

My Final Dolphins Mock Draft

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It's been a long wait, but NFL Draft weekend is finally here...almost.

This is shaping out to be one of the most unpredictable drafts in quite some time, both from an NFL perspective and a Dolphins perspective.

Here is my futile attempt at projecting Miami's early draft plans:

1) Tyler Eifert - TE - Notre Dame

I have had Tyler Eifert as the target at 12 for a few weeks now and since it's beginning to gain some steam, I'll stick by it. The Dolphins head into the draft with only one major, immediate hole on the roster: Left Tackle. I don't see Miami trading up for one, nor do I see them taking DJ Fluker at 12th overall. Miami could take a CB, however DJ Hayden's stock is inflated right now among most of the media, in my opinion, and would be a reach at 12. As would Trufant and national media favorite Xavier Rhodes, who Armando Salguero claims Miami is not that interested in (something I've been preaching for months). The Dolphins could look to add a pass rusher, and Tony Pauline as speculated recently that Tank Carradine is a serious option in the 1st round. I think Carradine would be a reach this high even without the ACL tear, never mind recovering from it. Jarvis Jones is a very good prospect, but will Miami take a bad scheme fit this early? Doubt it. Sheldon Richardson is a pick that would infuriate, although not surprise me; but a DT isn't Ireland's first choice. Tavon Austin is a player every fan is dreaming about, but realistically Miami will stay away from the 5'8 utility player from West Virginia.

That leaves Eifert, who fits multiple immediate need, a future need, and will be one of the best players on the board. The Dolphins need a pass catching target with size, a TE who can block, depth at the position, a TE who can replace Dustin Keller (or at least give them that flexibility) in a year and Miami needs somebody who can score TD's in the redzone. Eifert fits all of these needs and gives Miami a component offensively that they have not had this decade: A complete offense with immense versatility. There is no bigger weapon for a team who wants to run a high tempo offense than an elite set of TE's. An Eifert/Keller two TE set gives Tannehill an elite combination, in my opinion, and with Mike Wallace on the outside the two should eat up the middle of the field with ease.

There are very few players that I have seen with the ability to high point the football and come down with it like Eifert. He has elite hands, size and is a very smooth athlete. He's as good in traffic, over the middle and in the redzone as any TE that I can remember studying the past few years. Eifert needs to continue to improve as a blocker, but he has a good frame, long arms, improved every year in that aspect of his game at Notre Dame and puts a lot of effort into his blocking. It's average at this point, but he has the tools to make a strength of his game.

I won't predict that Eifert becomes Rob Gronkowski, but I do see a top 10 TE in him and an immediate impact player. He'll be a very good player a premium position, and makes for a safe, solid selection at #12.

{youtube}yw61TLN2w{/youtube} 2a) Jordan Poyer - CB - Oregon St. I struggle with this pick. There are a variety of directions that the Dolphins could go here. Safety is a big possibility if one they like (Jonathan Cyprien *cough cough*) falls to this spot. Miami could also look to move up for DJ Hayden, Tank Carradine, or Bjoern Werner if they were to fall into the late 20's. I think corner is the position they attack here though. I'm expecting a run on CB's in the late first round and early second round. Poyer might seem like a bit of a reach at 42, and I do have my reservations about him. However, in a zone defense he fits beautifully, especially in the slot. If you try and have him in man coverage on the boundary consistently you are doing him a disservice. Poyer isn't big or strong enough, nor does he have the recovery speed to play that role and be anything more than an average player. He makes plays in off-zone, not in man. With that said, Poyer does have some Brent Grimes in him and Barry Jackson has stated multiple times that the Dolphins do like Poyer. He's got sensational instincts and reads QB's as well as any player in this draft. From a pure fit standpoint, Poyer is probably the 3rd best zone corner in this draft, in my opinion. He makes plays on the ball consistently (showing good ball skills), breaking on as many routes as any CB in this draft (maybe with the exception of Hayden), is aggressive in his coverage and has nice quickness/change of direction. Poyer, as I mentioned, does have some flaws. Most concerning is his tackling; he's not soft, but you can tell he's not strong and misses a lot of tackles because of it. He struggles down the field as well because of his lack of recovery speed and size. Here are some great stats on Poyer: Of all the consensus Day 1 and 2 corners, nobody had a better completion percentage against than Poyer's ridiculous 5.04%, and it's not that close. Poyer also had the best 1st down percentage among these CB's, with opposing teams gaining first downs on just 16.67% of the completions against Poyer. With that said, Poyer is my 6th rated CB and is a very nice fit for what the Dolphins *says they* want to do at CB. {youtube}NsJ8B01YtQ{/youtube} 2b) *Traded for Branden Albert* 3a) Stedman Bailey - WR - West Virginia I expect the Dolphins to trade Davone Bess for a 2014 draft pick. Bailey is Davone's replacement. Bailey grew up a walking distance from Sun Life Stadium, and naturally a Dolphins fan. He's not necessarily a dynamic WR, but he epitomizes the phrase "real good football player." He doesn't have elite speed, but he has very

good hands, plays much bigger than his 5'10 frame and has prototypical ability for the slot. Bailey has a nose for the endzone (he had a ridiculous 21 TD's this past season to lead the country) and has good quickness in his route running and after the catch, racking up an average of 6.24 yards after the catch last season - better than Tavon Austin, Cordarrelle Patterson, Quinton Patton, or any other top WR prospect. Bailey is tough and runs like a running back with the ball in his hands. I really like him and there has been buzz for months linking him to Miami.

3b) Corey Lemonier - DE - Auburn In a perfect world, the Dolphins attack pass rusher earlier and they certainly have the ammunition to do so as I mentioned earlier. However I have a feeling the Dolphins are somewhat happy with the combination of Jared Odrick and Olivier Vernon, only looking to add competition, depth and future contributors to the position. That's what Lemonier provides. He's a high upside, athletic player who Miami has shown a lot of interest in. Lemonier was thought by many to be a 1st round pick heading into the season, but had a bad Sr. campaign. He's very much a speed rusher who doesn't bull rush very well and will probably struggle against the run. He plays soft a lot and doesn't use his hands well. One thing I also noticed is that he's often slow reacting to the snap. Rarely does he get a good jump. One other negative about Lemonier is that he was primarily a left DE at Auburn, while Cameron Wake is exclusively on the left side in pass situations. I'm not his biggest fan. However, he does have very good athletic ability and was a productive player in the SEC, getting 9.5 sacks his Jr. year. Miami has shown a lot of interest though and the pick here makes sense. Cornelius Washington is also another option if he were to fall this far.

4) Earl Watford - OG - James Madison Miami needs to add depth along the offensive line; even with a trade for Albert, Miami will likely be spending at least one more pick on an offensive lineman. Richie Incognito is almost undoubtedly in his last year as a Dolphin, and neither John Jerry nor Lance Louis are names that can be counted on at guard. Miami needs to start developing young, athletic lineman to fill those shoes in 2014 and compete immediately. Watford is a very athletic, developmental player who should fit well in a zone blocking scheme. Miami has shown little interest in mid round guard prospects, although I have little doubt one will be added in the draft.

5) Jelani Jenkins - LB - Florida have a feeling the Dolphins will add plenty of depth along the front 7 in this draft. I'd suspect a DE, DT and LB all get selected at some point. Jenkins is very talented, but had an up and down career at UF. Miami has met with Jenkins privately in Davie and he fits the mold of what Miami appears to be looking for in a LB. Josh Kaddu might be more of a DE than a LB at this point and watch for Miami to continue to add athletes to the LB core.

6) Cierre Wood - RB - Notre Dame Miami can't feel comfortable with Lamar Miller, Daniel Thomas and Jonas Gray as the tailbacks heading into next season. As much as most of us love Lamar, he's not proven, and the only thing Daniel Thomas has proven is that he can't be trusted either. Miami probably won't add a back before round 4, but once we get into Day 3 I think they'll pounce on good value. Wood is a nice fit for a zone blocking team. He has good quickness, decent power and really good vision, excelling when he has a chance to pick a hole, put his foot in the ground, make one cut and take off up field. The Dolphins took a flyer on Wood's teammate Jonas Gray last off season and are said to like Wood this year.

7) Kayvon Webster - DB - USF Miami has had a private workout with Webster, who played CB at South Florida, but I personally think could make the transition to safety given his straight line speed. I'd expect Miami to add multiple DB's in this draft. With the remaining 7th round picks and undrafted pool, I expect Miami to add plenty of DT's to compete in camp as well as a kicker for Carpenter.