

NFL Draft

With 4 Top 100 picks, Seattle hopes to cash in on deep draft

By **TIM BOOTH**
Associated Press

RENTON, Wash. — Every few minutes on Tuesday, John Schneider's phone would ding while resting next to him on the table.

Another message for Seattle's general manager in the hours leading up to an important NFL draft for the Seahawks.

Seattle will have nine total picks when the draft begins on Thursday, including the No. 26 overall pick in the first round. After middling draft results in recent years, the Seahawks have needs at a number of positions — most notably on the offensive and defensive lines — that could be solved in the short and long term with a successful weekend of selections.

Since the 2012 draft where

the Seahawks landed a bounty of future stars, including quarterback Russell Wilson, Seattle's draft success has fallen off. But that was a transition year when Seattle went from building a championship contender to now trying to maintain its place among the NFL elite. And with veteran free-agent additions and finding a few undrafted gems, simply getting on the roster for players drafted by the Seahawks has become a challenge.

"It's been harder to make our team since the '13 draft, '14 draft," Schneider said. "Some drafts are stronger than others — how many of these guys really have a legitimate chance of making our team? It's been harder for us to figure out who has a legitimate chance to make our team."

Seahawks needs fall near line of scrimmage

DRAFT PICKS: Nos. 26, 56, 90, 97, 124, 171, 215, 225, 247
THEY NEED: interior DL, OL, CB, outside LB, backup RB, WR.



THEY DON'T NEED: QB, TE, K, P.

POSSIBLE FIRST PICK: G Cody Whitehair, Kansas State; OT Taylor Decker, Ohio State.

OUTLOOK: Line of scrimmage has to be addressed. They need depth on both lines after departures of G J.R. Sweezy, T Russell Okung and DT Brandon Mebane. Finding an immediate starter at any of those positions would be great, but depth for future is more critical. Also watch what Seattle does at outside linebacker and cornerback. Seahawks have presumptive starters at both positions, but depth is always priority for GM John Schneider.

Schneider said he views this draft as the deepest since arriving in Seattle in 2010. That means there could be more late-round gems for the Seahawks to unearth and potentially more options among undrafted rookie free agents, an area in which Seattle has excelled in finding future contributors.

But it'll be the early rounds where much of the attention will fall on the Seahawks. Seattle has four selections among the Top 100 picks and that's assuming the Seahawks keep their first-round pick at No. 26. Seattle has not made a pick in the first round since 2012.

"This is our seventh

(draft) and this is the most impressive one to us in terms of the sheer number of players," Schneider said.

Most of the attention has fallen on the needs along the offensive and defensive lines after losing some key starters during free agency. Guard J.R. Sweezy and tackle Russell Okung

departed from the offensive line, while defensive tackle Brandon Mebane and outside linebacker/defensive end Bruce Irvin left along the defensive line. And while Seattle has options already on its roster that can fill those spots, coach Pete Carroll's mantra of always wanting to create competition likely means those positions will be addressed during the draft.

"We don't grade for the league, we grade for our team. And when you do that, that represents what your board ends up looking like," Schneider said. "You're going to have specific needs at different positions based on people that you've lost on free agency or if a guy that you drafted isn't coming through at a specific position. It's really a combination of the two."

2016 First Round

- Tonight, 5 p.m. (at Chicago)
- TV: ESPN, NFL Network

Draft Order

1. Los Angeles (from Tenn.)
2. Philadelphia (from Cleve.)
3. San Diego
4. Dallas
5. Jacksonville
6. Baltimore
7. San Francisco
8. Cleveland (from Miami through Philadelphia)
9. Tampa Bay
10. N.Y. Giants
11. Chicago
12. New Orleans
13. Miami (from Philadelphia)
14. Oakland
15. Tennessee (from L.A.)
16. Detroit
17. Atlanta
18. Indianapolis
19. Buffalo
20. N.Y. Jets
21. Washington
22. Houston
23. Minnesota
24. Cincinnati
25. Pittsburgh
26. Seattle
27. Green Bay
28. Kansas City
29. New England (forfeited)
30. Arizona
31. Carolina
31. Denver

Rounds 2-3 on Friday, 4 p.m.
Rounds 4-7 on Saturday, 9 a.m.

Possible first picks Goff, Wentz at ease on eve of selections

By **JAY COHEN**
Associated Press

CHICAGO — Jared Goff lobbied a few balls to a couple of lucky kids and practiced his coverage skills. Carson Wentz grinned as he sent a line of boys and girls through a footwork drill.

It was all smiles for the quarterbacks on the eve of the NFL draft. They might not know exactly where they are going, but they know they won't have to wait very long to find out.

"Excited for whatever happens," Goff said Wednesday. "It's going to be a fun time. It's going to be a dream come true regardless."

Easy for him to say. After a pair of blockbuster trades at the top of the draft, Goff and Wentz are expected to be the first two names off the board when the first round starts at a downtown Chicago theater Thursday night. The only question is which one of them becomes the centerpiece for the NFL's



AP Photo/Kiichiro Sato

North Dakota State's Carson Wentz huddles with children during an NFL Play 60 event at Grant Park, Wednesday, April 27, 2016, in Chicago before Thursday's first round of the NFL football draft.

return to Los Angeles with the Rams, and which one heads to Philadelphia at No. 2 for a rebuilding project with the Eagles.

"Someone talked about it last night, there's already a card with your name on it," Wentz said after joining several top prospects for a football clinic at a downtown park on Wednesday, "and

I'm just excited to finally find out where that is."

The 6-foot-4 Goff started every game during his three seasons at California and set school records with 977 completions, 12,220 yards passing and 96 touchdown passes. The son of former major league catcher Jerry Goff passed for 4,719 yards and 43 touchdowns during

his final season with the Bears.

The 6-5 Wentz led North Dakota State to its fifth consecutive FCS title last season. He passed for 1,651 yards and 17 touchdowns during his senior year that was shortened by a wrist injury.

"It'll be exciting to see where we both fall, and hopefully we play each other for a long time," Wentz said.

Goff and Wentz share the same agency, Rep 1 Sports, and got to know each other when they trained together while preparing for the draft.

"I think our careers will kind of be linked together for forever," Goff said. "But yeah, we're friendly and competitive, just like any other quarterbacks that train together, and had a good time getting to know him."

For a long time, it looked as if quarterback was the least likely possibility for the No. 1 pick. Tennessee, which drafted Marcus Mariota in the first round a year ago, was connected to Mississippi

offensive tackle Laremy Tunsil for the top spot.

Everything changed two weeks ago when the Titans traded the top selection and two other picks to Los Angeles for a package that included the Rams' first-round picks in each of the next two drafts. Then Cleveland traded the No. 2 pick to Philadelphia, and the top of the first round had a whole new look.

"It was exciting," Wentz said. "Obviously you're aware of what the teams kind of need a little bit, and my agents kind of filled me in a little bit. But it was exciting. Anytime there's movement in the draft, it's always fun."

The 6-5, 310-pound Tunsil, who helped clear the way for the Rebels' prolific rushing attack, brushed off the personal fallout from the trades like he discards would-be tacklers.

"Things happen for a reason, and whatever team I get to go to, I'll be happy with," he said.

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