

NFL or college? Alabama's Tagovailoa still weighing options

By John Zenor

The Associated Press

TUSCALOOSA, Ala. — Tua Tagovailoa said that being assured he'd likely remain a high National Football League (NFL) draft pick could make "the biggest decision of my life" a little easier.

The Alabama quarterback is still weighing his options and going through rehab for the right hip injury that ended his junior season — and potentially his career with the 11th-ranked Crimson Tide. Once regarded as a potential No. 1 overall pick, Tagovailoa said if he feels he'll still be a Top 10 or 15 pick, that might be too tempting to stick around.

"I think that'd be tough to pass up," he said, sitting in a chair where the podium normally rests during Alabama news conferences. "But I think there's a lot more to it than that in some aspects."

Tagovailoa stopped there, saying he wants to have that conversation with his family not reporters.

He walked into the room on crutches, sporting dinosaur-covered red pajama pants, saying it looked "like a (Nick) Saban press conference" before doing an impression of his coach. He ended the news conference by telling a reporter he liked his Christmas sweater.

In between the quips, he discussed his uncertain future and the big decision of whether to stay in Tuscaloosa or enter the draft.

Tagovailoa was injured when he was dragged down by two Mississippi State



defenders on November 16. He had surgery two days later in Houston.

The quarterback doesn't have a timeline on when he will make that decision, saying it could come right before the January 20 deadline for underclassmen to declare for the NFL draft.

"This is probably going to be the biggest decision of my life," Tagovailoa said. "This is where I seek advice from what I believe and this is where I seek advice from my parents. But truly at the end of the day, the decision comes down to me, whether I feel like it's right for me to stay or whether it's right for me to go."

"It's just a really, really big decision, and everybody just wants to know. That's what makes it even bigger, I'd say."

In the meantime, he has started the

rehab process in Birmingham, Alabama, and is getting treatment at Alabama's athletic facilities while back in class. He said the medical staff was surprised at how well he did pushing against resistance with his right leg.

Tagovailoa said he won't be able to twist his hip as much inward but doesn't believe that will affect his football ability.

"What the doctors have said is they expect a full recovery, that I'd be able to go out there and play football again at 100%," Tagovailoa said. "I just won't be able to rotate it internally the same way."

He's less certain about whether he'll return to football for the 2020 season or beyond. He pointed out that this isn't a standard, somewhat predictable football injury and recovery process.

WEIGHTY DECISION. Tua Tagovailoa said that being assured he'd likely remain a high National Football League draft pick could make "the biggest decision of my life" a little easier. The Alabama quarterback is still weighing his options and going through rehab for the right hip injury that ended his junior season — and potentially his career with the Crimson Tide. (AP Photo/Vasha Hunt)

Tagovailoa said he spoke with former Auburn star Bo Jackson — who had his NFL career cut short by a hip injury. He said Jackson told him not to rush things, but Tagovailoa also said the injuries were very different.

"I've played hurt many times over the course of the two years that I've been the starter here, but I'd like to say this is just a totally different situation," Tagovailoa said. "This is a unique situation. This isn't something that I can rush. If I want to play to my full potential, I know that I can't just come back and play on it as if it were my ankle."

"It's just something that I need to take into consideration. Me wanting to play, I think a lot of that has to go into my decision-making, too, as to whether I stay or leave."

Tagovailoa has already set the Alabama record for passing touchdowns with 87 and his 7,442 passing yards ranks third in school history. He watched from the sidelines as No. 11 Alabama fell 45-48 to rival Auburn, ending the Tide's playoff hopes.

"It's really tough being able to watch your guys be able to go out and play and not be able to do anything to help them," Tagovailoa said. "The only thing that I could do is just try to encourage them."

Andrew Yang having fun, but Democrat's message is serious

By Sara Burnett

The Associated Press

CHICAGO — Of all the many Democrats running for president, Andrew Yang is having the most fun.

Unburdened by expectations and unbothered by political convention, the tech entrepreneur has spent months cruising around the country, mixing his dark warnings about America's new tech economy with doses of humor and unscripted bluntness.

He has crowd-surfed, skateboarded, and made memorable quips at nationally televised debates. At a new office opening in New Hampshire, he sprayed whipped cream from an aerosol can into the mouths of hyped-up supporters. Over the weekend in Las Vegas, he was raising money for his campaign at a high-roller poker tournament featuring World Series of Poker champions.

The formula has made him one of this 2020 campaign's phenomenons. His outsider bid is fuelled by policy, personality, and technology. It's outlasted the White House campaigns this year of some governors and senators, and seems to be following the advice of a former state party chairman who said voters can tell whether candidates are enjoying themselves.

Yang's campaign may not have him on track to winning the nomination, but it may be delivering sober warnings to conventional Democrats about the kinds of voters



they're leaving behind.

"You can tell if someone's like gritting their teeth or if they're genuinely happy to be there and want to talk to you," Yang said between events at two Chicago universities, including a rally that drew about 1,500 people. The former state chairman's guidance, he said, has "made it easier for me to lean into just how I would naturally be as a person."

"I think if people dig into my campaign they see it's a very, very serious message," Yang said. "We are going through the greatest economic transformation in our country's history and we need to rewrite the rules of this economy to work for us. So people, I believe, are savvy

YANG GANG. Democratic presidential candidate former technology executive Andrew Yang leans on his wife Evelyn while participating at a Fair Fight phone bank at Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta. Unburdened by expectations and unbothered by political convention, the tech entrepreneur has spent months cruising around the country, mixing his dark warnings about America's new tech economy with doses of humor and unscripted bluntness. (Bob Andres/Atlanta Journal-Constitution via AP)

enough to know that you can have a very, very serious message and actually enjoy yourself while you're delivering it."

Yang was on the bubble to qualify for this month's debate after appearing in the first five. He has hovered in the low single digits in polling along with several candidates who trail former Vice President Joe Biden, senators Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts and Bernie Sanders of Vermont, and mayor Pete Buttigieg of South Bend, Indiana.

But what started out as an overwhelmingly online fan base of predominantly male techie types has broadened its appeal. After initially self-funding, Yang raised \$10 million in the third quarter. That's more than most rivals, and he said that "we are going to beat that by a mile" in the final three months of this year.

His supporters, known as the Yang Gang, often say the other Democrats in the race to take on President Donald Trump aren't speaking to them or their fears. Many of these backers are young people who say they don't feel aligned with either party.

Several who attended the Chicago events said they supported Sanders in 2016 but grew disillusioned after he didn't win the nomination. Many supported third-party candidates or just stayed home that Election Day, when Hillary Clinton led the ticket. And if Yang isn't the party's nominee, they may do so again in 2020.

"A lot of people aren't trusting the mainstream political candidates and pundits on TV. Yang is kind of like a breath of fresh air," said Ethan Daniels, 23, who supported Sanders in 2016 but voted for Libertarian Gary Johnson in the general election. "I think that's the reason why Trump won the election, because a lot of people are kind of getting tired of the staleness of these politicians who come through, and then nothing in their life changes."

Daniels finished college with degrees in sociology and criminal justice but is still looking for a job in his field. He said he first learned about Yang on a podcast hosted by comedian and former TV host Joe Rogan; that interview has more than 4.5 million views on YouTube. Daniels likes what Yang has to say about artificial intelligence, universal basic income, and video game addiction, topics he says other Democrats "don't want to talk about."

Daniels was among the supporters at the rally wearing

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Berlin zoo reveals names, gender of two twin panda cubs

BERLIN (AP) — The Berlin Zoo's giant panda twins finally have names: Meng Xiang and Meng Yuan — desired dream and fulfilled dream.

According to Chinese tradition, the two cubs were given their names 100 days after they were born in the German capital. Their gender was also revealed: the two are both boys.

The names were presented on wooden signs both in German and Chinese by Berlin mayor Michael Mueller and the Chinese ambassador, Wu Ken.

Afterward, the two cubs were presented to dozens of reporters for the first time in an open glass box containing a heating pad underneath a baby blanket. One of them tried to sleep throughout the showing while the other crawled around wide-eyed turning his rear to the audience several times only to be put back in proper position with his face to the reporters by the two attending zookeepers.

Zookeepers initially hand-fed the cubs — the first giant pandas born in Germany — with bottles of milk pumped from mother Meng Meng, but they now feed on their own.

She and father Jiao Qing came to Germany from China



CUTE CUBS. Giant pandas Meng Meng and Jiao Qing are the parents of Meng Xiang and Meng Yuan, the two cubs that were born on August 31, 2019 at the Berlin Zoo. (2019 Zoo Berlin via AP)

two years ago.

The two little pandas weigh 13.2 pounds each and will be presented to the public at the beginning of next year, once they're able to walk on their own.

There are fewer than 2,000 of the endangered pandas estimated alive in the wild today.