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ESPN Conference Call Transcript: *Monday Night Football's* Jon Gruden Discusses QB Camp Series and NFL Draft Prospects

ESPN conducted a media conference call on Tuesday with *Monday Night Football's* [Jon Gruden](#) to discuss the *SportsCenter Special: Gruden's QB Camp* series and ESPN's 2015 NFL Draft coverage. ESPN will provide live gavel-to-gavel coverage of the NFL Draft from the Auditorium Theatre of Roosevelt University in Chicago, April 30 - May 2, and Gruden will provide analysis on the main set the opening night in prime time. [Full audio replay](#); *Gruden's QB Camp* [TV schedule](#) and [photos](#)). Transcript:

Q. You spent extensive time with the top quarterback prospects, and you certainly know the Bucs living in the Bay Area. If the Bucs decide to go for a quarterback, who is the best fit, knowing what you know about Dirk Koetter, new offensive coordinator, and the personnel on the Tampa Bay Bucs right now, which direction should they go?

GRUDEN: I used to worry about everything that the Bucs did for several years. And I don't know who best fits Tampa Bay right now. It will be a tough decision for them, if they go with the quarterback. I like Mike Glennon, personally. I thought he did some really good things as a rookie. I thought they had some issues last year with the offensive line, certainly, and Jeff Tedford's illness, it derailed them. But they're different quarterbacks. It all depends on what Lovie Smith, Dirk Koetter and the front office are looking to do in the short term and in the long term. Both are underclassmen, I'm talking about Mariota and Winston. They need some seasoning. They might need a little bit of time. But you'll have to ask Dirk Koetter and Lovie Smith. I would be eager to get my hands on either of these young prospects because they both have a lot of talent and intangibles that are hard to find.

Q. At this point, if they go with either Mariota or Winston, with the first overall pick in the draft, is there pressure on a coach, do you think, to play the kid immediately in game one?

GRUDEN: There's pressure on coaches to show the red flag or keep it in their pocket. Certainly there's going to be pressure to put this kid out there. There's just not a lot of patience anymore. I've seen the NFL chew up and spit out young quarterbacks that I thought were going to be very good. Guys like Jake Locker, out of football currently. Christian Ponder's changed teams. Colt McCoy has changed teams. Blaine Gabbert once again has changed teams. So I think there will be pressure to play the man because the fan base is going to be eager to see what they have, and they need somebody to cheer for down here, let's be honest.

Q. I'll ask about the Titans. There's been a lot of talk about Marcus Mariota not being a great fit for Ken Whisenhunt. You spent time with him. Do you think Mariota is a guy that the Titans can make work here at Tennessee, if he's there?

GRUDEN: I think so. I think Ken Whisenhunt will be able to adapt to any quarterback. He had to adapt unfortunately to several quarterbacks in his first year. We all have, I think, a perfect world what offense we'd want to run. But if you do choose Marcus Mariota, he's going to bring a unique skill set to you, running, quarterback-driven, running-type option plays can be part of it. His scramble ability is another thing. His second reaction plays are really unscripted. It's exciting. But I think Ken Whisenhunt has proven over the years that he can adapt to Ben Roethlisberger and Kurt Warner and a young man like Zach Mettenberger. And it's up to the staff of the entire organization, if they go with a young quarterback, to make sure they give him the proper training and put him out there when they see fit. But I'm confident Mariota will be a fit in any offense. I think he can be an outstanding drop-back passer if that's all you want him to do.

Q. If you're the Titans, to take a chance with a young guy like Mariota, or do you trade for Philip Rivers, if he did play?

GRUDEN: That's a lot of speculation. Philip Rivers has proven that he can do it at a high level for a long time. And he's got some hands-on experience with Ken Whisenhunt. That's apples and oranges. What do you have to give up to get a veteran quarterback, I believe, that's 33 years old, how much of your future? Do you have the receiving corps? Do you have the offensive line in place to highlight the pocket passing strengths of a man like Philip Rivers? Those are things that the Titans will have to weigh. But I just feel like trading Philip Rivers is a lot of speculation. I don't know how much truth there is to that.

Q. A few years ago, when Seattle took Russell Wilson, you were very excited on the air and very complimentary. Is there that player in this draft, quarterback, ideally, but maybe another player, who

you think could slip through the cracks a little bit and yet make an impact as a rookie and have that kind of potential?

GRUDEN: I see a lot of players studying these men in a dark room. I don't go to the combine and see their individual workouts and interact with a lot of different coaches on my staff because I'm fired. I don't have anybody to lean on, you know what I mean? But I like Garrett Grayson at Colorado State. His measurables are good. He runs a 4.7. And he's proven that he's a good pocket passer. He's played for two coaches that have been in the NFL, Steve Fairchild and Jim McElwain. I got a feeling he's going to be a good pro quarterback, provided that he gets on the team where there's some continuity. I mean, some of these young quarterbacks have no chance, the way they change coaches and coordinators every single year. It's astonishing to me. But I do like Grayson.

There's Trey Flowers, a defensive end at Arkansas. Probably didn't work out as well as some of the people perhaps want. But I think, when you watch him on tape, you see a football player that is versatile and is really equipped to rush the passer. He's relentless.

And couple of young corners, Senquez Golson at Mississippi. I really like his ball production. He's a feisty tackler. And D'Joun Smith, another corner at Florida Atlantic. I really like the way he plays. There's several men in this draft -- I really like Jake Fisher, the tackle at Oregon. I think he's proven he can play left and right tackle. There's a lot of guys that jump off the screen at me that probably aren't on the top of mind to a lot of people. I like Jeremy Langford at Michigan State, a really good, productive running back, that I think has kind of been overlooked a little bit by Gurley and Gordon for obvious reasons.

Q. I'd like you to role play John Elway a little bit here. He's probably going to take an offensive lineman in the first round. But after that, with "The Sheriff," as you call Peyton Manning, 39 years old, and Brock Osweiler, in the final year of his contract, would you, if you were the Broncos and Elway, take a quarterback from that next wave of quarterback in rounds, say, second through five?

GRUDEN: Depends on how much they like Osweiler. None of us really know because he hasn't played much except for some mop-up duty late in the games. I think it all depends on how much they like the progress that they have seen with Brock Osweiler. I liked him coming out of Arizona State. Big guy. Has athleticism. Should know the offense by now. So I think that will be the determining factor on whether or not they choose a quarterback. Obviously signing Osweiler after this year will be another chore that needs to be done. But getting an offensive lineman sounds like good business for Denver. Only they know how much they liked Brock Osweiler. And if they don't see him as the future quarterback of the Broncos, I'm sure they will try to acquire someone that fits this offense for Gary Kubiak.

Q. And after Winston and Mariota, is Grayson your number three?

GRUDEN: I like Grayson a lot. I really do. I would say he's my third. I like Hundley at UCLA. I think he's going to take a little time. He's going to need a little coaching and seasoning and time to adapt to the NFL game. But he's athletic. He's tough. He's got a lot of charisma and intelligence. And he's a great competitor. And Bryce Petty, if you have some patience and you get him acclimated to the new style of offensive football, this young man is athletic and he can throw the ball. So it's a matter of how much time you're willing to spend developing a young quarterback to prepare him for the future. But there's a lot of teams that are in a similar situation that the Broncos are in. Who is the next quarterback when our veteran perennial bowl player retires? That's a great question.

Q. From the time that you spent with Marcus, was there one thing that jumped out, that surprised you about his personality or his makeup?

GRUDEN: I've known a lot about Marcus for a while. He's quiet. He's very quiet. That was an exclamation point that I came away from. He is very much not interested in himself. He could care less about his individual achievement, could care less about where he goes in this draft. He's eager to learn, compete, and prove to people he can play. He's very sharp. I'll say that. He is very sharp, passionate about the game. Has a photographic memory. He can remember everything you put on a chalkboard over several hours and he can go out and execute it quickly. I'm impressed with his mental quickness, his arm quickness, and his physical body quickness. This kid can really move. He's got a great future. I enjoyed being with him for every second.

Q. With so many good (indiscernible) centers at the top of the draft, do you think, with the Saints at 13, that it would be worth trading up to maybe grab a guy like Dante Fowler, which obviously is going

to take a lot, or do you think there's just so many in this draft that it's not really worth it to move from 13?

GRUDEN: I love Fowler. Just brought up a young man that I think in my book is the top defensive player in this draft. I do know the Saints have two first round draft picks. They have a number of picks in the top 75. So if they sit where they are, I think they'll be able to acquire five pretty good players. I like Bud Dupree from Kentucky. I like Shane Ray from Missouri a lot. I think there's going to be a pass rusher potentially there for them at number 13. But you never know with Mickey Loomis and Sean Payton. They've proven they will go up. They went up last year to get Brandin Cooks and to get Ingram. If there's something they want, they have no fear in going up to get it. So that will be fun to watch.

Q. You touched on Brett Hundley earlier. You had a chance to spend some time with him. My question is, regarding this idea of patience, do you think an NFL team these days is willing to be patient with the quarterback taken in the second or third round, spend the time that's necessary to develop him, or are we just kind of not in that era anymore?

GRUDEN: I think some teams can afford to be patient because their circumstances will allow them to do that. Tom Brady is sitting in New England and the Patriots took Jimmy Garoppolo in the second round, I think with the intention of developing him for a few years. If you have a front line, proven starting veteran quarterback, you can afford yourself an opportunity to put a guy on your team and let him watch a master at work. That's what Aaron Rodgers did learning under Brett Favre. Drew Brees had an opportunity to learn under Philip Rivers. And Steve Young got a chance to see Joe Montana.

If you have a front line veteran quarterback and you can bring in a bright, young prospect, it only enhances the development process. And some teams are looking for a guy to go out there and play right away. And that's hard to do, given where college football is right now with these no huddle spread offenses. There's a lot to learn. And this new Collective Bargaining Agreement makes it very difficult to fast track anybody.

Q. When you were with Brett, what kind of impressions did you come away with about his makeup and also his playing ability?

GRUDEN: Well, if you know Hundley, you know he has a real confident charismatic vibe to him. You can see why he's the captain at UCLA. You can see why the Bruins turned things around and became a top 10 football team because they have a top-flight quarterback at the NCAA level. He is very physically talented. This man ran the ball almost 500 times at UCLA. He has a strong arm. I think he needs to refine his pocket mechanics a little bit. There's some things in his delivery I think he can quicken. But he wants it real bad. He's got a lot of talent to work with, and he is very intelligent and I think very confident in himself.

Q. Two questions. One of them is about Devin Gardner. And I'm curious how difficult do you think the transition from college quarterback to NFL receiver is. My second question is about Jim Harbaugh. In your mind, there's been some conversation – Alex Boone is on this HBO thing tonight, suggesting he's a better college coach than an NFL coach. Could you comment on that also?

GRUDEN: I try not to get into Alex Boone's comments because I haven't heard any of them. I think Harbaugh has proven he's a very good coach at the NFL level. How are we going to dispute that? I don't know who the best guards are. I don't know who the – I don't know what Alex Boone is trying to do with this, but if you ask me, I think Harbaugh has proven he's an outstanding NFL coach. Very few men in the history of the game get to three straight NFC Championship games. So I think that speaks for itself. But it will be fun to listen to the comments or the show, if you have time to do that. In regards to Devin Gardner, it will be a challenge. I'll say this, though, I saw Devin Gardner catch a touchdown pass I believe against Alabama a couple of years ago as a receiver. So it won't be a process starting from scratch. I think he has that in his background. He's certainly athletic. I had a chance to cover him in the Outback Bowl when he was down here against South Carolina. He's a good kid. He's got a quarterback's perspective on things. So he's going to be a quick study. He'll work hard at it. It will be an uphill battle for him, but I've seen guys like Brad Smith. Good old friend Freddie Solomon, who is no longer with us, did that for the 49ers in their glory days. It's been done before. I wish him the best.

Q. Writing a story about background checks in the pre-draft process. Your colleague at ESPN, Mark Dominik, related an interesting story about how they had a scout hanging out at a bar for a week. One of the prospects came in too often and that convinced him to take the player off the board. Just curious, in your experience as a coach and in the NFL, if you could share some of the things that you

would go to to learn about some of these players before the draft process. And is there ever a line that you wouldn't cross?

GRUDEN: I'm going to – some of this stuff is confidential. I appreciate Mark Dominik's comments. But when you're drafting a player, you have to do all the research on their injury history, their personal character, their intelligence, and then their combine individual workout numbers. There's a lot of research that goes into this. You have to find who the people are in their world that they're connected with, their family, their wife, their girlfriend, their coaches, their teammates, certainly their high school coaches. Their backgrounds are important. And there are some players who have character issues, you have to look sometimes carefully into those. But I'm not going to get into some of the things that go on that I've heard are going on throughout the years. But it's very important, obviously.

Q. Would you be shocked at this point if the Bucs don't take Winston and how good, if they do take him, how good can he be as a rookie quarterback reasonably given that task with Vincent Jackson, Mike Evans, and Austin Seferian-Jenkins?

GRUDEN: I don't know about Austin Seferian-Jenkins. He hasn't proven that he's a front line tight end yet. He's got talent. But I want to see more from him. I think a lot of Vincent Jackson and Evans. I think they're great size down the field, bad ball receivers. And if you have two bad ball receivers that have that type of physical talent, that's exciting. They've got to play better on the offensive line. They put millions and millions into this offensive line. Collins didn't work out. They brought in a center from Green Bay, Logan Mankins. I expected so much more from the offensive line. I know Jeff Tedford's illness was a big part of this. The offensive line has got to play better. If they can run the football and create some eight-man fronts and some single coverage for these great receivers, it could be a lot of fun to watch for any quarterback.

And Jameis Winston, say what you want, this young man has rare talent. He has incredible courage. He's at his best when they're behind, the game's on the line. He just almost thrives in adversity. And it's a credit to his mental toughness. I like the way he throws the ball. I've seen him make multiple tight window throws. He's been in a very diverse offense. You see him in two backs, one backs, no backs. And they've let him have a chance to audible. He's just a kid. I believe he's a third-year sophomore. He still has two years of eligibility left. So you have some patience, I'm confident that you have a chance to get one heck of a young trigger.

Q. Would you be shocked at this point if Tampa Bay didn't take him?

GRUDEN: Tampa Bay shocked me before.

Q. Given the complexity of offensive terminology, play calls, the structure of the playbook and how voluminous that can be, how concerned are you to Marcus Mariota's adjustment to that? And from your history as both a coach and a draft evaluator, how long does it generally take guys like that to really wrap their arms around an entire playbook when they haven't really done it before?

GRUDEN: I think it all starts with the snap count. After meeting with these quarterbacks, the way we do things the last couple of years, you realize that a lot of these quarterbacks don't even have snap count. They're using silent counts in the shotgun. They're using set-go every single play. They've never used a hard count. They haven't been asked to recognize a problem in the defense and audible. So there's a lot of things that are going to be new for these young quarterbacks coming out of college. None of them were in the huddle this year. Not Garrett Grayson, not Brett Hundley, Mariota. Not Jameis Winston either. None of these guys, Bryce Petty, got in the huddle. So that whole process of the snap count, calling plays, recognizing coverages and defenses and getting your offense in an optimum play will be a process. But I think some of these coaches are really good, obviously, and we have a little bit more time at the NFL level than we do at the college level to spend time with our players and help them learn quickly. They'll have to be put on a fast track. And it will be a tremendous effort. But you can get it done in a real quick amount of time.

Q. How much can you simplify that playbook before it becomes a case of diminishing returns?

GRUDEN: Everybody says simplify it. What if you have a great receiver? If you want to move a great receiver around -- if you leave a great receiver over there on the right all the time, he's never going to catch a pass. If you want to put him in the slot, do you want to put him in motion, want to use some shifts, use different personnel groupings, you have to have words. You just can't hold up a sign on the sideline and make a hand signal. So it depends on what kind of offense you want to run. The more simple you are, the better you better be. You better be really good if you're real simple in pro football. That's just my opinion.

Q. Quick non-draft question. I was curious what your reaction was to the Eagles signing Tim Tebow, and do you think that Chip Kelly can find some kind of role for him beyond being just their third quarterback?

GRUDEN: I'm curious probably just like everybody else. I was curious when they got Sam Bradford. I was curious when they let McCoy go. Real curious when they got the two backs they signed. So he's got a master plan, I'm sure. It will be fun to see it unfold. I'm anxious to see what Tim Tebow's been doing for the last year or so to improve, to get himself ready for this opportunity.

Q. In your opinion, does a team need a franchise quarterback to be successful year in, year out; and if you don't have one, is it possible to be successful year in, year out?

GRUDEN: That's a good question. What is a franchise quarterback? A \$100 million quarterback, I guess that's what it is. I don't think you have to have a \$100 million quarterback to be successful year in, year out. I think you gotta have a really good player, a really good teammate, a great leader, a man that has a tremendous understanding of the game. And usually, when you have success, your quarterback becomes a franchise quarterback. So I guess what we're saying is you do need a franchise quarterback to be successful, because as soon as you enjoy repeated success, these quarterbacks get paid hundreds of millions of dollars. But you gotta have one. You gotta have a quarterback playing at a high level to win a Super Bowl or to compete for a Super Bowl, and certainly year in, year out.

Q. You talk about some of these young quarterbacks to get them on the fast track and it can happen. When you look at Mariota, what will he have to do to get on the fast track to be able to perform at the NFL, and which of his physical skills do you see carrying over and helping him do that?

GRUDEN: I think, most importantly, is who drafts them. I think some of these coaches personally, just like players, are probably better than others. You want a hands-on quarterback coach that's been a part of training a young quarterback. And Dirk Koetter, Ken Whisenhunt, two coaches who have developed young players, that certainly helps. They understand what the process is all about, teaching them protections, formations, audibles, how coverages work, how routes adjust to different looks. Disguises. They've got to learn who the players are in the NFL, what personnel matchups are good, what personnel matchups are bad. They've got to learn the common opponents in their division. There's so much to learn in such a short period of time, it will be a challenge, but it certainly helps when a quarterback teams up with a really good coach who has had hands-on experience at the NFL level.

Q. Do you see Marcus physically as a guy who can kind of adapt into that?

GRUDEN: Yeah, look, I could be Marcus's agent. I think this stereotype of Marcus Mariota as a spread quarterback that runs read options every play is ridiculous. I think he's very poised. I've seen him go through progressions. They run some common NFL route combinations. He's put a lot of points on the board. He's been asked to do a lot with pass protections. He learned the Oregon offense inside and out. And he'll learn your offense. It's just a matter of you teaching him and surrounding him with a support system, good players, good contingency game planning, and an opportunity to be great.

Q. I remember the game that you and Tirico did last year in Chicago near the end of the season against the Saints. You were candid about Jay Cutler and where he was at with everything right now, and you even suggested that maybe the Bears should look to go to plan B during the season. The Bears have the seventh pick. Not a great class of quarterbacks as you know, but do you believe, knowing what you know about Cutler and the type of player he is, that Chicago should be actively searching to replace him in this draft?

GRUDEN: Well, he's been there for a number of different offensive coaches. He's had the Bears on the brink of going to the playoffs. He hasn't really been able to sustain 16 to 20 weeks of great play in my opinion with all that talent. It just hasn't all come together for him. I think Chicago, given the contract that Jay Cutler has, should consider looking for a young arm that has a bright future as a Bear. The body language of the Bear football team wasn't good last year. Oftentimes, that's a reflection of the quarterback. He threw, I think, three interceptions in the game. For a man of that type of talent, that type of experience, it was shocking to me. I want him to turn it around now. But I just am somewhat surprised that he's been unable to get it in the gear that the Chicago Bears need him to get it to because he's had a pretty good supporting cast.

Q. If I could get your reaction to the offseason moves that the Bills have made, starting with Rex Ryan and Percy Harvin. And lead into the draft, what you think they might need to do with No. 50, whether they should take a quarterback or look elsewhere to sort of support the other moves that they've made?

GRUDEN: They've signed some quarterbacks. I've read where they're going to have a three- or four-man battle for the position. EJ Manuel is still a young player. I think the offensive coordinator that's coming over from San Francisco has dealt with a mobile quarterback in Colin Kaepernick. So maybe that will stimulate and help EJ, who knows. I like Rex Ryan. I always have. I've spent a lot of time up there with the Jets coaching staff over the years just studying football. I really like his system. I'm really surprised at what transpired in Buffalo just as a football fan. I thought they did a great job on defense last year. I really did. I thought Jim Schwartz did an outstanding job. I don't know what happened at the head coaching position to qualify all these changes. I really don't. But getting Rex Ryan will certainly, I think, be exciting for Bills fans and I think the players will respond to them.

I don't know what Percy Harvin is. I don't know if he's a true receiver, if he's a slash player, slash running back receiver, returner. It's time for Percy Harvin to realize all his potential. This is his third team, I believe, might be his fourth team. He needs to find a home and exert himself and sustain a high level of play at whatever role they ask him to be in. But as far as what they're going to draft, I really don't know. They've made a real good addition to their backfield getting LeSean McCoy. They've lost a couple of players in free agency. I'm sure they're probably going to look at replacing Kiko Alonso. I know they lost a pretty good safety man. So I'm sure there's some things they're looking for defensively, but I really like what they did last year trading up to get that receiver, because Watkins is one heck of a player.

Q. How much have you seen of Cameron Erving, Florida State's offensive lineman? And the fact that he played basically two or three years of offensive tackle, and then last year at center really seemed to take off when he moved to the interior part of the line, how much would that help -- how much does that help an NFL team to have that versatility?

GRUDEN: I've seen a lot of Erving because I spent a lot of time with EJ Manuel and Jameis Winston. Couple of years ago, Erving was just making his name as a left tackle. He wins back-to-back Jacobs Awards. Was top offensive lineman in the ACC. That versatility is rare and unique. And especially rare coming out of college. But to have a center -- I see Erving as a potential Don Mosebar-type center. I'm familiar with Mosebar from my old Raider days. Long, tall, athletic, great range. If you have a center that can do some things that Erving has proven that he can do under short notice, just think what he'll be able to do with a full training camp and a couple of years of experience. And I still don't think he's a washout at left tackle. I think he could be pretty good out there. He's one of the more intriguing players in this draft. But, boy, I'd love to have him as my center.

Q. If Mariota should be on the board when Washington picks at 5, which may be a stretch, how would you weigh his potential, which you've already described eloquently, against the knowns of Robert Griffin entering his fourth season? And is it a pick that you would make at 5?

GRUDEN: Let me make myself perfectly clear. When I answer this question, I'm not answering it for Jay Gruden, even though he's my brother. We don't collaborate on all these things. This is my opinion. If any of these teams are picking, I would be surprised if they did not take Marcus Mariota. I think he's a rare prospect. I think he has some can't-miss qualities, if you can bring him along and have just a little bit of patience to give him the correct direction. I think this kid, Mariota, could be one of the really great quarterbacks of the future of the NFL.

Q. You had Derek Carr in for the quarterback show last year. Was curious as your observations of his rookie season and kind of what the next step for him is now. They've changed systems on him, but he managed to get through the first rookie year without getting sacked a lot, keeping interceptions down. What were your observations of him during your visit, his rookie year, and what's next for him?

GRUDEN: I just love the way he took control of the football team. Looked like he was in complete control as a leader. He didn't look like he was pressing at all. He looked like he had very good command. And I know Greg Olson very well. He used to coach with me. I liked the way he improved. If you look at the last three or four games, they speak for themselves, against a very good Kansas City Chief team, against an outstanding 49er defense, even though they were shorthanded at some positions. I like the way he finished. I like the

way he competes, from the start to the end of every game. He's much more athletic than people realize. And he has a cannon. And if they can just continue on the path that they're on, adding good players and maybe a couple more guys to that skill set of receivers, the Raiders, once again, they can make their way back. I'm excited for the Raiders as an ex-Oakland Raider myself. I really am impressed with Carr. I really root for him.

Q. With the Jets, do you think they need to get a quarterback in this draft, or do you think they can go into the season with either Geno Smith or Ryan Fitzpatrick under center?

GRUDEN: I would be surprised if the Jets – I'm assuming, between you and I, I think that Winston and Mariota will be gone. I don't think the Jets will be looking at a quarterback at pick number 6. I'm really impressed with what they've done. They've added a lot of good players. Three really good corners. They've improved their secondary tremendously. That was the weak link of this football team last year. And Geno Smith, as polarizing as he is to most of the people that I hear talk about him, he is getting better. He is showing some progress. And they are adding some players around him. Brandon Marshall comes to town, to potentially give him a go-to target. I think a (inaudible) tight end has a chance to be a factor in the passing game. Maybe another offensive lineman, maybe another year of really spending time with Geno, with a solid back-up like Fitzpatrick, will be beneficial. But I'd be surprised if the Jets pulled the plug on Geno, because I see, as painful as it is for some Jets fans, I see some progress.

Q. With so many high schools and colleges running the spread offense now, is it getting harder to find fullbacks and tight ends that fit into a pro-style offense?

GRUDEN: I'm glad you said that. It's getting harder to watch and try to evaluate players. You don't see a linebacker take on a fullback anymore. You don't see a defensive end get face blocked by a tight end. You don't see a lot of things that you used to see. Some of these receivers don't run a route tree that you even recognize. And they're running plays at warp speed, trying to run 90 plays a game. So defenses aren't as sophisticated. There aren't as much specialization. There might be more yards. But I don't think we have seen a lot of general managers, scouts, and coaches be able to really get a true indication of who can do what. But to answer your question, there is not, that I can find, a true blocking tight end in this draft. There's not a Jason Witten in this draft. Not on tape. And there aren't many fullbacks. I saw Neighbors at LSU and I saw Fowler at Alabama. But not very many teams, maybe Iowa, even uses a fullback. So you hit the nail right on the head. It's getting tough.

Q. Is fullback a position that's becoming extinct?

GRUDEN: After the success that DeMarco Murray had last year, they used Hanna as an H-back type. There's not a lot of teams that aren't using a fullback. There's a role for a fullback in a two-back set, because the play-action passes are still very important. Running the ball in on the goal line in short yardage and to run out the clock at the end of the game, sometimes you need that fullback component to really give you the arsenal to be a good running team. But a lot of the fullbacks in the league right now are converted linebackers. You see Darrel Young in Washington, and see several teams using defensive linemen, like the Cincinnati Bengals as their fullback, in critical goal line situations. It is a dying breed. I'm concerned about it, because my dad put me through college as a running back coach.

Q. I was wondering what you thought about this class of receivers as a group in terms of potential star power and where maybe a sleeper for the later rounds?

GRUDEN: I like this group. You could really say there's nine or 10 that could be considered in the first round, the top 35 players of this draft. Cooper from Alabama. White from West Virginia. DeVante Parker. Jaelen Strong at Arizona State. Phillip Dorsett at Miami (FL) has T.Y. Hilton-like qualities. This kid can fly. Devin Smith, Ohio State. I love Nelson Agholor at USC. He does all the things I'm looking for. I think Devin Funchess at Michigan is going to be a real gem for some creative offensive coach. Perryman at Central Florida. Who runs 4.26? I don't know very many people. There's just so many that are in this draft. Man, we didn't even talk about Dorial Green-Beckham at Missouri or Oklahoma. Sammie Coates at Auburn. You can get a really good receiver this year in the second or third round. No question.

Q. I wanted to get your opinion on what you thought of Russell Wilson flirting with this idea of maybe playing baseball and staying at quarterback. Do you have a thought on that? What would you tell him if you do? What do you think of that?

GRUDEN: I'm surprised, that's for sure. I'm surprised that he would do that, just because he's proven to be one of the most valuable players in all of football. And he's got a contract coming up. There's risk in

everything you do. But I'm surprised that he continues to pursue baseball. Deep down, after meeting with Russell Wilson, I'm not shocked because I know he has a passion for the sport. I know he has an inner drive that is uncommon to most human beings that I've met. And I don't want to ever say never. My dad drafted Bo Jackson coming out of Auburn. I saw Deion Sanders do it. Who knows what will happen with Russell Wilson. He's defied all odds before. But I am shocked. I am really surprised given the fact that he's had so much success and he's got a contract looming and it's going to be for a lot of money that he would assume any risk whatsoever.

Q. Another Seattle question here. The success that John Schneider and Pete Carroll have had in the draft, sort of working together. Just curious what you've seen of their dynamic and how important that is that the coach and the GM seem to work so well together when picking the personnel, especially on draft day?

GRUDEN: That certainly helps. I think both have an open mind. They have extreme confidence in one another. They have a lot of trust. And I think every player that is drafted, they know that Pete Carroll and his coaching staff are going to go overboard trying to make them successful. They're going to have a role for him, and they're going to do everything possible to develop him. They're going to welcome every draft pick with open arms. There's going to be no split decisions on draft day. And that's a credit to their relationship. And I think it's a big part of their success. And Pete Carroll has been a college coach, a great college coach. I think that dynamic, that background, helps the entire organization find players, understand players, and allows them to create the culture that they have there.

Q. Wondering, when you're drafting for a strictly developmental quarterback near the end of the draft, what traits are you trying to find specifically? And along those lines, do you see any quarterbacks that could go in the final round, sixth, seventh round that could offer a lot of value to a team in this draft?

GRUDEN: You know, we used to do that I think every year in Green Bay years ago, Mike Holmgren, Ron Wolf would bring in a quarterback at some point in the draft. I think a lot of it is going to be based on the individual workout that you have with the quarterback. But you're looking for a young man that has arm talent. Number one, can he throw the football, can he make the throws that you're going to ask him to make? Does he have athleticism to create some plays? Does he have body quickness? How quick is his release? Is he sharp mentally? Does he love football? Does he have a passion for it? Is he a leader? Can he survive on very few reps? A lot of quarterbacks can stand back there and watch the starter and they can get better by just watching. That's what you're looking for. I like a number of guys down the road a little bit in this draft. But I haven't had a chance to work with them individually. So I don't want to start saying several names that would be candidates of mine. But I like this Halliday at Washington State. I like the way he plays. I saw him play in a bowl game a couple of years ago against Colorado State. I like the way he played this year against Utah. There are a number of guys that have some redeeming qualities. But it's all going to be based on the individual workout and how he performed doing your stuff.

Q. The Giants in recent years have sort of admitted to, in the later rounds, trying to find surer bets, guys that are team captains and high quality, high character kind of guys. How did you sort of balance that in the later rounds between potential and balancing the character end of it and the fact of what you're getting and how much certainty you know with those kind of players?

GRUDEN: Getting team captains and high character players is a real good ingredient to have. I wanted as much football character as possible. And if we had a real strong locker room, a lot of football character, we might take a risk on a young player that maybe was a character. Maybe he had some character issues. It all depends on the exact research that we had done. But I kind of like the idea of helping a young man in the middle to late rounds, dusting them off, get him back on his feet, putting him in an environment where we had a lot of leadership and football character, and helping turn a young guy around. I think that's part of coaching. That's what the great teams do. I see a lot of these teams that are successful willing to bring in a player that's had a checkered past, and I think the environment that you have certainly is very important, if you have some veteran leadership, you can sometimes go that route. But if you don't have a lot of leadership on your team, you probably shouldn't go that way.

Q. Two-part question: One, do you see the logic to a Rivers/Mariota trade; and two, if Rivers stayed and they added Todd Gurley, does that look like it could put them into Super Bowl contention?

GRUDEN: This Rivers/Mariota trade thing, I don't know if that's -- I don't know how much smoke and how much fire is there. I just don't understand how you can trade a quarterback, Philip Rivers, all the way up to where you're going to have to go. Who is going to get what? They're going to have to be other compensation involved. What that is might be the determining factor on this. But I'd be shocked if that happened. But you're right, if you could get a great back, whether it be Gurley or Gordon, whoever it is, to ignite this running game once, like they had with LT, to set up some play-action passing, that could really be an outstanding 1-2 combination for their offense. Hopefully they get Weddle back in camp and they continue to add pieces to their defense. I think they need to find a rusher. But if they can keep their man, Philip Rivers, that's the number one thing I would want to do to keep the arrow pointing in the right direction.

Q. I'm doing a story on the Miami Hurricanes in this draft. Could you talk a little bit about Miami's draft depth this year, it's more than recent years for sure, and also talk about any guys from Miami you think can have a pretty quick impact on the league?

GRUDEN: I'm glad you called in, because I've told several people that I talked to in the league that my favorite players in this draft are Miami Hurricanes. I love Flowers at left tackle. I think he's going to be a Pro Bowl lineman. I don't know if he's going to be a right tackle, guard or left tackle, he's just a pup. But he's big. He's powerful. He has the playing style I love. I can't tell you how much I like Flowers at left tackle. The middle linebacker is, he's on my All-Gruden Grinder team, Denzel Perryman. He's like (John) Beason, like Jonathan Vilma guys that have come through there. He makes a lot of tackles. He's a great communicator. Biggest hitter in the draft. Perryman can play. And if you don't like Duke Johnson, you have to tell me why. Maybe he's not big enough. But he can return. He's a great receiver. Anybody I talk to says he has the heart of a lion, just like McGahee and Portis and Gore had. Makes a lot of yards and a lot of plays. And Dorsett, the wide receiver – is there a faster, more dynamic player in the draft? I mean, this kid can fly. I'm really shocked that Miami didn't have more success on the field. But those are four Hurricanes that are going go high, you watch, they're going to go real high in this draft and make some people real happy.

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