decide if he'll wear a cap or a helmet. If it sounds like a scare tactic to get more money from football, it may not be. Doug Melvin, a vice president of the Baltimore Orioles and a personnel expert, said from all reports he has read, Jackson is "the best amateur talent we've seen in the last 30 years." That's an opinion, he added, that is shared by most other baseball organizations.

By drafting him, the Buccaneers are taking a big risk. A source close to Jackson says the baseball option is no idle threat. The road to the majors may include an early stop in the minors, "but after that," the source said, "the money will be about the same, and he can play baseball until he's 40. How long do most running backs last in the N.F.L.?" About five years.

Or, the Buccaneers can trade him. The San Francisco 49ers have been making a big pitch — two players and two high draft choices — to get him. The Buccaneers have been listening; they just can't agree on which players the Buccaneers would get.

Money is another issue. Jackson wants something like \$1.3 million a year, which would make him the

highest-paid player in the league.

The second-most coveted player in the draft is Jim Everett, the quarterback from Purdue, although he might not be the second player taken. Everett's stock rose precipitously last week as it became clear he was the most highly regarded quarterback available and a prospect who could develop quickly into a starter. He completed nearly 60 percent of his passes at Purdue for 7,411 yards and 43 touchdowns. The nearby Indianapolis Colts wanted him so badly that they gave the New Orleans Saints their third-round pick to switch positions in the first round. That gave the Colts the fourth slot, but that could be as many as two too low. The Atlanta Falcons and the Houston Oilers follow the Buccaneers, and it's possible Everett will be gone by the time the Colts are up.

The Falcons put out the word they will take Tony Casillas, the defensive tackle from Oklahoma, the best defensive player in the draft and an ideal strongman to play nose guard in Atlanta's new 3-4 defense. You would think a team starting a season with Turk Schonert, David Archer and Bob Holly as its quarterbacks would think twice about ignoring a guy like Everett.

But the Falcons, specifically Coach Dan Henning, may be operating under more acute pressure.

"Look at it this way," said a rival general manager. "Henning knows he has to win this year or he may be out. Casillas is a guy who can come in right away and make a difference. It may take Everett a year or two to develop. Once he does, he could be their quarterback for the next 10 or 15 years. But Henning may not have the luxury of looking that far into the future."

So here come the "ifs." Every draft is loaded with ifs: If this team does this, then that team does that. Imagine. A club spends hundreds of thousands of dollars to prepare for a draft. Then when it starts, it's at the mercy of the club picking in the preceding position.

If the Falcons take Everett, the Oilers will take Casillas. If the Falcons take Casillas, the Oilers have a big decision to make. With the next-to-worst defense in the league last season, they need a big pass rusher like Leslie O'Neal of Oklahoma State or Jon Hand of Alabama more than another quarterback.



The New York Times/Mark Philbrick

Robbie Bosco, one of the top-rated quarterbacks, with the Chiefs' quarterback coach, Pete McCulley, on Brigham Young campus last week.

But Ladd Herzog, the Oilers' general manager, said last week he would pick Everett if he's there, a decision that could have major repercussions for Warren Moon, who has worked hard in two seasons to adjust after six years in the Canadian Football League.

Keep in mind, however, Herzog has made predictions like that before, usually to serve a hidden agenda — at least that is what several rival club officials have suggested.

"What I think they're doing," said one, "is trying to bleed the Colts. The Oilers figure they can get a good player to switch positions." Besides the Colts, who offered the Oilers a fifth-round pick to switch positions, seven other teams have contacted the Oilers about switching in the first round, including the Kansas City Chiefs, who offered the wide receiver Henry Marshall, and the San Diego Chargers, who offered the wide receiver Trumaine Johnson.

Everett doesn't care what happens. "Any city that has an N.F.L. team is fine with me," he said.

Those who rate Everett as the top quarterback agree that Chuck Long of Iowa is the best of the rest, a group that includes Jack Trudeau of Illinois, Robbie Bosco of Brigham Young and Mike Norseth of Kansas. The Colts can have Long without moving. But if they trade with Houston to get Everett, the Oilers will trade down. They have Long rated as a low first-

round pick because they don't think his arm is strong enough. Anyway, lots of other teams like Long, including the Detroit Lions, the Seattle Seahawks, the Chiefs, the Minnesota Vikings and both Los Angeles teams, the Rams and the Raiders.

It's possible, although not probable, that the also-rans for Long might settle for one of the others as a first-round pick. You never know with quarterbacks. Different teams have different convictions. Remember 1983, when six went in the first round? Everybody figured five had the potential — John Elway, Todd Blackledge, Jim Kelly, Tony Eason and Dan Marino — but the Jets pulled off what seemed like a shocker when they took Ken O'Brien ahead of Marino, who was the last of them to go. Now, it doesn't seem so shocking. O'Brien was the top-rated quarterback in the league last season. Go figure.

The same kind of varied opinions are at work this year with respect to the running backs and the offensive linemen.

After Jackson, Keith Byars of Ohio State was everybody's favorite. Some teams liked him as much as Jackson. Then in January he needed surgery to repair a stress fracture on the little toe on his right foot. The injury is healing but maybe not fast enough to satisfy some teams that need a run-

ning back right away. In the weeks before the draft, Byars flew around the country, offering his foot and X-rays for closer examination. In one recent eight-day stretch, he visited the Raiders, the 49ers, the Seahawks, the Lions, the Steelers, the Bills, the Oilers and the Cowboys. From most accounts, he's iffy for this season. Some doctors have suggested it may be in his best interest to sit out 1986, a prognosis that may scare off some teams. His own doctor, Jack Hughston of Columbus, Ga., has told him he will be ready by July.

"Some of the medical reports have been good, some bad," Byars said the other day. "I still think I'll go early, but now I'll have to wait like everybody else."

Other backs that could go in the opening round are Neal Anderson of Florida, Ronnie Harmon of Iowa, Gary James of Louisiana State, Reggie Dupard of Southern Methodist, John L. Williams of Florida and Kenneth Davis of Texas Christian.

These are the big offensive linemen: Brian Jozwiak of West Virginia, Jim FitzPatrick of Southern California, Jim Dombrowski of Virginia, John Rienstra of Temple and Doug Williams of Texas A&M. All but Rienstra played tackle; Rienstra is more of a guard. Dombrowski and Jozwiak will probably be the first to go, and none of them is likely to be there after the 15th pick, Seattle's; they are all that good.

The next deepest position is defensive line. Casillas, O'Neal and Hand should all go within the top 10 picks, which is too bad for the Jets and Giants, who would love to get one of them. They probably won't. Without a trade, the Giants pick 19th in the first round, the Jets 22d. If one of the other linemen doesn't satisfy them — Mike Ruth of Boston College, Erik Howard of Washington State and Pat Swilling of Georgia Tech — they will look to players at other positions. The Jets need more offensive linemen, linebackers and defensive backs. The Giants could use defensive linemen, a speedy wide receiver, another linebacker and some help in the secondary.

There is also a strong bunch of linebackers, starting with Tim Green of Syracuse, Tim Harris of Memphis State, Kevin Murphy of Oklahoma, Joe Kelly of Washington and John Oferdahl of Western Michigan. Three or more could go in the first round.

Trades, of course, reshuffle everybody's thinking. These are a few of the possibilities teams have been discussed:

¶The Giants and Chargers talked about Gary Zimmerman, the offensive lineman from the United States Football League, whom the Giants took in a supplemental draft. The Giants want one of San Diego's first-round picks, the 13th or 14th, in exchange for their pick in the first round and the rights to Zimmerman, whom the Chargers like as a guard or center.

¶If the Chiefs get Long, they might trade Bill Kenney, their able backup quarterback, to the Buffalo Bills for the running back Joe Cribbs.

¶Marc Wilson, the sometimes beleaguered quarterback for the Raiders, could end up with the Eagles if the Eagles give the Raiders a player they can use. A deal has been held up because the Eagles want to give the Raiders a second- and a fourth-round pick. The Raiders want the Eagles' first pick.

¶The Rams, who aren't enamored by anyone beyond the top 10 players for a first-round pick, have offered the 23d pick to the Chargers for the Chargers' picks in the second and third round, the 44th and 71st choices.

¶If the 49ers can't trade with Tampa Bay for Jackson, they will probably trade down. The guy they want is Ronnie Harmon, a running back from Bayside, Queens and Iowa who should still be around late in the first round. His brother, Derrick, also a running back, has been with the 49ers for two years.

The draft is deep enough that most teams should get some help within the first three rounds, although it doesn't have much to offer in the way of tight ends, centers, safeties and kickers. Scott Gieselman of Boston College may be the best tight end available, Gary Walker of Boston University the best center.

Five teams — the Redskins, Packers, the Broncos, the Browns and the Dolphins — do not get started until the second round. The Bengals will be the busiest, with 17 picks, including eight in the first four rounds. The Chargers have 10 in the first five rounds. The 49ers, who have had the fewest picks in two of the three previous drafts, and the Browns have that distinction this time, each with nine choices.