

Dolphins add OLG/OLT Dallas Thomas in the 3rd round

Contributed by Tony Simmons
Friday, 26 April 2013

Miami added talent to the offensive line with the addition of Tennessee OLT/OLG Dallas Thomas with their 77th pick in the 3rd round. Thomas has the ability to play OLT and moved inside to OLG his senior season. He has good size at 6'5 1/2, 306 lbs and the frame to still put on good weight. Is stout at the point of attack and can handle power with a strong base. Can pull and has good balance, slide, seal and sustain. Probably is a better fit inside at OG, and certainly has the ability to come in and compete for a starting position on the offensive line.

The Dolphins traded pick #82 in the 3rd round to the New Orleans Saints and gained (2) 4th round picks, #106 & #109. The Dolphins now have (3) 4th round picks and (3) 5th round picks.

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ESPN INSIDER

has the versatility to line up at tackle and at guard. While he lacks an ideal inline power base, he makes up for it with quickness and lateral agility, making him an ideal fit for a zone blocking scheme. In addition, he is polished in terms of technique and has excellent hand placement. Thomas also is consistent in space when climbing to the second level or covering up defenders on the move.

How he fits: Although the Dolphins continue to try to replace left tackle Jake Long, they also have problems inside at the guard position. They fixed one with the acquisition of right guard Lance Louis from Chicago. But the weak link of this unit is probably left guard Richie Incognito. That gives Thomas a chance to compete for a starting position, and at the very least be a swing inside player.

OVERALL FOOTBALL TRAITS

2009: Played 13 games (0 starts) 2010: Started all 13 games at LOT. 2011: Started all 12 games at LOT. 2012: Started all 12 games at LOG Height-Weight-Speed 2 Has prototypical OT height. A bit lean but continues to add bulk to frame. Straight-line burst is adequate-to-good. Durability 1 Has played in 41 consecutive games, including 37 consecutive starts to end his career. Intangibles 2 Soft-spoken type. Team player. Made move to LOG in 2012 spring after 25 starts at LOT so team can get best five OL on field. Solid student. Son of Dawn Thomas.

OFFENSIVE GUARD SPECIFIC TRAITS

Pass Protection 2 Natural knee bender. Quick set and has very good overall balance. Appears on tape to have very long arms and big hands. Effective mirror-and-slide. Good range but can struggle at times when having to quickly recover laterally after oversetting initially. Is a bit light in the trunk. Will get knocked back initially by powerful rushers. Usually is able to sink hips and reset in order to stymie, but not often enough. Tends to let pads rise after initial contact and gets hands too high, which negates his leverage. Needs to be more consistent with hand placement. Upper body power is adequate but not good. Improved power in initial punch would help his game tremendously. Run Blocking 3 Not dominant but very effective. Fires out quickly and takes good angles. Has good range as a run blocker. Light on feet. Under control in space. Would fit nicely in a zone-blocking scheme in NFL. Good balance and leverage. Moves feet effectively after initial contact. Narrow based blocker. Needs to improve overall strength. Does not consistently drive defenders off the line but has adequate-to-good initial pop when coming forward and keeps feet moving after initial contact, which allows him to maintain good positioning and sustain run blocks. Brings some toughness to the table. Awareness 2 Knows his assignments. Shows good feet/timing on combo blocks. Awareness versus blitz is adequate-to-good. Keeps eyes up and locates delayed blitzers off the edge and late developing twists/stunts. Occasionally will be a quarter-count late to react on fast developing twists/stunts. Does a consistently good job of locating assignment as a second-level run blocker. Toughness 3 Not a mauler but flashes a noticeable mean streak. Delivers punch with purpose. Effort is adequate for the most part but occasionally will fail to work through the whistle. Content at times to wall off in run game.

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OVERVIEW

Even though Thomas grew up in Louisiana and was recruited by in-state LSU, he decided he could make a quicker

impact at Tennessee. Thomas redshirted in 2008, and then played all 13 games on special teams the following season. When finally given his chance as a sophomore, Thomas won the team's Harvey Robinson Award as the offensive surprise player of 2010 spring practices and then proved himself durable and reliable by starting all 13 games at left tackle. He started every game on the blind side as a junior, as well, with his best effort possibly coming against South Carolina defensive ends Melvin Ingram and Jadaveon Clowney –- they combined for just two tackles, none for loss and no sacks, on the day.

In order for the team to get their five best offensive lineman on the field in 2012, Thomas moved from left tackle to left guard. In this year, his senior season, Thomas earned second-team All-SEC honors. Thomas finished his career by starting his final 37 games.

ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS

Displays the potential to start as either a tackle or guard in the NFL. Plays with natural bend in the knees, and flexibility. Possesses excellent agility. Can sit down into his blocks and anchor. Can block down yet spring back outside to cut off outside blitzers, also gets to second level quickly and shows good speed and hustle downfield. Very good at pulling, and is always attempting to drive his assignment to the ground. Maintains balance while extending his arms to keep outside rushers out of the pocket, does not give up after initial contact. Good recovery speed to cut off spin and inside counter moves. Goes out to meet his man and packs a punch to stop their momentum. Comes off the ball very well from a three-point stance in the run game.

WEAKNESSES

Foot quickness

is a bit lacking. Must continue to get stronger in the lower body, will give up a bit of ground against powerful defenders - –- especially when he fails to land his punch correctly. Must consistently get his hands up quickly, both in pass protection and when trying to negate second-level defenders. Lunges towards his man out of a three-point stance on occasion, overextending to allow him to pass by.

NFL COMPARISON

Rodger

Saffold

BOTTOM LINE

Thomas has three years of starting experience in the SEC under his belt. He spent his Sophomore and Junior seasons at left tackle, before moving to guard in his senior season. Thomas plays with great flexibility. He also has the ability to anchor into his blocks. Thomas likely profiles better as an offensive guard, but is capable of playing left tackle in the NFL, despite less than ideal foot quickness. Thomas should be a top-50 selection.

SPORTING NEWS (TSN)

SCOUTING ANALYSIS

Moving from left tackle to left guard to clear the way for Antonio Richardson, Thomas set aside his goals to improve Tennessee's line as a senior. he impressed scouts with his team-first approach and unselfish attitude. Comfortable with guard footwork and taking such technique with him to the left tackle position, Thomas shuffles rather than kick sliding, showing a sudden, choppy and largely effective pass set.

Being a natural knee bender, Thomas anchors and absorbs surprisingly well versus power rushers, despite lacking plus strength or pop in his hands and hips at the point of attacks. His reps at guard as a senior did not help his progression as a tackle and only reinforced his shuffling technique on the perimeter. Moreover, his apparent lack of strength shows in his inability to create movement and drive in the running game.

Compensating for his lack of strength however, Thomas does a nice job of turning defenders in the hole by cutting off the man in front of him, positioning himself with a wide base and anchoring down at the point of attack; simple and effective, Thomas yielded no ground in using such technique and proved himself capable of opening running lanes.

Thomas excels as a second-level blocker, displaying a quick burst along with the coordination and balance to break down in the open field and lock on at the point of attack. Hand placement and overextension at the point of attack cause some inconsistencies, but, when correct with his technique, Thomas flashed elite ability in this facet.

Able to sustain blocks with his lower half strength and natural bend, Thomas shows the understanding of how to anchor on the move. The speed with which Thomas cuts off linebackers and the ideal angles he takes make him especially effective on the move and confirm the movement skills.

Considering his size, length and feet Thomas brings more upside and a higher ceiling at left tackle. On the flip side Thomas also shows the mobility, second-level blocking ability and lateral quickness to contribute right away as a guard in a zone-blocking scheme. The versatility to play both positions is a plus.

While his physical tools warrant a second round pick, a torn right labrum at the Senior Bowl will likely push Thomas into the third round, where he'll provide excellent value for NFL teams. —Alex Brown, Optimum Scouting

SPORTS ILLUSTRATED (SI)

evaluate an offensive linemen who uses his hands aggressively to punch defender and blocks with a "take no prisoners" attitude. His good core/natural strength looks even better when he pops pass rusher with hard punch as he often is able to stop them in their tracks. Maintaining pass blocks once he gets a good "fit" on defensive linemen looks easy because he blocks with good base and can slide side to side with ease. Having played offensive tackle his final two seasons at Tennessee, Thomas has the versatility to not only play guard in the NFL, but could also be a swing tackle. While his aggressive hand use helps him in pass pro, his aggressive attitude and playing strength make him a good in-line run blocker. He has consistently shown the ability to tie up head-up defensive linemen to keep hole open for running back and is able to collapse line on down/side block to open large hole. Being able to maintain base helps Thomas to move through the line to block effectively on the second level.

POSITIVES

It is refreshing to

NEGATIVES

Despite showing ability to be dominant in pass pro when he uses hands to aggressively punch defensive lineman and get a good "fit," he does not punch as consistently as he needs to and it allows explosive off the ball power rushers to jolt him and drive him backwards when he is not aggressive with hands. The reason he will likely have to play inside at guard in the NFL is that despite having good feet, he lacks the top end foot quickness to consistently slide out to the corner in time to set and take on speed rushers before they can turn the corner. In addition, he has a bad habit of stopping his shuffle, crossing over and chasing man after making initial contact, which leaves the corner wide open. On film Thomas looks very trim and in shape, but he will likely need to add some bulk/weight to play effectively at guard in the NFL.

ANALYSIS

While many offensive linemen do not jump off the film, Thomas often did because of his aggressive use of hands and overall blocking demeanor. His heavy, two handed punch can stop pass rushers in their tracks and once he gets a good "fit" on man it is usually over. Thomas is never going to win any races in the 40, but he is a good athlete who can get to the second level to block effectively and can make the short pull to lead block well on outside runs. Having played tackle and guard at Tennessee definitely improves Thomas value because he brings great versatility to his team. Despite our belief that he is best suited to playing guard in the NFL, the reality is that at his size and with his experience playing inside and outside, he could realistically develop into a starter at any of the five offensive line positions. Overall, Thomas is likely to be a second or third round draft pick and is the type of lineman that I believe will win a starting job early in his career (Likely as a rookie) and be a good, solid starter for many years.

SCOUT.COM

Thomas was an offensive tackle who started for two seasons before moving inside to guard this past year. He was 2nd team all-conference this past season in a league with some outstanding guard talent. His versatility makes him more coveted because he can play multiple OL positions on the front.

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