

NFL Draft | Starts Thursday, 5 p.m. (ESPN)

Draft of mystery

Unorthodox offseason means unusual, unpredictable picks

BY ARNIE STAPLETON
AP Pro Football Writer

About the only certainty in the confounding 2021 NFL draft is Trevor Lawrence going to the Jaguars with the first overall pick. Beyond that, it's really anybody's guess following the most unorthodox of run-ups to the league's annual parade of prospects. COVID-19 opt-outs and shortened or shelved seasons in the fall were followed by the combine cancellation and the elimination of in-person interviews this spring because of the pandemic. Teams had to rely on Zoom calls to get to know players. "I've said this before: what we're doing is educated guessing," Giants general manager Dave Gettleman said. "So, this makes us a little more uneducated, not having this personal touch with these players."

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About the only certainty in the confounding 2021 NFL draft is former Clemson quarterback **Trevor Lawrence** going to the Jaguars with the first overall pick Thursday in Cleveland. This year's NFL draft is like none other because teams weren't able to meet face-to-face with the pool of prospects outside the lucky few who got to play in the Senior Bowl after a season that was marked by opt-outs and cancellations. John Bazemore/AP file

NASCAR CUP SERIES

Keselowski claims 6th win at Talladega with overtime pass

BY JOHN ZENOR
Associated Press

TALLADEGA, Ala. — Brad Keselowski did it exactly right this time and finally got that last-lap victory, winning in overtime Sunday at Talladega Superspeedway. Keselowski is the ninth driver to win through 10 NASCAR Cup races this season and avenged the embarrassing Team Penske gaffe in the season-opening Daytona 500 when he and teammate Joey Logano triggered a last-lap crash as Keselowski tried to pass Logano for the victory. Keselowski led just one lap, the last one, in a race that featured 35 lead changes among 27 drivers. "The whole race I had a couple opportunities to take the lead, but I just kept thinking, 'Man, keep your car in one piece,'" Keselowski said. Logano was involved in an airborne wreck and called on NASCAR to change to dangerous racing conditions at Daytona and Talladega. "On one hand, I am mad about being in the crash and on the other, I am happy to be alive," Logano said. "On another hand, I am wondering when we are going to stop because this is dangerous doing what we are doing. I got a roll bar in my head. That is not OK. I am one hit away from the same situation Ryan Newman just went through. I just don't feel like that is acceptable." Newman escaped serious injury



Brad Keselowski celebrates after winning the Geico 500 NASCAR Sprint Cup auto race at Talladega Superspeedway on Sunday in Talladega, Alabama. Butch Dill/via AP

racing for the win on the final lap of the 2020 Daytona 500. The victory, Keselowski's sixth at Talladega, came after team owner Roger Penske pulled the three Team Penske drivers and affiliate Matt DiBenedetto onto a call this week to discuss his expectations on how they should race Sunday. Penske refused to accept another Daytona disaster when Logano or Keselowski should have won the race but instead of working together the two triggered a fiery crash that also collected a third Penske car. William Byron was second, Daytona 500 winner Michael McDow-

ell third and Kevin Harvick a season-high fourth. DiBenedetto, who led 28 laps, finished fifth but gave away the win with a late lane change that allowed to Keselowski to surge to the front. Kaz Grala finished a career-best sixth and was followed by Tyler Reddick and Austin Dillon in a trio of Chevrolets. Ford drivers took spots nine through 13 and the highest finishing Toyota driver was Christopher Bell in 17th. Keselowski tied Dale Earnhardt Jr. and Jeff Gordon with six wins each at Talladega.

PGA TOUR

Aussies win Zurich Classic in a playoff

BY BRETT MARTEL
Associated Press

AVONDALE, La. — Cameron Smith and Marc Leishman outlasted Louis Oosthuizen and Charl Schwartzel to win the Zurich Classic in a playoff that capped a tight and tense final round Sunday. Smith and Leishman won with a par on their second trip up the par-5 18th after Oosthuizen pushed his tee shot into the water and narrowly missed an 11-foot putt for par. The Australians forced the playoff by shooting a 2-under 70 in alternate-shot play at the PGA Tour's lone regular-season team event. Oosthuizen and Schwartzel began the round with a one-stroke lead, but shot a 71 with three pars and two bogeys. It's Smith's third career victory — second at the Zurich team event — and best result since tying for second at the pandemic-delayed 2020 Masters last November. It's also his sixth top 10 since the current tour season started last October. Smith's last victory came at the 2020 Sony Open in Hawaii. It was Leishman's sixth career victory, his best result since tying for fifth at the Masters this month and his first win since the 2020 Farmers Insurance Open. The climactic finish capped off a compelling duel between two teams that teed off together in the final grouping and took turns holding leads that never grew to more than two strokes. Peter Uihlein and Richy Werenski shot a 67, with six birdies and one bogey, to shoot up the leaderboard from 18th to third.

NBA

Morant, Grizzlies beat Blazers again

PORTLAND — Ja Morant had 28 points and the Memphis Grizzlies beat the Portland Trail Blazers for the second time in three days, 120-113 on Sunday. Jonas Valanciunas, back after missing three games because of concussion protocol, added 21 points and 10 rebounds. CJ McCollum had 27 points for the Blazers. They have lost five straight and nine of its last 11 to fall to seventh in the Western Conference — a half-game ahead of Memphis. Jusuf Nurkic had 16 points and 19 rebounds. Sunday's contest was the second of three meetings between the two teams in less than a week. Morant had 33 points and 13 assists in a 130-128 Memphis victory over the Blazers on Friday night. Memphis stretched the lead to as many as 16 points in the third quarter but Portland closed the gap to 94-92 on Carmelo Anthony's pullup 3-pointer with just over 10 minutes left. Portland rallied, getting to 114-111 on Nurkic's layup and free throw with 58.3 seconds left. After Morant's free throws, Norman Powell's layup made it a three-point game. Morant added another pair of free throw before Damian Lillard missed on a 3-point attempt that all but ended it. Lillard finished with 23 points.

— Associated Press

MLB

E-Rod leads Red Sox past Mariners

BOSTON — After a lost year due to COVID-related heart problems, Eduardo Rodriguez is back atop the Red Sox rotation. The Boston left-hander struck out eight Mariners in six innings to beat Seattle 5-3 on Sunday and remain unbeaten on the season. The Red Sox had lost three of four since his previous outing. "That's what aces do," Red Sox manager Alex Cora said. "They put their team on their back and they carry us to a 'W.'" Rodriguez (4-0) gave up six hits — five of them doubles — and no walks to help the Red Sox earn their major league-leading 11th comeback victory of the season. He won 19 games in 2019 and then missed all of last season with inflammation in his heart muscles as a result of COVID-19. Rodriguez has lasted at least five innings in 32 straight starts dating to May of 2019. The Red Sox have won his last eight outings and the team is 49-12 in his starts since the beginning of the 2018 season. J.D. Martinez had two more doubles, giving him 10 for the year — the most in baseball. He also ended the game tops in hits, 30, tied with Xander Bogaerts, who had a double of his own to help the Red Sox split the four-game series and improve to .500 at Fenway Park. Seattle starter Nick Marguevicius (0-2) got just one out while allowing four runs in the first inning. He faced seven batters and walked four of them — two with the bases loaded — while also allowing two hits.

— Associated Press