My first Dolphins mock draft

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First off, my apologies for not being consistent with my blogs the last few weeks. Draft season is my favorite time of year, but I've been busier than usual recently. That being said, I've taken as much time as I can to look at a few prospects that Miami is clearly targeting, (or at least want us to believe they are), recently. Combining information on who Miami has been showing the most interest in (based off of visits, workouts, interviews, scouting trips, etc.), and who I feel Jeff Ireland and Joe Philbin will take a liking to based on their history, here is my first mock draft. I'll come out with at least one more (including a full NFL first round mock) the day before the draft, although I doubt the Dolphins picks will change much unless new inside/major information comes out. I believe that one of two things will happen come April 26th. Either Miami drafts Tannehill at #8 overall, or he's not available and they move down to draft Brandon Weeden later. Right now I think the former is the more likely option, (word out of Cleveland is they don't have any interest in Tannehill, which doesn't surprise me; can a staff that's on the hot seat afford to draft a QB who won't contribute in 2012 at #4 overall? I've maintained they preference is Weeden at 22 for a while). However, I'll give a mock including both scenarios. If Miami does move down for Weeden the compensation could vary. If Cleveland is not the one who drafts Tannehill before Miami than the Dolphins cannot afford to trade down past 21. In that case, the compensation will likely be a 3rd and 4th round pick. If Cleveland does take Tannehill and Miami is comfortable enough moving into the last 20's, the compensation will likely involve a 2nd round pick. I think the former trade scenario is more likely, so for the second portion of this mock I will be using those selections, (Miami would still have 1 second round pick, but three 3rd round and two 4th round selections). Mock 1: 1. Ryan Tannehill, QB, Texas A&M - If you have not checked out the Draft Winds staff's scouting report on Tannehill, it is a must read, (as is their Weeden write-up). There is no point in me trying to compete with that scouting report, and I agree with almost every point they make in it. One thing I do want to state regarding the Tannehill pick, however, is the perception that the pick would be a "reach." I'm going to let you in on a secret: When it comes to franchise QB's, there is no such thing as a reach. If you feel he has the mental, physical and intangible tools to be a franchise QB, than he's worth the top pick in the draft. Period. If Jeff Ireland, (who was rumored to love Tannehill during the season), Joe Philbin and Mike Sherman (Miami's Offensive Coordinator and Tannehill's coach for his 4 years at A&M) feel that Ryan will be a franchise QB, than you take him at #8 and run through the streets naked, happy as can be that you've finally found somebody to build around. Hell, if you have a conviction about him than I don't care what Mel Kiper or Brian Billick say, move up to get him. If he pans out, regardless of what you gave up for him, it will be a steal, not a reach. The three major reasons I've seen for Tannehill being called a reach are, 1) he's not "safe," 2) he's not the 8th best player in the draft, and 3) next year's class is loaded. First of all, how many QB's are "safe?" Even if Tannehill is a 50/50 shot, 50/50 is better than zero. You don't pass him up because of risk, nor do you take somebody because of safety. You take them because of what you think they WILL become. Trust your evaluation and go with your conviction. If you like him, go get him, regardless of the cost. If you don't, then you don't. It's that simple. The second point, (no offense to anyone who would disagree with me...actually, go ahead and take offense to it, you probably deserve it), is just plain stupid. Do people not understand the game of football? Listen, is Trent Richardson a better player than Tannehill is right now? Sure. Is Blackmon? Yes. Melvin Ingram? Maybe. But I don't care what they are today. I care about what they will be down the road. And down that road, Ryan Tannehill's potential is easily capable of catching up to any of those players. Not only that, (and probably much more importantly), those players aren't QB's. Is Adrian Peterson a better RB than Ben Roethlisberger is a QB? No question. Who do I take to build my team around? It's not even debatable: Big Ben. RB's, CB's and pass rushers are important, but they don't win championships; QB's do. Quarterbacks are the ones that win and lose games more times than not, and the ones that will keep you in contention consistently, with the ability to put you over the top when you assemble those special rosters around them. The third argument is even more ridiculous and humorous. Why is it humorous? Because we said the SAME EXACT THING last year...and the year before that. Truth is, we don't know what will happen a year from now. Yes, there could be 5 stud first round QB's. Or there could be just 1 or 2. Barkley won't be an option, Landry Jones stunk after he lost Ryan Broyles, Bray would be silly to come out next year, Logan Thomas is very talented but is a huge question mark, and is Tyler Wilson really special, or just a "solid" QB? You can't make decisions based off of assumptions and potential options a year from now. You make them off of what you know. The only thing we KNOW (in this scenario) is that Tannehill is there for the taking. It's not Tannehill vs Bray, or Wilson, or Jones. It's Tannehill vs Tannehill, and maybe Tannehill vs. Weeden. Those are the decisions that Ireland has to make. That is not debatable, as far as I'm concerned. For the record, I do believe Tannehill can be the guy. I know that a lot of people have a hard time getting on board with him for a variety of reasons, (most of which I think are invalid, as outlined above). But you draft him off of what you think he is in 3 years and in 7 years, not what he is or isn't in 2012. And personally I am very confident that in a few years Tannehill will be a top 10 NFL QB. 2. Vinny Curry, DE, Marshall - I still believe that Curry will go higher than #42 overall, however most mock drafts and analysts have him being available at this spot. If he is available, this is an absolute no brainer for me. Curry fits what Miami needs opposite of Wake perfectly; he's not an elite pass rusher with elite pass rush skills (doesn't have an elite first step, but has a decent one and gets up to speed quickly, although doesn't bend around the edge that well), but he has the best motor of any pass rusher that I've seen, is VERY strong at the point of attack against the run and in his bull rush, and has extensive experience on the left side. The only negative to Curry at this spot is that he may not be versatile enough to be a 3 down LB in Miami's hybrid D. Curry is much better suited to play DE in a 43 than OLB in a 34. I think he can play both, but he's going to struggle at times in space as a LB. With that said, Curry finds ways to make impact plays on all 3 downs consistently and together with Wake, it should be a tandem that wears down opposing OL and TE's throughout the course of a game. So while I think Curry has a limited ceiling as a pass rusher and may not

fit Miami's 34 D as well as they'd like, Curry is a perfect fit in 4-DL sets opposite of Wake and is a very safe pick given his strength, motor and above average athleticism. 3a. Ryan Broyles, WR, Oklahoma - I would actually be surprised if Broyles makes it this far, although you never know how these types of situations will play out; Broyles tore his ACL last Novemeber, but ran a 4.5 40 yard dash today at a workout held today. The fact that Broyles was able to run a 40 yard dash and run it pretty well (although certainly not as well as if he was healthy), is impressive and speaks to a few things; 1) He clearly as tremendous work ethic, otherwise he wouldn't be this far ahead in his recovery, 2) he's a quick healer, and more importantly, 3) he should be ready to go full speed for training camp. With all that said, an ACL injury can't be taken lightly, and this is a LOADED WR class, especially in rounds 2-4. For that reason Broyles could drop, and if he does Miami would be stupid to pass him up at this stage. Broyles was touted as a first round pick last year before going back to school for his Sr. year, and again this past season before the knee injury. He fits the offense PERFECTLY, as he's a very good route runner on short-intermediate routes, can get down the field, can play outside or in the slot, has very good hands and makes yards after the catch consistently. Broyles would be a steal at this stage. What's interesting is that Miami brought Broyles to Davie for a visit at some point in the last few weeks, but were not at his workout today. I'm thinking (and hoping) that they are trying to hide their interest. 3b. Marvin McNutt, WR, Iowa - McNutt is a little over rated, in my opinion, however does provide Miami with some needed size at WR and has serious connections to the Dolphins; Ken O'Keefe, Miami's new WR's coach, was Iowa's offensive coordinator previously. Joe Philbin is also very close with Iowa's Head Coach Kirk Ferentz. McNutt is being compared to Jordy Nelson by some, although I can't say I see it. I don't see tremendous explosion coming in and out of breaks, very violent hands against press coverage, or the speed to challenge defenses down the field. That said, he's got solid hands, is a solid blocker down field, has nice size and finds ways to be productive after the catch. The Dolphins have shown as much interest in McNutt this off season as any player not named Ryan Tannehill. 4. Ryan Steed, CB, Furman - I can see Miami attacking the CB position much earlier than this, (as early as round 2). The Dolphins not only need a nickel CB badly, (whether it be somebody to play in the slot, or on the boundary when Smith moves to safety in nickel and dime situations as expected), and overall depth in the defensive backfield, but they also potentially need a replacement for Sean Smith in 2013. Smith is a free agent after this season and with the amount of money that they will have to invest in a number of players, (Jake Long, Cam Wake, Reggie Bush, Brian Hartline, Randy Starks, and others) there might not be enough money to keep Smith in Miami, despite the salary cap likely being raised significantly in 2014 due to the new (and absurdly high) TV deals. Make no mistake about it; CB is a very big need for this team. Not quite to the priority that pass rusher, WR and obviously QB are, but it's certainly at the top of the list of the tier 2 needs. While I haven't seen Steed play, the Dolphins have shown a lot of interest in him and fits the bill size wise and athletically that Miami likes in their corners. His strength is supposedly press coverage, which is another plus. 5. Ryan Davis, DE/OLB, Bethune Cookman - Davis could very well go higher than this as he's drawn a lot of interest from a lot of different teams. The Dolphins have shown as much interest as anyone though. Davis worked out at the University of Miami's Pro Day (where the Dolphins were obviously in attendance) and Miami then also sent scouts to watch him work out at Bethune Cookman's Pro Day. He has good size for either RDE in a 43 or ROLB in a 34 at 6'3, 260 and was extremely productive this past season recording 12 sacks and 21.5 tackles for loss. I haven't seen Davis play, so I can't speak about his play, but the pick makes sense for a lot of different reasons. Look for Miami to address pass rusher multiple times in the draft. Another player to look out for is Jake Bequette out of Arkansas. Miami has shown interest in him and he fits the mold of a Jeff Ireland pass rusher at 6'5, 274 and has a great motor. 6. Armond Armstead, DT, USC - Armstead has a scary history of health issues. On top of a concerning injury history he had to sit out last season because he was hospitalized for chest pains. Doctors not affiliated with USC say he is fine and does not have a heart condition, but USC doctors would not let him play last season or workout at their Pro Day. Armstead was being viewed as a 1st or 2nd round pick coming into the season and Miami has shown plenty of interest, meeting with him twice including a visit in Miami. He's got great size and athleticism for his position at 6'5, 290 and fits the mold of a 43 DT or 34 DE very well. Some have said that he can even kick outside and play DE in a 43. The Dolphins are clearly doing their homework and rightfully so. He could prove to be a steal. 7. Ryan Lewis, LB, Bethune Cookman - Ben Volin reported yesterday that the Dolphins have shown extensive interest in Lewis and have talk to him about converting to FB. The Dolphins are in need of a FB with Clay moving to TE full time, (according to Coach Philbin, although it could very well be a smokescreen), and Philbin's offense in Green Bay using FB's in a variety of ways on offense, (see John Kuhn). The other late round fullback that Miami has shown plenty of interest in is FAU's Alfred Morris. He's a bit lighter, weighing about 230, but could provide a solid option at FB as well as special teams (think replacement to Lex Hilliard). Now for my mock if Miami were to trade down for Weeden... 1. Brandon Weeden, QB, Oklahoma St. - Like the Tannehill piece that Draft Winds put together, the Weeden novel is a must read. Weeden, unlike Tannehill, would come in and compete with Matt Moore and David Garrard for the starting job right away, (hopefully winning it). I'm not going to speak too much on Weeden, other than I agree with the Draft Winds breakdown that he is a franchise QB and is well worth investing into despite his age. You can read their piece for an extensive and very knowledgable breakdown. 2. Vinny Curry - (description above). 2b/3a - At this point I think Miami packages the picks they acquired for Weeden, (a 3rd and 4th), to move back into the 2nd round for Jayron Hosley, CB, Virginia Tech. The Dolphins have shown a lot of interest in Hosley, who would be a great pick-up and immediate impact player. He had a more quiet season in 2011 than he had in 2010, although has had a great off season and is still one of the top 3 corners in this draft, in my opinion. Hosley would allow Miami the flexibility to move Smith to safety in the nickel and dime, without being concerned about replacing him at CB. He'd also allow them to let Smith walk in Free Agency next off season if money gets tight. 3a. Ryan Broyles - (description above). 3b. Bruce Irvin, DE/OLB, West Virginia - Had Irvin entered the draft a year ago he'd likely be a first round pick. After a much quieter season in 2011, Irvin has seen his stock free fall. He's had a great off season, posting spectacular numbers at the combine. However it is said that teams are worried about his stamina, work ethic and lack of size/strength, making him nothing more than a 3rd down situational pass rusher. That's fine with me, especially if

Miami is able to grab Curry earlier. The Dolphins have had a history of doubling down on needs, and pass rusher is certainly a need worth doubling down on. Irvin would compliment the pick of Curry well as each have different roles and strengths to their games. In a perfect world, Irvin gets back to 2010 form and provides great pressure opposite of Wake on 3rd down, while Curry is able to be a force against the run as well as provide consistent collapsing of the pocket on first and second down. The Dolphins have done a lot of work with Irvin this off season, and rightfully so, as there is a lot of talent to tap into. 4. Marvin McNutt - (description above). 5. Tom Compton, OT, South Dakota - The Dolphins do need some more depth and competition along the offensive line, although not as badly as some think, in my opinion. Compton is "firmly on the Miami radar" according to the folks at Draft Winds and fits the bill of a Jeff Ireland OL. He's 6'6, 314, has long 34 inch arms and was a four year starter. Obviously trying to predict a 5th round draft pick is almost impossible to do, but I think this is a good spot for an OT and Compton makes a lot of sense. I'll leave the rest of the mock the same. Hopefully you enjoyed the read if you got all the way through. Less than two weeks until the draft. Start getting excited!