

**ARIZONA CARDINALS DRAFT PREVIEW PRESS CONFERENCE (4/22/08)
GENERAL MANAGER ROD GRAVES (RG) AND HEAD COACH KEN WHISENHUNT
(KW)**

On whether they are done with pre-draft preparations:

(RG): "Yes, we are pretty much done. These next several days are more administrative items—reviewing our medical information and our security information on the players. We will go through several mock drafts this week and take calls from other teams. We are pretty much set to go, just sitting back and waiting for Saturday."

On being happy that the team is drafting 16th rather than higher as in the last couple years:

(RG): "There are two parts of an answer for that question. First of all, for the organization I think it shows progress and it is very positive from that standpoint. Obviously there is less certainty the further down you go, but we will take this position any time. From a personal standpoint, I am ecstatic about it. As I mentioned before, I don't anticipate as much time with the agent and certainly there is anticipation that we have an opportunity to get our draft choice in on time. From that standpoint, I think it is also very positive."

On how the draft philosophy differs now that the team is picking 16th:

(RG): "I think it is going to lean more towards the best available player. As I mentioned before, we do have certain positions that coach and I have identified that we would like to address early, but we don't want to do that at the expense of leaving top players on the board. I think we have had good success whenever we have taken that approach to the draft and I think it becomes more important when you are in a position, in the middle of the round, where that approach is probably the wiser approach to take."

On the overall depth in the draft:

(KW): "It depends on what you are talking about. There are certain positions that, it seems like, every year, they are deeper than other positions. But it is a talented draft which is a good thing for us, especially picking at 16. That means that there is going to be a good player available for us. There are a number of things that can happen before we get an opportunity to pick and we will have a chance, hopefully, to have a number of options, thereby, like Rod said, pick the best player that is not only available, but that also can fit one of our needs. I don't think that precludes us by any stretch of the imagination if we have a player up there that we have highly ranked, whether it is a position that we feel like we might have a need; we are going to take the best player. That is important. That is how I think you develop a team."

On whether Whisenhunt's second year is easier now knowing what he has on the team:

(KW): "We know a lot more about our depth on our football team here. In fact, the guys that are here right now working out, we know a tremendous amount more about those guys and what they can do and what their capabilities are. What that gives us the availability to do is not only draft for need but to develop depth and develop young players, which is so critical. Last year at this time, I couldn't have told you who our offensive line was going to be. Here today, we know who that is going to be so if there is a really good offensive lineman available that we are willing to take, it is going to make us be able to develop that guy with a little more patience than we would have with, say, Levi (Brown) last year, having to play. We are a lot more comfortable, not only with analyzing our talent, but also with the process. This is the second year that our coaches, our scouts, Rod and I have gone through this, and we are certainly more comfortable with what we can anticipate and how we can work together."

On what quality you look for in a standout defensive player:

(RG): "One of the things, if you are looking for just one item, is the propensity to make big plays--game changing plays. The more often a player is able to do that, I think it is an indicator that he certainly may have that potential star ability at our level. One of the things that you would like to be able to see in players is their ability to make those types of plays in critical situations during a

football game. How often are they in a position to actually do that and actually come through for their teams? I think those are the qualities that the great players have.”

On how comfortable the team is with the new draft rules:

(RG): “I am comfortable with it. We will see how it actually works this weekend, but I am comfortable with it. 15 minutes, in previous years in the first round, was a little long. We all pretty much have an idea who we are going to select. We talk it through long before we get to our selection. Usually the (extra) time spent is spent waiting for the phone to ring to see if anyone is interested in moving—that sort of thing. I think taking (time between selections) down to 10 minutes shouldn’t bother us or the process at all.”

On whether it is safe to say that the top pick may not be expected to start right away:

(KW): “I think that is a sign of the improvement of the football team. I don’t think we have a glaring need, depth-wise, or position-wise, going into this draft which makes it a lot easier to pick. Once again, you are going back to the best player. We will see how it unfolds. You would like for that first pick to compete. You would like for that first pick to have a chance to start. But he is going to have to earn that. We established that it is part of the make-up of this team that you have to earn your chance to start and the best players are going to play. Whoever we pick at 16 is going to be a good football player, so naturally there is going to be competition at the position he was picked. A lot of times there is a learning curve and a development process with young players and it is a lot easier when you can develop them over time, as opposed to having to play them early.”

On whether USC LB Keith Rivers is an inside guy or an outside guy in their estimation:

(KW): “It depends on your defensive scheme. He can play a little bit of both. He is a very talented player and he works at the game. Those are two of the qualities that you really like to see. In our scheme, I think he could do a number of positions—either one of the inside positions or as an outside position—he could certainly fill in there. He is a talented football player.”

On whether the team still needs pass rushers having signed a few in free agency:

(KW): “I don’t think there is a team in the league that wouldn’t like to have as many pass rushers as they could have. One of the biggest things you want to do is put pressure on the quarterback. That makes it a lot easier for your defensive backs to cover their guys. We feel very good about the additions that we have made (in free agency). I think Rod and his staff did a great job of working with Travis LaBoy, with Clark Haggans and with Bryan Robinson—giving us great depth and great competition at these positions and allowing us to put more pressure on the quarterback. Last year, as the season progressed, we wore down a little bit and we had some injuries to some guys and it limited our ability to put pressure on the quarterback. That puts a lot more pressure on your secondary or the back end of your defensive coverage. So I don’t think you can ever have too many (pass rushers) and you are always looking to find those guys.”

(RG): “The thing that I would add to that is that we have a couple of players who have been very productive for us in the past, who are coming off of injuries. I think we have to be open minded as we go into this draft, to be willing to address issues or positions that we know where we are coming off of injury or we may be aging in that area. We will just evaluate those as the names are on the board. As coach said, you can’t have enough of those guys and both of us come from backgrounds where, and coach might take exception to this, but I think defense wins championships. But I think we share the opinion that you have to be strong up front and anytime we can add to that, we will take a look at it.”

On whether there is any indication of teams wanting to trade draft picks:

(RG): “I think we will have a better feel for that over the next couple of days. As of right now I have not received any calls. That type of evaluation will probably take place during the draft. I think that once we get out of the top 10, there is probably a good likelihood that anywhere from (picks) 11 to 14, there could be interest from those teams of either moving back or we could consider moving back. We are going to keep all of our options open.”

On whether there is a certain draft position they would not move back to:

(RG): “I couldn’t necessarily say off the top of my head, but I doubt that if we move back we probably wouldn’t move back further than five spots. But again, it just depends on the circumstances and the offer.”

(KW): And potentially what other guys are available at that time. If there is good depth at a position where we feel like we may have a chance at one of those guys a couple of picks later—anytime you can pick up extra picks, especially in a draft where there is pretty good depth early in the draft—it can only help you in building the depth on your team and developing your younger players.”

On whether they have discussed taking a quarterback, maybe on the second day:

(RG): “We have talked about taking a position of leaving all options open. As coach said, our main interest with our football team, obviously we have some concerns at a couple of spots, but depth is important. The same approach we are taking at the defensive end spot—about where we are with depth, our age at certain positions and so-forth—if there is a certain player there that warrants us making the selection, we will do it. The quarterback position is not void of that.”

(KW): “If Tom Brady is there in the sixth (round) we will take him.”

On whether there are positions that the team is set at and will not look to take another player there:

(KW): “I think it depends on what player is available. If there is a player that we feel is a highly graded player and if we feel like it is a superior talent or one that you can’t ignore, than no, I don’t think that is going to preclude us from taking a player at that position. The NFL is all about competition and that is what makes you better as a football team. I believe that and I think our players believe that now. When you are evaluating who is there when you are getting ready to make a pick, you can’t lose sight of all the work you put in up until the draft, as far as where you have those players evaluated and where you have them ranked. I don’t necessarily ignore a player just because you may have depth at that position, especially if he is significantly higher graded than the players that are on the board at that time.”

(RG): “As coach said, we will take those points into consideration. But we also take a look at where we feel we will get the greatest margin of improvement. If there is a top rated player there and we think we would get a better improvement at another position, then we might evaluate that over the top rated player. So again, it depends how far you are dropping on the quality of the player in order to make that selection.”

On whether the running back class is deep enough to take a guy in later rounds:

(RG): “I would say this, and it goes back to a question earlier, it is probably going to be, two or three positions where there is going to be a quick run on those players and then the concern will be about the depth later. For that reason, I think teams will make a quick run. The running back position could be that way. I always believed that there is a gem that can be found if you are looking hard enough at the end of the draft. I think based on our grades and how we see them stacking up, that running back is probably the position that there are five or six names at the top and then after that it is a little less certainty about what you are getting. That does not mean that there are not players there that could come in and help us.”

On how they have the cornerbacks rated and how long they would wait to pick one feeling like they are getting someone rated near the top of their board:

(KW): “A lot of times when you are evaluating college football players you are looking at schemes and what you see them do in their schemes that are specific to what you do. A lot of times, it is not a good fit. For instance, if it is a cover two corner that plays well in college, it doesn’t necessarily fit what we are doing so that player wouldn’t be rated as highly on our board. It is not just that position. There are a number of positions on the board where (the players) skill set better

with what we are trying to do. Therefore, they are rated higher on our board. Then there is going to be a group that you look at and you say 'We think these guys are good players, but the risk versus trying to make them fit into our system doesn't necessarily go with taking them in the first round or taking them this high' and, as Rod said a minute ago, there are other factors that you have to evaluate when you are making the decision on these players. It is easy to say 'best player' but we rate our players on how they fit in the league and then we go back and evaluate them based on how they fit into our system. There may be a great player on the board that is not a fit for our system and that is going to be a factor that we take into consideration as far as whether or not we would draft them. Yes, there are on our board a couple of guys who we feel are very good players and then there is another group who we feel are good players, but there is a little more risk or a little more uncertainty in how they are going to fit into our scheme."

On whether the wide receiver position is a concern going into the draft:

(KW): "We have got a number of young guys that are out there working on our field right now that were in our program last year and what it really comes down to is having somebody step up. I couldn't really tell you right now who that guy is. Is it Jerheme Urban? Is it Steve Breaston? Is it Sean Morey? Is it Jamaica Rector? That is just to name a few. As the process goes through the draft, if there is a good receiver that is there, it may be a point in the draft where they may be a good fit for us. That is something that you look at. If it is not a position that we have to have, but it is a position that would help our football team, then absolutely we would consider it."

On whether contract status for current guys helps guide who will be selected in the draft:

(RG): "That is really sort of secondary to what we need to have to improve our football team. While those things come into play at some time, we just don't want to pass up the opportunity that the draft presents to improve our football team. If you start shying away from players because you want to address other positions based on a player's contract status, you can sort of read too much into it and find yourself in an awkward position later. I just think that we are interested in improving the talent on our football team and wherever we can do that, that will take priority."