

**ARIZONA CARDINALS
HEAD COACH KEN WHISENHUNT (KW) AND
GENERAL MANAGER ROD GRAVES (RG)
DISCUSSING THE 2008 DRAFT**

Opening Statement:

(RG): “We talked about one through three. Kenny Iwebema, defensive end from Iowa was our fourth pick, Tim Hightower, running back from Richmond our fifth, Chris Harrington linebacker from Texas A&M was our sixth and Brandon Keith offensive tackle from Northern Iowa was our seventh round pick. Coach Whisenhunt will comment on those players.”

On Kenny Iwebema:

(KW): “Iwebema is a good young defensive end out of Iowa that coach (Ron) Aiken had worked with before he came with us, so we already have a little bit of inside information on him. We were excited to get him there in the fourth. (He is) a good technical player with good strength and he brings a lot to the table. He actually had some production at Iowa with a number of sacks. That was a position for us that was thin going into the draft and we feel like we did a very good job addressing that, not only from the standpoint of young players that add depth, but also where we can have a little bit more of a rotation at that position during the year. One of the things that we talked about earlier was that later in the year we wore down and that was because we were getting so many reps. This gives us a chance to work some other guys in, hopefully have some competition at that position.”

On Tim Hightower:

(KW): “With our next pick we took Tim Hightower, running back out of Richmond that we were very high on. We had looked at him possibly in the fourth, but we felt good about getting him in the fifth. I know Todd (Haley) came down here and spoke about him but Moe (Maurice Carthon) feels very strongly about him as a running back. The thing that I like about him is that he has a little bit of a chip on his shoulder to prove that he belongs. He didn’t get invited to the combine but he worked out well, did very well for us in the individual workout that we had and just from watching him in tape study we feel like he is going to be a very good player to add to our mix at running back.”

On Chris Harrington:

(KW): “With our sixth pick we took Chris Harrington who we project as a linebacker in our scheme. (He) has a relentless motor, works hard, smart player, a lot of the characteristics that you look for in a football player he has. We are excited to get him at that pick and feel like he will bring a lot to the table as far as increasing the depth and competition at those positions.”

On Brandon Keith:

(KW): “With our last pick we took Brandon Keith that we are going to play at right tackle from Northern Iowa. We have a number of guys on this squad from there including one of our coaches, Dedric (Ward) and our quarterback (Kurt Warner). We felt good

about him, a good young prospect at tackle, big guy who moves well. We feel like with our offensive line group and with Russ Grimm we have a chance to develop him as a player at that position.”

On not drafting a home run threat:

(RG): “I think that we addressed some critical positions on our team in terms of depth and making our team a much stronger football team. While we didn’t hit on every area that we wanted to, we took advantage of the opportunities we did have with the players that were available at the time of our selections. We felt like we upgraded our team. Sure we would have loved to come away with a couple of positions that may have provided more spark for us, but we can’t be disappointed at the way things fell for us. I think defensively where we had some concerns in terms of depth and maybe even aging to a certain extent, we certainly felt like we helped ourselves there with some young players and we have some young guys on the offensive side that I think have a chance to compete and certainly provide a stronger roster for us. I feel very good about where we ended up in this draft. You have to take advantage of your opportunities as they exist. We did not want to get into a situation where we were reaching just to satisfy certain players. I think for the majority of the day, the best player available approach ruled through most of our decisions and when we have taken that approach we have usually come out ahead.”

On what Hightower has that intrigued you:

(KW): “Sometimes I think game speed maybe is a little bit more deceptive than a timed 40 speed and we felt like he was a good powerful runner inside the tackles that is going to give us some good yardage. But I think one of the things that he does well is that he competes at that position and he runs hard. I think there is an element of niftiness about him that is overlooked. He is a good receiver and he has been productive at that level. So we felt he fits matching the style that we are trying to get done and we still think he brings an element to our football team not only as a running back, but as a potential special teams contributor. He also started on special teams as well as being the starting running back at Richmond and that is a trait or a characteristic that I feel is important. He wants to play football and when you have those kind of guys, I think he fits in well with what we are trying to get done from a team perspective.”

On if he is comfortable with the team speed on offense:

(KW): “It is easy to say we want to try to get a home run hitter but that is not always that case. There were times in the draft where maybe those guys were available, but once again we took the best player where there was the greatest margin of improvement. Lets not forget that Edge (Edgerrin James) ran for 1,222 yards for us last year. We felt like at the end of the year we were running the football a lot better and we feel like we improved our football team today and yesterday with the combination of draft picks that we got. Once again, going into this draft we stated up front that we were in the position of not having to draft for a need and that we were going to take good football players. When you look at the players that we took, that is why we are excited about them because we feel like they are going to contribute to this football team in the future. When you are trying to build a core and build good young players, you develop them through the draft and in practice and that is what we have. A good base that we can do that.”

On if this draft changes how they are looking at the signing of veteran players:

(RG): “We are open to considering veterans as we move forward and there maybe some opportunities in early June that we would certainly consider at that point. Again, anyway we can build our roster prior to training camp, we are still open to all opportunities.”

On how many undrafted players they are going to bring in:

(RG): “We looked at 12 to 13 undrafted players that we are hoping to solidify today.”

(KW): “Some of that is a process; you are fighting other teams trying to get good football players that matchup, but that is our target.”

(RG): “We will probably know where we stand in the next 24 to 48 hours.”

(KW): “Like Rod (Graves) said, there will always be the opportunity down the road that if somebody would become available that would help us, then we are certainly not opposed to that.”

On if the later picks leans towards overachievers or talented but not reached potential:

(KW): “Rod (Graves) and I talked about this today and even Mr. Bidwill and Michael (Bidwill) were in on the decision when we were talking about these picks and one of the things that keeps coming up is football character. I think that Tim Hightower is an example of that. He is a guy that loves the game. It started with (Dominique) Rodgers-Cromartie, our first pick, who loves the game and it goes all the way down through the draft, even with our last pick. They are excited about being here and excited about getting on the field. When you talk about football character, we want guys that want to play, that want to study, that want to learn and to a man these guys were all excited about that. Now you say it is draft day and that is what they do on draft day, but this is not a pick up the phone on draft day and see if they are excited. This is a process that goes year round and this is a gathering of information and one of the priorities for us is finding players that want to be good football players; that are excited about playing the game and we feel like that is one of the most consistent things about our draft picks. That is the type of players that we picked.”