

NFL DRAFT PREVIEW



2012



The QB Quandary: Here We Go Again

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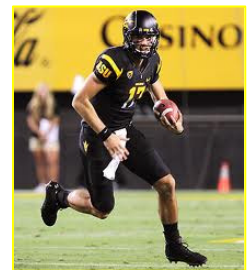
Super Sleepers
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Path to the Draft: Talent at the Top

The 2012 NFL draft will be full of surprises. There seems to be a consensus top five – QB's Andrew Luck and Robert Griffin III, OT Matt Kalil, CB Morris Claiborne, and WR Robert Blackmon. With a fairly steep drop off after the top five picks, things should be very unpredictable, resembling the Wild West as much as an NFL Draft.

Outside of the quarterback, each position seems to have a unanimous top player, with a couple tier two prospects, and then the drop-off begins. This is a tough year to project in what round players will be drafted for several reasons. Because the NFL has become so scheme-diverse, players will have very different rankings across the individual draft boards. For example, a big run-stuffing DT prospect like Baylor's Nicolas Jean-Baptiste could carry a 3rd round grade for a team utilizing a 3-4 defense, and carry a 5th or 6th round grade for a 4-3 defensive team not looking for a nose tackle. A team using a two-running back rotation will likely covet a speedster like Miami's Lamar Miller, whereas a team looking for an every down back might go in a different direction. Each year the NFL playbooks and schemes get more complicated, and now more than ever beauty is truly in the eye of the beholder of the scheme.

QB: The Luck vs. Griffin III debate has dominated the headlines, but there are a few side stories that make this class interesting. Texas A&M's Ryan Tannehill could very well go in the top ten, with the Browns and Dolphins popular candidates. Tannehill is raw but has flashed the skills of a franchise QB. He may need to sit for a year or so to get accustomed to the speed of the NFL. Options after the big three include Oklahoma State's Brandon Weeden who put up big numbers but will turn 29 this season, Michigan State's Kirk Cousins, who appears to be more of a game manager than gunslinger, and Arizona State's 6'8" Brock Osweiler, who is surprisingly athletic for his size and could develop into a solid starter.



Osweiler: Late round option



Ganaway

RB: Trent Richardson is the uncontested number one back in this class, but there are some nice talents that will be available in the first three rounds, as well as some sleepers. Speedsters like Miami's Lamar Miller and Virginia Tech's David Wilson and all-around back Doug Martin from Boise State will likely be the next three off the board after Richardson. Mid-round options include SDSU's Ronnie Hillman, Temple's Bernard Pierce, and Baylor's big back Terrance Ganaway. As the NFL moves to a pass-first league, running backs are no longer a premium and can be found for a cheap price in the middle and late rounds of the draft.

WR: A very intriguing group that has a bit of everything. Classic #1 WR's like Oklahoma State's Justin Blackmon and Notre Dame's Michael Floyd will go in the top 15, and the next tier is also impressive. Baylor's Kendall Wright is a speedster with great hands, South Carolina's Alshon Jeffery is a big target, and Rutgers' Mohamed Sanu is a prototypical possession receiver. There are plenty of mid-round steals available. Appalachian State's Brian Quick had 2,000 yards receiving in his senior year, Iowa's Marvin McNutt is a converted QB who is still learning the position, and Wisconsin's Nick Toon's has football in his genes – his father is Jets legend Al Toon.

OL: This year's class offers franchise players at all three positions – USC tackle Matt Kalil, Stanford guard David DeCastro and Wisconsin center Peter Konz. There are several options at tackle and guard that will go on to be quality NFL starters and even Pro Bowl players. Ohio State's Mike Adams and Georgia's Cordy Glenn are college tackles that could be moved to guard in the pros and should be day one starters. Other guard options include Wisconsin technician Kevin Zeitler and small school studs Brandon Brooks from Miami of Ohio and Amini Silatolu from Midwestern State.



Brooks



Burfict

LB: 2012 offers a mixed bag of 'backers. Alabama has a pair of LB's in Dont'a Hightower and Courtney Upshaw. Hightower is a big run stuffing middle linebacker, while Upshaw will likely be converted from his college position of DE to OLB as a pass rushing specialist. Boston College's MLB Luke Kuechly has tremendous instincts and coverage skills. North Carolina's Zach Brown runs like a safety and has a nose for the ball. Mid-round options include Utah State's Bobby Wagner, Miami's Sean Spence, and Arizona State's phenom Vontaze Burfict, who has all the talent in the world but tons of character issues.

CB: This is a talented group with several cover corner options in LSU's Morris Claiborne, South Carolina's Stephon Gilmore and North Alabama's Janoris Jenkins. There are plenty of zone specialists as well, like Alabama's Dre Kirpatrick, Nebraska's Alex Dennard and Virginia's Chase Minnifield. It's a fairly deep class with mid-round options like Coastal Carolina's Josh Norman, Iowa State's Leonard Johnson, and Louisiana-Lafayette's Dwight "Bill" Bentley. A side note that may or may not be of importance - most of this year's class check in at less than six feet. You have to wonder how they'll fare against big NFL receivers like Calvin Johnson, Larry Fitzgerald and A.J. Green.



Bentley: Small School Surprise

Cover Story

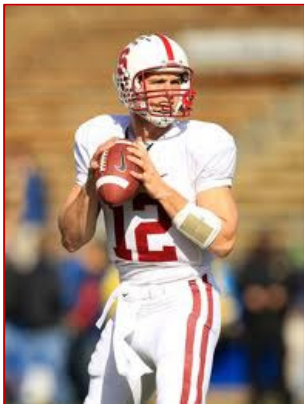
Luck & RGIII - Manning vs. Leaf all Over Again?

The year was 1998. The Indianapolis Colts and San Diego Chargers sat one and two at the top of the first round of the draft, both in need of a quarterback. For two years Peyton Manning was considered the top college quarterback, and many were surprised when he announced he'd return to Tennessee for the 1997 season, his senior year. In that year, another quarterback – Washington State's Ryan Leaf – burst onto the scene, putting up Manning-like numbers. The choice wasn't easy, but in the end the Colts wisely went with Manning's track record over the buzz and potential of Leaf. Manning is a hall of famer and Leaf is one of the draft's biggest busts.

Here we are fourteen years later as a similar situation unfolds. The Colts sit at the top of the draft once again, with the Washington Redskins at number two – both in need of a quarterback. For the past two seasons, Stanford's Andrew Luck has been considered the top QB in college, and many were surprised when he returned for his senior season in 2011. But a strange thing happened on the way to the 2012 NFL Draft – the world discovered Robert Griffin III.

RG3 as he's known, won the 2011 Heisman Trophy after a magical season where he led Baylor to a 9-3 record, a #12 ranking in the top 25 and a 67-56 win over Washington in the Alamo Bowl, the second-highest scoring bowl game in NCAA history. The great debate – Luck vs. RGIII – had begun.

Make no mistake; this is not Manning vs. Leaf part II. Luck is clearly the more polished of the two, but RG3 is no one-year wonder like Leaf. Leaf had never completed more than 55% of his passes in college while Griffin is a career 67% passer, including 72% in 2012. That is a phenomenal feat considering he threw for nearly 4,300 yards. Both Luck and RG3 are athletic quarterbacks. RG3 is the better runner, amassing 2,081 yards and 33 TD's on the ground, but many might be surprised when reminded that Luck ran for 957 yards in his three years with the Cardinal.



Luck

The Stats

Andrew Luck

Passing

9,330 yards

82 TD's

22 INT's

67% Comp. Pct.

Rushing

957 yards

7 rush TD's

The Stats

Robert Griffin

Passing

10,336 yards

78 TD's

17 INT's

67% Comp. Pct.

Rushing

2,081 yards

33 TD's



Griffin III

The bottom line is this – the situation may be similar to 1998, but the results will be much different. Both of these QB's are going to be productive – perhaps great – NFL quarterbacks, and their future in the NFL is now.

Why Rookies Matter

How the 2011 rookie class changed the landscape of the NFL



Cam Newton stood toe to toe with the NFL's best while setting several rookie records

Last season Cam Newton shattered rookie QB records that stood for decades. Andy Dalton and A.J. Green led Cincinnati to the playoffs. LB's Aldon Smith and Von Miller had 25.5 sacks between them. Doug Baldwin became a top receiving option in Seattle. Dallas RB DeMarco Murray had several big games before an injury ended his season. Keep in mind all this was done with a lockout-induced shortened training camp. A slow trend has been developing over the past few years – the rapid development of the rookie. It used to be that a wide receiver needed at least three years to develop. Saints WR Marques Colston changed all of that in 2006 with 70 receptions for 1,038 yards and 8 TD's. Today rookies like A.J. Green and Julio Jones are being penciled in as starters and *expected* to contribute. But it's not just the wideouts – it has become a league-wide trend across the board for all rookies. The question is – why?

Even though the NCAA serves as a minor league of sorts for the NFL, it is the college game which has been dictating the trends at the pro level as of late. From the NFL incorporating the "wildcat" offense to the evolution of the TE to a pass-catching weapon and the proliferation of spread offenses – what begins in the NCAA is landing in the NFL. Because of this trend, the rookies are coming in more pro-ready. The speed of the game is still a big adjustment but the playbooks are less complicated compared to their college days and players are able to digest and make calls and reads at a high level early in their careers.

New changes to the college game has been non-traditional defensive fronts, like a 2-4-5 look where there are only 2 linemen, 4 linebackers and 5 defensive backs. It will be interesting to see if these odd fronts make their way to the NFL – so stay tuned!



What draft pick will lead their team to the playoffs in 2012?



You Snooze, you Lose!

Don't Miss Out on Our Super Sleepers

Somebody needs to notify the NFL Network that there are more than 32 players in this year's draft. Their capstone "Path to the Draft" show (for the record, we coined that phrase first) has been two months of the same stories on the same players. Guys like undrafted free agents Arian Foster and Victor Cruz continue to prove that it's not when (or if) you are drafted, but what you do once you make an NFL roster. So pay attention NFL Network, here are some sleepers who could make a big impact early despite little draft buzz.

Running Back

Michael Smith, Utah State: Ran a blazing 4.33 40 yard dash at his pro day. Robert Turbin's running mate at Utah State, Smith is the lesser known of the two, but speed is valuable in the NFL, so keep an eye out for Smith.



Ganaway

Terrance Ganaway, Baylor: After three less than stellar seasons, Ganaway exploded in 2011 with 1,547 rushing yards and 21 TD'S. Is he a one-year wonder? How much can you attribute to defenses keying in on Robert Griffin III? Ganaway is a bruising back with good speed and we expect big things.

Lennon Creer, Louisiana-Lafayette: Creer began his college career at Tennessee behind Arian Foster and Montario Hardesty and eventually transferred to Louisiana-Lafayette. The MVP of the East-West Shrine Game is a speedster who could be a steal if he gets past his documented maturity issues.

Wide Receiver

Marvin McNutt, Iowa: McNutt is a large receiver at 6'3" and 215 lbs. He had a big senior year (1,315 yards and 12 TD's) and could make an early splash in the NFL.



McNutt

Defensive End

Justin Francis, Rutgers: Versatile lineman who actually played DT for two years despite being less than 270 lbs. 13 tackles for a loss and 6.5 sacks senior season. Could be the next Geno Atkins.



Ihenacho

Safety

Duke Ihenacho, San Jose State: Aggressive and athletic safety who needs to continue developing his coverage skills, but excellent against the run.



We're Going from Zero to Mock Five with the 2012 Mock Draft!



1. Indianapolis Colts

Andrew Luck, QB, Stanford: Despite the debate, all signs point to the Colts rebuilding their franchise with Andrew Luck. A solid choice who will be a starter from day one.



2. Washington Redskins

Robert Griffin III, QB, Baylor: Redskins have their first true franchise QB since Joe Theismann. Griffin III is a special player who instantly upgrades the position and will be fun to watch in the NFL.



3. Minnesota Vikings

Matt Kalil, OT, USC: Vikes have a lot of options here, but ultimately choose protection for Christian Ponder's blind side with a franchise left tackle.



4. Cleveland Browns

Trent Richardson, RB, Alabama: Cleveland holds the key to the draft here, and may trade down and grab Ryan Tannehill. If they stay put look for them to give Colt McCoy a weapon in the backfield.



5. Tampa Bay Buccaneers

Morris Claiborne, CB, LSU: Division foes feature Drew Brees, Cam Newton and Matt Ryan at QB. In a passing league, CB's are a premium.



6. St. Louis Rams

Justin Blackmon, WR, Oklahoma State: Blackmon is the obvious choice here now that Brandon Lloyd is gone.



7. Jacksonville Jaguars

Michael Floyd, WR, Notre Dame: Jacksonville throws the first big curveball by getting the best weapon available for QB Blaine Gabbert.



8. Miami Dolphins

Melvin Ingram, OLB, South Carolina: Everyone assumes Miami will go Tannehill here because of the Mike Sherman connection, but pressure to win now has them taking this talented defender.



9. Carolina Panthers

Riley Reiff, OT, Iowa: In addition to protecting Cam Newton, the Panthers have three talented running backs they need to clear lanes for.



10. Buffalo Bills

Stephon Gilmore, CB, South Carolina: Buffalo completes the defensive overhaul with this talented defensive back.

Mock Draft Cont.



11. Kansas City Chiefs

David DeCasto, G, Stanford: The Chiefs are still trying to replace Brian Waters. DeCasto is a ten-year starter at the position.



12. Seattle Seahawks

Dontari Poe, DT, Memphis: Seattle has given the offense a lot of attention since Pete Carroll's arrival. They finally turn their attention to defense with the big DT.



13. Arizona Cardinals

Jonathan Martin, OT, Stanford: Arizona has begun rebuilding the offensive line. Martin becomes an instant starter.



14. Dallas Cowboys

Coby Fleener, TE, Stanford: Jerry Jones throws the second curveball of the first round, finding Jason Witten's long-term replacement.



15. Philadelphia Eagles

Quinton Coples, DE, North Carolina: Getting to opposing QB's in the NFC East is a key to victory.



16. New York Jets

Dont'a Hightower, LB, Alabama: Rex Ryan's defense relies heavily on linebacker play, and they need to stay young to make that happen.



17. Cincinnati Bengals

Nick Perry, DE, USC: For being a defensive architect, Marvin Lewis seems to go through a constant rotation of defenders in Cincy.



18. San Diego Chargers

Dre Kirpatrick, CB, Alabama: With Peyton Manning in the division, the Chargers focus needs to be improving the secondary.



19. Chicago Bears

Kendall Wright, WR, Baylor: Bears continue to upgrade their offensive weapons, pairing Wright with new wideout Brandon Marshall.



20. Tennessee Titans

Fletcher Cox, DT, Mississippi State: Jason Jones is gone, and the Titans look to the big man in the middle to replace him.



21. Cincinnati Bengals

Alshon Jeffery, WR, South Carolina: Bengals are looking for a young WR to pair with A.J. Green. They historically draft skill positions high, so look for WR here.

Mock Draft Cont.



22. Cleveland Browns

Ryan Tannehill, QB, Texas A&M: There is a pre-draft buzz surrounding Tannehill, but he's a developmental QB and could fall to the Browns with their second pick.



23. Detroit Lions

Janoris Jenkins, CB, Northern Alabama: The Lions are desperate for help at corner and are forced to look to the troubled Jenkins to help the defense.



24. Pittsburgh Steelers

Luke Kuechly, LB, Boston College: Age and the salary cap caught up with the Steelers, and Kuechly is a great start of the rebuild.



25. Denver Broncos

Michael Brockers, DT, LSU: Brockers gives the Broncos an inside pass rush to match outside rushers Elvis Dumervil and Von Miller.



26. Houston Texans

Cordy Glenn, OT, Georgia: Houston was forced to cut RT Eric Winston in a salary cap move. Glenn is massive and could start as a rookie.



27. New England Patriots

Doug Martin, RB, Boise State: Benjarvus Green-Ellis is gone, and Martin could take over as the every-down back.



28. Green Bay Packers

Mark Barron, S, Alabama: The neck injury to Nick Collins last season has Green Bay looking for a safety. Barron is a great value here.



29. Baltimore Ravens

Kevin Zeitler, G, Wisconsin: Joe Flacco might not want to hear it, but the running game is still the Ravens' bread and butter.



30. San Francisco 49ers

Mike Adams, OT, Ohio State: San Francisco addressed WR and RB in free agency, now it's time to beef up the offensive line.



31. New England Patriots

Courtney Upshaw, DE/LB, Alabama: Many question where he'll play, but you can bet New England will find the perfect place for him.



32. New York Giants

Peter Konz, C/G, Wisconsin: The Giants running game will have a different look next year with the loss of Brandon Jacobs. Konz helps solidify the front five.



THE RATINGS



Quarterback: Two franchise QB's in this year's class, with a possible third in Tannehill. After that there are a lot of question marks.

Who We Love: Robert Griffin III



Griffin is the most mobile pure passer since Randall Cunningham.

1. **Andrew Luck, Stanford:** Griffin gets all the attention for his athleticism, but Luck is a tremendous athlete in his own right. More polished than RG3 at this point, with tremendous arm strength, accuracy, instincts and work ethic.

1A. **Robert Griffin III:** The first rating of its kind in Draft IQ history. RG3 as he's known is such a special player we couldn't justify rating him 2nd. Can do things no other QB in the NFL is capable of, and despite his mobility he prides himself on being a pocket passer first.

3. **Ryan Tannehill, Texas A&M:** Tannehill rounds out the trio of big, athletic passers in the 2012 draft. The difference here is Tannehill will need to sit for a year, while Luck and RG3 are pro-ready now. Strong armed and fairly mobile.

4. **Brandon Weeden, Oklahoma State:** Weeden put up big numbers at Oklahoma State, but his age might scare some teams away. He'll turn 29 this season...not many teams want to build around a soon to be 30-something QB.

5. **Kirk Cousins, Michigan State:** Steadily improved in three years as a starter at Michigan State. Not the biggest or the fastest, but offers intangibles you want in a starting QB.

6. **Brock Osweiler, Arizona State:** There hasn't been a QB this tall since Dan McGuire came out of San Diego State in 1991. Osweiler stands 6'7" and is surprisingly athletic for such a big man. Very intriguing yet raw prospect that could develop behind a veteran quarterback.

7. **Nick Foles, Arizona:** Foles has a similar story to Cousins – steadily improved as a three-year starter at Arizona after transferring (ironically) from Michigan State. Projects as a backup who could develop into a solid NFL starter.

8. **Kellen Moore, Boise State:** What do you do with a QB like Moore? He's college football's all-time winning quarterback, started every game of his career, never thrown for less than 3,500 yards and 25 TD's in a season, defeated big time opponents, but just doesn't have the size or possibly arm strength for the NFL. The next Doug Flutie?

9. **Russell Wilson, Wisconsin:** Much like Moore, Wilson has all the skills and intangibles you want in your quarterback, but at less than 6' he lacks the size necessary in the pros. Like Seneca Wallace, should enjoy a long career as a backup QB.

10. **B.J. Coleman, Chattanooga:** Tennessee transfer who has good size, speed and arm strength but didn't dominate at the lesser FCS level like he should have.

Running Back: Extremely deep group with starting talent into the 4th round.

Who We Love: Ronnie Hillman



Slippery speed back, electric with the ball in his hands.

1. **Trent Richardson, Alabama:** Strong, fast back who can break tackles and find the hole. The only question is what to do in the NFL when the holes are much smaller after running through those big Crimson Tide running lanes?

2. **Doug Martin, Boise State:** Powerful, compact runner who draws comparisons to Ray Rice. Every down back that would normally go higher if the league wasn't currently so pass-happy.

3. **David Wilson, Virginia Tech:** Wilson is a special player with great speed, making him a threat every time the ball in his hands. Big play ability but tends to lose yards trying to do too much at times. Despite small stature, could be an every-down back.

4. **Lamar Miller, Miami:** Game changing back with only two seasons of experience and one 1,000 yard season (1,272 in 2011). Shifty back is a home run threat.

5. **Chris Polk, Washington:** Steady running back who lacks breakaway speed, but one of the few every-down backs at the top of the group. Rushed for more than 1,400 yards in two straight seasons.

6. **LaMichael James, Oregon:** James is a highly productive college running back (5,082 rushing yards in his career), but there are question marks. Small frame but withstood nearly 800 carries at Oregon. Unorthodox offense was nothing like what he'll have to learn in the pros. Big risk/reward pick.
7. **Ronnie Hillman, San Diego State:** Put up big numbers for the Aztecs. Instinctive back with good speed. Could be a mid-round steal as an every-down back in the LeSean McCoy mold.
8. **Robert Turbin, Utah State:** Big back who can get tough inside yards and break the occasional long run. Tore his ACL in 2010 but bounced back with a 1,500 yard season in 2011.
9. **Bernard Pierce, Temple:** Three year starter is a patient runner but battled injuries throughout career. May need to be paired with a change of pace back to preserve his career at the pro level.
10. **Isaiah Pead, Cincinnati:** Pead is a football player and playmaker, just not an every down back in the NFL. Great special teamer, speed back, and receiver out of the backfield and a team should utilize his skills wisely to maximize his talents.

Wide Receiver: A little bit of everything in this year's group – experienced, raw, fast, and possession receivers are all available.

Who We Love: Brian Quick



Big receiver, bigger production, great things await him in the NFL.

1. **Justin Blackmon, Oklahoma State:** Big bodied wideout who moves very well for his size. Blackmon has great hands and uses his body to maneuver defenders out of position.
2. **Michael Floyd, Notre Dame:** Floyd is an incredibly talented and productive wideout with some off-field issues (Two alcohol related arrests in college). He's rising quick with a strong pro day workout and could be a top-ten pick.
3. **Kendall Wright, Baylor:** RG3's go-to receiver, Wright put up 108 receptions for more than 1,600 yards in 2011. A playmaker that can play both outside and in the slot. The only major concern is a slow 40 time at the combine.

4. **Stephen Hill, Georgia Tech:** This ranking should be partially credited to Calvin Johnson and Demaryius Thomas – the last two Tech receivers with freakish size and speed who excelled in the NFL. Like Thomas, Hill will need a year or two of seasoning before realizing his potential. 6'4" and a 4.36 40 yard dash should push him into the late 1st or early 2nd round.
5. **Mohamed Sanu, Rutgers:** Big wideout in the Marques Colston mold. Isn't the fastest but managed 115 receptions in 2011. Skills should translate to a solid #2 receiver.
6. **Brian Quick, Appalachian State:** Quick is big (6'4" 220 lbs.) and fast for his size. Only played one year of high school football, so he's still developing as a player. Dominated FCS with 2,001 receiving yards in 2011. You read that right.
7. **Alshon Jeffery, South Carolina:** A bit of an enigma, as he had a disappointing junior year after a breakout 2010. Didn't run the 40 at the combine, then shed 15 pounds and ran it at his pro day. An awful lot of questions surround this talented prospect.
8. **A.J. Jenkins, Illinois:** Consistently improved during his four years at Illinois, capping off a solid career with 90 receptions for 1,276 yards and 8 TD's his senior year.
9. **Reuben Randle, LSU:** We'll forgive Randle for the lack of production due to the stiffer competition in the SEC, but we ranked him just below Jenkins because of a lack of straight-line speed. Could serve as a #3 WR or low-end #2.
10. **Chris Givens, Wake Forest:** Speed receiver really came on his senior year with 83 receptions for 1,330 yards and 9 TD's.

Tight End: Average class after a few strong years that featured Rob Gronkowski, Jimmy Graham and Aaron Hernandez.

Who We Love: Brian Linthicum



Finally started as a senior, and the best may be yet to come.

1. **Coby Fleener, Stanford:** Big, athletic TE with soft hands. He didn't put up big numbers at Stanford, but is a decent blocker with the athleticism featured in the new prototypical pass-catching TE in the pros.

2. **Dwayne Allen, Clemson:** Allen appears to be the new mold of TE in college – large and athletic with average blocking skills. Lacks the top-end speed to be elite, but should be productive in a passing offense.
3. **Michael Egnew, Missouri:** Teams will be on the lookout for the next Jimmy Graham, and Egnew could fit the bill. The question is if the 2010 All-Big 12 TE is the next Graham or Chase Coffman.
4. **Orson Charles, Georgia:** Charles offers more than Allen from a blocking standpoint, but was arrested for a DUI in March. Any arrest so close to the draft raises red flags.
5. **George Bryan, N.C. State:** Teams looking for a blocking TE should look to Bryan, who also has great hands and a knack for getting open despite a lack of speed.
6. **Ladarius Green, Louisiana-Lafayette:** 6-6, 240 pounder who averaged 18 yards per catch in 2010. Battled minor injuries during his career and didn't compete against top defenses, but should be a productive pass-catching TE in the NFL.
7. **Rhett Ellison, USC:** Team leader who projects as an H-back after three years at TE and one at FB. Great work ethic prompted USC to rename their "Trojan Way" leadership award the "Rhett 'The Machine' Ellison Leadership Award." Few college seniors can claim that accolade.
8. **Brian Linthicum, Michigan State:** One-year starter who saved the best for last, with 115 receiving yards in the Outback Bowl win over Georgia. Smart player who could add some weight and become a nice all-around TE.
9. **Kevin Koger, Michigan:** Koger's best football could be in front of him. Has the size and speed to develop into an all-around TE, but a hamstring injury kept him out of pre-draft workouts. Scouts trying to figure him out will have to put faith in his average body of work at Michigan.
10. **James Hanna, Oklahoma:** His production doesn't match his athleticism. Could be a nice late-round value if a team is willing to be patient and let him develop.



LaDarius Green racked up 606 receiving yards and 8 TD's in 2011

Offensive Tackle



Osemele

1. Matt Kalil, USC
2. Riley Reiff, Iowa
3. Jonathan Martin, Stanford
4. Mike Adams, Ohio State
5. Kelechi Osemele, Iowa State
6. Zebrie Sanders, Florida State
7. Bobby Massie, Ole Miss
8. Jeff Allen, Illinois
9. Andrew Datko, Florida State
10. Nate Potter, Boise State

Offensive Guard



Glenn

1. David DeCastro, Stanford
2. Cordy Glenn, Georgia
3. Kevin Zeitler, Wisconsin
4. Brandon Washington, Miami
5. Brandon Brooks, Miami (Ohio)
6. Amini Silatolu, Midwestern State
7. Senio Kelemete, Washington
8. Joe Looney, Wake Forest
9. Lucas Nix, Pittsburgh
10. Adam Gettis, Iowa

Center



Konz

1. Peter Konz, Wisconsin
2. Ben Jones, Georgia
3. Michael Brewster, Ohio State
4. Philip Blake, Baylor
5. David Molk, Michigan

Defensive End: As the NFL evolves to a passing league, so do the men chasing the QB. Smaller, more athletic DE's are all the rage this year.

Who We Love: Shea McClellin



The big Irishman is always around the ball and making tackles.

1. **Quinton Coples, North Carolina:** Boom or bust project that compares to Julius Peppers. Big question marks surrounding his attitude and motivation.

2. **Melvin Ingram, South Carolina:** A bit raw but will develop with solid coaching – a lot like the scouting report on Jason Pierre Paul coming out of school.
3. **Nick Perry, USC:** Racked up 21.5 sacks and nearly 30 tackles for loss in three years at USC. A bit less explosive than the two men ranked above him, but disruptive nonetheless.
4. **Shea McClellin, Boise State:** Not the sackmaster a lot of scouts are currently looking for, but a complete player who is versatile enough to play DE or LB.
5. **Whitney Mercilus, Illinois:** Like Pat Angerer, wins our “best name” award, and he is merciless when rushing the passer. The only problem is that he only did it consistently for one year. Sack total jumped from 1 to 16 in his final year.
6. **Vinny Curry, Marshall:** A strong showing at the Senior Bowl helped boost Curry’s stock. Solid tackler with the speed to get to the QB. Should start at the next level.
7. **Jared Crick, Nebraska:** A torn pectoral muscle ruined Crick’s senior season. Was on his way to being a first round pick until the injury, but at the combine he showed he was healthy. Could be a 2nd round steal.
8. **Chandler Jones, Syracuse:** Good bloodlines, his brother Arthur currently plays for the Ravens. Lost half his senior season to a knee injury and his stock has fallen because of it. In half the amount of playing time still increased his sack total by a half sack.
9. **Andre Branch, Clemson:** Steadily improved each season as a starter, capping off senior year with 10.5 sacks. Tall and lean, may have to move to outside linebacker.
10. **Frank Alexander, Oklahoma:** Production improved each year, and has the size and speed to become a solid DE in the pros. A misdiagnosed heart condition kept him out of the combine, but he had good pro day workouts and will be a great value pick.



Chandler Jones: Rising up draft charts quickly.



Vinny Curry: Every-down DE with pass rushing skill

Defensive Tackle: Solid group with a mix of run-stuffers and athletic pass-rushers.

Who We Love: Mike Martin



Doesn't have typical size but an intense player and heavy hitter.

1. **Fletcher Cox, Mississippi State:** Big and athletic man in the middle who put it all together in 2011 with 12.5 tackles for a loss and 4 sacks.
2. **Michael Brockers, LSU:** Two-year starter is a bit raw, but has tremendous size and speed and could easily become the top star from this group.
3. **Dontari Poe, Memphis:** Perhaps the biggest enigma of the draft, both literally and figuratively. Draftniks seem split on whether Poe's size and athletic ability will translate to the pros given his lackluster production against lesser opponents while at Memphis. Is he Warren Sapp or Glenn Dorsey?
4. **Alameda Ta'amu, Washington:** Perfect nose tackle in a 3-4 defensive alignment. The largest DT of the group at 350 lbs.
5. **Jerel Worthy, Michigan State:** Solid in the middle who has the ability to get in the backfield and disrupt a play.
6. **Devon Still, Penn State:** The Nittany Lions weren't in the headlines for their play on the field last season, so a lot of people seem to have forgotten about Still. He racked up 17 tackles for a loss, capping off a very solid two year span with the team. Also one of the tallest DT's of this group at nearly 6'5".
7. **Derek Wolfe, Cincinnati:** Scrappy defender who had a monster senior campaign with 21.5 tackles for a loss and 9.5 sacks. Good measurable at 6'5" and nearly 300 lbs.
8. **Brandon Thompson, Clemson:** Big man who can play in a 3-4 or 4-3 scheme. Won't be an elite pass-rusher, but can clog up the middle. Ankle surgery after the 2011 season may cause him to slip a bit in the draft.
9. **Kendall Reyes, Connecticut:** Four-year starter who steadily improved with each season. That's something you look for in a prospect, and hope it continues at the pro level.

10. **Mike Martin, Michigan:** Tough and stout in the middle, started every game of his college career in the Big Ten. Knows a thing about leverage from his high school days as a state wrestling champion.

Linebacker: No top ten picks this year, but nice talent through the first few rounds.

Who We Love: Zach Brown



Standout track star who takes advantage of his speed on the gridiron.

1. **Luke Kuechly, Boston College (ILB):** Prototypical size and speed for the inside, and the instincts to match. He's not a thumper like Ray Lewis or Brian Urlacher, but he'll be the QB of a defense for years to come.
2. **Dont'a Hightower, Alabama (ILB):** Not as fast as Kuechly but bigger and more of a run-stuffing hitter. Surrounded by incredible talent at Alabama so it's tough to fully gauge how he'll succeed at the pro level.
3. **Zach Brown, North Carolina (OLB):** Freak athlete who runs like a safety. Racked up 105 tackles, 13.5 for a loss, in his senior season.
4. **Courtney Upshaw, Alabama (OLB):** His final two seasons were extremely productive, but the problem with Upshaw is figuring out where to play him. Possibly too small to play at DE, and a move to the outside may hinder his development.
5. **Lavonte David, Nebraska (OLB):** Juco transfer who tallied 285 tackles in just two years.
6. **Bobby Wagner, Utah State (ILB):** Undersized speedster who was a tackling machine at Utah State, to the tune of 446 in four years. If surrounded by other talented LB's, Wagner will shine. Don't expect him to be the centerpiece of the defense.
7. **Mychal Kendricks, California (ILB):** Lots of questions surround the Pac 12 Defensive Player of the Year. He's a bit undersized at 5'11" with a history of injuries and there are questions about his intelligence and ability to man the defense at the MLB spot. He played two years outside, so a position switch might be in order.

8. **James Michael-Johnson, Nevada (ILB):** Can play both inside and out, but better suited for MLB where he can do what he does best - stop the run. A bit stiff in pass defense.

9. **Audie Cole, North Carolina (OLB):** Big hitter and solid leader at North Carolina. Tries too hard to make the big hit and needs to improve his tackling technique, but could be a sleeper pick in the Ryan Kerrigan mold.

10. **Keenan Robinson, Texas (OLB):** Natural leader and solid tackler. Back-to-back 106 tackle seasons got lost in Texas' disappointing campaigns.

Cornerback: If we're labeling this draft, it might be the "Year of the Corner." Lots of talent coming from large and small programs.

Who We Love: Stephon Gilmore



What's not to love? Great size and speed and a solid tackler.

1. **Morris Claiborne, LSU:** While Claiborne doesn't have the physical tools of former teammate Patrick Peterson, he's arguably a more solid cover corner. Technique is near flawless, and he uses that to make up for average size and speed.

2. **Stephon Gilmore, South Carolina:** Gilmore is a terrific cover corner who compares favorably to former Gamecock Jonathan Joseph – but with better size. Also a strong tackler. The total package.

3. **Janoris Jenkins, North Alabama:** Plays much bigger than his 5'10" size. Possibly the best cover corner in the draft, but also has off-field issues (kicked off of Florida Gators team after 2010 season) and a questionable attitude – so much so that he could fall all the way out of the first round.

4. **Dre Kirpatrick, Alabama:** Good size in the Leon Hall mold, better suited for zone coverage schemes. Like other Alabama defenders, you have to wonder how much of his game involved being surrounded by several other 1st round talents.

5. **Brandon Boykin, Georgia:** Boykin is a solid cover corner who lacks the size to matchup with taller receivers in the NFL. At worst, he's a solid #3 who can cover the slot receiver with ease.

6. **Trumaine Johnson, Montana:** Good size at 6'2" and good athleticism to turn and run – the only question is his deep speed and lack of elite competition. Someone will take a chance early on Johnson and give him a chance to prove he's ready for the NFL.

7. **Josh Robinson, Central Florida:** Ran a blazing 4.32 at the combine, and wants to prove he has the coverage skills to match. Has a tendency to lose receivers when he turns to run with them, so there is some work to be done.

8. **Leonard Johnson, Iowa State:** Remember this name – he may not make an immediate impact at corner, though he does offer value in the return game. Johnson is a technician who should develop into a solid CB once he adjusts to the pro game.

9. **Dwight "Bill" Bentley, Louisiana-Lafayette:** Four-year starter, good size and speed, willing tackler, and showed he could play with the big boys in the Senior Bowl. You can't ask for much more, especially from a mid-round prospect.

10. **Chase Minnifield, Virginia:** The son of former NFL CB Frank Minnifield. Missed final game of 2011 and the combine after minor knee surgery, but should be ready for training camp. Lack of speed may prompt a move to safety in the pros.

Safety: There aren't any household names in this class, but a few intriguing prospects.

Who We Love: Brandon Hardin



Do-it-all safety who is injury prone but a great player with special talents.

1. **Mark Barron, Alabama:** Playmaker and big hitter, Barron tops this average class. More of an in-the-box safety but offers average pass coverage skills.

2. **Harrison Smith, Notre Dame:** Smith doesn't have the athleticism of Barron nor the knack for big plays, but may ultimately be a better pro prospect because of his coverage skills and all-around game.

3. **Markelle Martin, Oklahoma State:** Martin came up big in Oklahoma State's biggest games. Solid safety who should be a starter for several years.

4. **George Iloka, Boise State:** Big defender at 225 lbs. and decent speed. Could play both corner or LB in a pinch, adding to his value.
5. **Antonio Allen, South Carolina:** Great size and speed combination, big hitter who needs to play in a defense that often plays eight men in the box.
6. **Phillip Thomas, Syracuse:** 92 tackles in 2010, followed by 82 in 2011 and 6 INT's. The production came in a lesser Big East conference so expectations should be tempered a bit.
7. **Brandon Hardin, Oregon State:** Hardin is an interesting case – he lost all of 2011 to a shoulder injury, but appears to have come back faster and stronger after the injury – running a 4.36 40 time and bench pressed 225 pounds 24 times. Could be the steal of the draft.
8. **Trenton Robinson, Michigan State:** Doesn't look the part but makes up for it with hard work and leadership skills. Should be a solid special teamer who may eventually work his way into the starting lineup
9. **Cyhl Quarles, Wake Forest:** Quarles can lay the wood, but isn't very effective in pass protection (only had 6 passes defended in three years). Classic strong safety who excels at tackling (101 in 2011), but he'll likely make his money on special teams while coaches work on his coverage skills.
10. **Christian Thompson, South Carolina State:** Auburn transfer who has prototypical size for a free safety.

FINAL THOUGHTS



The Peyton Manning free agency tour of the 2012 off-season made me a tad nostalgic this year. Fourteen years ago I produced my first draft guide, with a cover that featured Manning and second overall pick Ryan Leaf. I wrote the guide on a Brother word processor and used a Xerox copier to design the cover. My have times have changed, for Manning and for the draft guide. At that time I was at Purdue University, and the 1998 draft was the last draft that I was joined by great friend and then-roommate Tyler Poe. After ten straight drafts with Draft IQ partner Scott Schwindt, I'm heading to Seattle to watch the 2012 draft with Tyler. This year Draft IQ is going back to where it all started, so to speak, and this year's cover ironically features the top two QB's that will go one and two. One constant you can always count on is Christmas in April...so I offer everyone a hearty "Merry Christmas" this year and every year.

Report Card



How we fared last year

Our grades for last year's projection of the 2011 NFL rookie class:



Cam Newton, QB (Drafted by Carolina): Wow, were we ever off the mark on this one. We'll take our lumps, but can hardly say we were the only ones. Newton shattered rookie QB records and made it look easy. All we can really say as we wipe egg of our face is "our bad." **Verdict: MISS!**



Vincent Brown, WR (Drafted by San Diego): We featured Brown in our "Who we Love" section of the WR rankings. The 3rd round pick caught 19 balls as a rookie, 2 for TD's. More telling is the fact that the Chargers felt confident enough in Brown to let Vincent Jackson leave as a free agent. **Verdict: HIT!**



Ryan Kerrigan, OLB (Drafted by Washington): Another "Who we Love" featured player; we said Kerrigan might need to move to OLB. The Redskins did just that, and Kerrigan racked up 7.5 sacks as a rookie. **Verdict: HIT!**



Mikel Leshoure, RB (Drafted by Detroit): Leshoure (like Ryan Williams) lost his rookie season to injury. While the jury is still out on Leshoure, he's had a rough off-season with a drug arrest and subsequent arraignment hanging over his head. **Verdict: Undecided**



Ryan Mallett, QB (Drafted by New England): We were pretty high on Mallett last year, ranking him as our #2 QB. We still feel pretty good about that considering New England invested a 3rd round pick in him. He'll continue to sit and develop behind Tom Brady, so this one might take a while to unfold. **Verdict: Undecided**



Overall: A pretty solid year for Draft IQ. After the Cam Newton debacle, our prognostications seem to be accurate. Players were drafted where we expected and performed the way we thought they would. We're like a fine wine, getting better with age!