

## NFL DRAFT

## Some say Ducks' Sewell is overrated

Penel Sewell is considered by most draft evaluators as the best offensive lineman in the 2021 NFL draft.

The former Oregon Duck's combination of power, athleticism and speed is a potent mix that has elevated him to a lofty status in the draft. Sewell is just 20, meaning there is a high ceiling for his upside. Those attributes have many draft analysts predicting Sewell won't last beyond the 10th overall pick in the draft, which begins Thursday.

Sewell played at the left tackle position for two seasons with the Ducks. He was exceptional in pass protection, allowing no sacks over 926 snaps in 2019, and only one sack over 1,376 career snaps.

Not everyone is enamored with Sewell and there are critics dissecting his game. The critics point to Sewell's age, thin body of work (21 games at Oregon) and his decision to opt out of the 2020 season due to the coronavirus pandemic.

"A bit overrated. He is a naturally thick, big-framed tackle. His work-out was actually better than he played," one anonymous scout told theathletic.com. "I didn't think he was super explosive. He covered people up with his size, and he would gouge somebody just because he was bigger than them. And name one pass rusher he actually played against in the Pac-12 who's on a draft board?"

The criticism could be gaining some traction, potentially leading to Sewell's stock taking a hit. "I put the tape on expecting to see Jonathan Ogden or Joe Thomas or Walter Jones or Orlando Pace, and I didn't see it," one longtime scout told theathletic.com.

Jones was the sixth overall pick in the 1997 NFL draft and Ogden was the fourth pick in the 1996 draft. Both players have been inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame. Thomas, the No. 3 pick in the 2007 draft, retired in 2017 and is expected to be inducted into the Hall of Fame when he's eligible.

— The Oregonian

## HOCKEY

## NHL games to air on TNT network

The National Hockey League is coming to TNT.

The league and Turner Sports on Tuesday announced a seven-year agreement that begins next season.

The deal means NBC's run of covering the league ends after this season's playoffs. NBC has broadcast games since 2005 and is in the final season of a 10-year contract.

When the Stanley Cup Finals are shown on Turner in 2023, it will mark the first time since 1994 they will be only on cable.

The TNT arrangement includes three Stanley Cup Finals, up to 72 regular-season games, half of the first- and second-round playoff games on TNT and TBS as well as a conference final series. One of the regular-season games will be the NHL Winter Classic, which is played on New Year's Day.

It also includes live streaming and digital rights across WarnerMedia properties, including HBO Max and Bleacher Report.

— Associated Press

## NFL

## Who will it be at No. 3?

San Francisco 49ers face consequential decision at quarterback in draft

BY JOSH DUBOW  
AP Pro Football Writer

SANTA CLARA, Calif. —

**K**yle Shanahan gets advice about what the San Francisco 49ers should do with the No. 3 draft pick wherever he goes these days.

Niners fans he runs into at restaurants, parents of his kids' friends, referees at youth soccer games or longtime pals are happy to let the 49ers coach know which quarterback they believe he and general manager John Lynch should take after trading three first-round picks to move up to No. 3 in the NFL draft on Thursday night.

While the public sentiment among 49ers fans is pointing to Ohio State's Justin Fields and North Dakota State's Trey Lance as the top two choices after Trevor Lawrence and Zach Wilson are projected to go off the board at No. 1 and 2, Shanahan said he won't be swayed by public opinion and that Alabama's Mac Jones is squarely in contention.

"We do this for a living, and I think people should be proud of us that we won't let that affect our decision," Shanahan said. "Then it's up to us to live with the consequences."



Mark Tenally/AP file

San Francisco 49ers head coach Kyle Shanahan is reportedly deciding among Ohio State's Justin Fields, North Dakota State's Trey Lance and Alabama's Mac Jones for the No. 3 pick in the NFL draft.

*"We decided we needed a starting quarterback. So we traded two ones to get a starting quarterback. That's how much it costs to do these type of things. Or you just sit there and wait and keep your fingers crossed and hope things work out."*

— Kyle Shanahan, San Francisco 49ers head coach

If this pick doesn't work out the consequences for Shanahan and Lynch could be significant based on the heavy price they paid to move up in the draft.

San Francisco dealt the No. 12 pick in this year's draft, first-round picks in 2022 and '23, as well as a 2022 third-rounder to Miami for the third selection

where they could be assured of one of the top passers in a quarterback-rich draft.

Shanahan said it's a "little dramatic" to call this one of the most consequential decisions in franchise history, but it's difficult to find many bigger ones.

"We decided we needed a starting quarterback. So we traded two ones to get a starting quarterback," Shanahan said. "That's how much it costs to do these type of things. Or you just sit there and wait and keep your fingers crossed and hope things work out."

The three likely possibilities offer different attributes and Shanahan said he believed all of them have what it takes to be the kind of quarterbacks teams can win with in the NFL.

Shanahan said he had a preference at the time of the deal in March but nothing "was set in stone."

See **49ers** / A6

## HORSE RACING | KENTUCKY DERBY



Michael Conroy/AP file

Jockey Luis Saez rides Essential Quality to win the Breeders' Cup Juvenile horse race at Keeneland Race Course in Lexington, Kentucky, in November. Essential Quality is expected to be the first gray horse favored to win the Kentucky Derby in 25 years.

## Shades of gray rare among Derby favorites, winners

BY STEPHEN WHYNO  
Associated Press

Chris Goodlett has walked around Churchill Downs many times since joining the Kentucky Derby Museum and heard admiring fans say to each other, "Oh, look at that beautiful gray horse."

## INSIDE

• Essential Quality a 2-1 favorite, **A6**

Not many of those remarks have come while looking at the winner's circle after the Derby. Essential Quality is the first gray horse to go off as the Kentucky Derby favorite in 25 years. A gray horse hasn't won the Derby since Giacomo in 2005, and only eight grays have won it since 1930.

According to historians and experts, there are just fewer gray horses compared to more traditional chestnut, bay, brown and black horses, and therefore fewer chances to win the sport's biggest race.

"That genetic determinant of the gray color is just not at

a high enough frequency in the thoroughbred population," said Dr. James MacLeod, professor of veterinary science at the University of Kentucky's Gluck Equine Research Center. "There's no functional connection between the single-gene determinant of gray coat color and the genes associated with elite athletic performance in thoroughbred racehorses."

Gray does belong in the spectrum of colors for elite racehorses over the past century, especially in recent decades. Silver Charm won the first two legs of the Triple Crown in 1997 before falling short in the Belmont, and Winning Colors in 1988 remains the most recent filly to win the Derby.

Success has just been rare, with 110 grays running in the Derby over the past 90 years and 7.3% winning it. Goodlett can't say how that compares to horses of other colors, which have won the other 82 most recent incarnations of the race.

See **Derby** / A6

## YOUTH SPORTS | COMMENTARY

## Governor's office, state leaders have a blind spot when it comes to sports

BY JOHN CANZANO

The Oregonian

I grew up playing sports. I was crazy about them and my parents supported it. In middle school I became the first kid in my school's history to play all seven sports that were offered.

My mother was the taxi driver.

Give her the credit.

I played three sports for a couple of years in high school. Later, I played two in college. Now, I'm around sports in my profession and my three daughters love sports themselves. What I'm saying is, when I drive past a field or court and see a game going on, I have a good idea what's happening out there.

Our state leadership does not. The Oregon Health Authority doesn't get it. Governor Kate Brown's office doesn't see it. She would have done better in the last year with a stronger staff around her. The whole enterprise has a glaring blind spot when it comes to youth sports.

Give our state leaders some credit for being willing to re-evaluate their repeated mistakes. They've revisited a handful of mandates that had errors and omissions in them. But often, their fixes create more questions. In the end, I'm left puzzled as to why our state leaders haven't moved to get a voice in the room who understands the logistics, challenges and nuances that come with youth sports.

They badly need one.

Runners, competing outdoors, were left masked up and gasping for oxygen for too long over the last year. Soccer players are still stuck.

*Runners, competing outdoors, were left masked up and gasping for oxygen for too long over the last year. Soccer players are still stuck. A centerfielder in youth baseball or softball, standing at a great distance from anyone else, is still being told to wear a mask or risk ejection.*

A centerfielder in youth baseball or softball, standing at a great distance from anyone else, is still being told to wear a mask or risk ejection. I have a pile of emails and letters from concerned parents who aren't just annoyed, they're terrified.

One mother wrote just today of her soccer-playing daughter, "She was playing the second half when she came over to me on the sidelines crying and gasping. She had been 'breathing' in through her mask and couldn't catch her breath."

The kid is 7 years old. I'd give the OHA and Gov. Brown credit for calling an audible at the line of scrimmage this week. But I'm not sure they'd understand the analogy.

I'll just say I'm glad they're now allowing some cross-country runners and track and field competitors to pull the mask down if there's nobody within six feet. But their new mandate has some puzzling gaps in it, including one for soccer.

Has anyone who makes the rules ever been to a track meet?

A diamond?

Played in a youth soccer match? Or bothered to watch one?

At the very beginning of the pandemic, in that initial news conference in March

2020, our public officials were announcing shutdowns and alerting the public of the dangers. A reporter asked Gov. Brown and the OHA officials where this left the status of Oregon and Oregon State's September home football games.

Our state officials laughed out loud. It was a tell, folks. Our leaders viewed college football as some silly and unimportant side show. They didn't relate to the 40,000-plus fans who attend a game on a college football weekend and plan their lives around it. They didn't view the university athletic departments the same as other state businesses, never mind that OSU and Oregon would later tell me they suffered collective net losses of \$80 million-plus last year.

There are 99,000 high school athletes who participate in OSAA sports this year. Hundreds of thousands more play youth sports. Do our leaders see them? Will they listen? Even to the OSAA, who is desperate for answers? Those kids will grow up and become voters in our state. Their parents already vote. Turns out the most powerful lobbyist group in Oregon remains largely ignored and I wonder if anyone in Salem is even aware of it.

They'll pay for that one day. See **Youth sports** / A7