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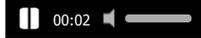
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MONDAY, MARCH 18, 2013

RIGGS DOES CARE ABOUT MURTAUGH: WHAT THE PACKERS NEED TO FOCUS ON IN THE DRAFT



I hate the Pack.

Yes, it's true, I really dislike the Green Bay Packers. But at the same time, I respect the Pack. Sort of like "buddy cops" "respect" each other in a "buddy cop" film. Like Riggs and Murtaugh from Lethal Weapon, or Turner and Hooch from... well... Turner and Hooch. Separately, Riggs is just some crazy suicidal maniac and Murtaugh is just "Too old for this s\$%#." But together they can dramatically take out Jet Li in the rain in Lethal Weapon 4 (which, by the way, I still don't believe - I mean wasn't Danny Glover like 60 by Lethal Weapon 4?). Separately, Turner is just Tom Hanks with OCD and Hooch is just a slobbery dog. But together they have the power to completely rip-off of the James Belushi movie, K-9, yet still be successful (and more memorable - honestly, did you even remember James Belushi did a movie called K-9? I didn't think so. But I digress.).

So being a Bears fan all my life, without the cheeseheads, I'd just be some crazy football fan who likes to replace the word "the" with "da". But there's a reason for the rivalry. A rivalry that began in 1921, the Bears and Packers are closing in on 200 meetings in the regular and post season combined. Of note, the Bears-Packers rivalry is credited by some as the first ever ejection of players for fighting during an NFL game back in 1924. And being a Bears fan, I've had my fair share of Packers memories. Like going to the Brat Stop in Kenosha, Wisconsin and seeing a plastic bear with Mike Singletary's jersey on hanging from a noose. Or when I went to wait for tickets for the 2009 NFL Draft in my Devin Hester jersey and had a group of four Packers fans charge me when they saw me, only stopping because they ran into the metal barrier surrounding the line and fell over. OK, so I never said Packers fans were smart, but at least they're passionate about their team. And I really won't ever forget sitting in what used to be Sutton Place bar in New York and watching the Bears lose the 2010 NFC Championship game amongst jeers of "You suck!" from surrounding Packers fans. But regardless of all that, I still respect the Pack.

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They've got great history. Brett Favre followed by Aaron Rodgers. Sterling Sharpe, Antonio Freeman, Donald Driver, Greg Jennings, and now Jordy Nelson and friends? Sometimes, it just doesn't seem fair. But heck, the trophy every team is playing for is the Lombardi Trophy, so you have to respect that. The Packers have one late pick in each of the 7 rounds, giving them some flexibility. So here's what I think the Packers' priority should be, in order, in the 2013 NFL Draft.

Priority (1) -- Running Back

Running back has been a perennial weakness for the Packers ever since Ryan Grant went down in 2010 with a bad ankle injury and never really came back. James Starks had flashes of genius in the 2010 playoff run up through the Super Bowl, but then never got his mojo back. And although the Packers apparently still feel good about DuJuan Harris, I just don't think he's a workhorse back. Missing out on Steven Jackson (thank goodness) leaves them with some limited options (Cedric Benson? As a Bears fan, I say go for it. I'd love not to have to worry about the Packers ground game.). Even if the Packers get a running back in free agency, I'd grab Eddie Lacy in the first round, and if he's gone, Montee Ball in the second. This is absolutely priority one.

Priority (2) -- Wide Receiver

When we think Green Bay, we naturally think air attack. And maybe it's because they always seem to have an embarrassment of riches at wideout that we never think it's an issue. With Randall Cobb and James Jones stepping up last year in light of Jennings and Nelson being injured at various times throughout the season, it's understandable that you might think the Pack should pass on wideouts. But Jennings has now gone to the Minnesota Vikings and James Jones is in going to be a free agent after the 2013 season. So if the Pack wants to continue being competitive in the air, they need to keep looking ahead to make sure Rodgers has options to throw to. Besides, this draft has plenty of amazing wide receiver options, like Tavon Austin, Cordarrelle Patterson, Justin Junter, Keenan Allen and Quinton Patton. And if they want to go deep, they can check out Ace Sanders and Aaron Mellette, both of whom I covered in my [last article](#) (but hopefully not until the Bears fill their WR needs!).

Priority (3) -- Tight End

And along with a good air attack is a good pass catching tight end. Unfortunately for the Packers, Jermichael Finley, who looked good in 2011, hasn't lived up to expectations or potential in 2012 and is now in his last year of his contract. He's clearly not happy about a potential pay cut, and you have to worry about any player that publicly questions the leadership of his quarterback (especially if his quarterback is pro bowler Aaron Rodgers). Then there's Tom Crabtree, who the Packers barely tried to retain and ended up leaving for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. And of course there's Andrew Quarless, but coming off a leg injury from last season, who knows what he'll do. With 7 picks, the Packers can certainly take a chance with a tight end in the draft after the first round. Perhaps Jordan Reed, Travis Kelce or Vance McDonald, but they can certainly go deeper if they miss on those high end options.

Priority (4) -- Defensive End and Defensive Tackle

Lastly, there's that defensive line. Sometimes it was hard to tell if the Packers even had one. And now they need to at least replace Jerel Worthy after he tore

an Elite 2013 Fantasy Quarterback?

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his ACL in December (which means he's unlikely to play in 2013 -- unless he's super human, like Adrian Peterson). Even without the injury, the Pack need help on the defensive line as they haven't found a consistent player to pair with B.J. Raji and Ryan Pickett. And though the Packers lost linebacker Erik Walden to the Indianapolis Colts, they did take care of securing linebacker A.J. Hawk with a significant pay cut over the next three seasons amounting to at least \$7.25 million in potential savings. Hawk isn't great against the pass, but he's serviceable against the run and allows the Pack to focus on other parts of their defense. At the end of the day, the Packers need to address the line first if they want to fix their defense. Without a solid line, having decent linebackers, safeties and corners won't matter (although they could use a little work in the secondary as well).

I'm sure hoping that the Packers don't find their Reggie Jackson autographed napkin (see my last article if you have no idea what I'm talking about), but with 7 picks, they have a good shot at it. If they don't, they may end up being more like Murtaugh than I thought. The last thing they want is for Aaron Rodgers to get frustrated and start saying "I'm too old for this s!@#."

By Ha Kung Wong (Twitter: @Rhihan)

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23 comments:



Anonymous March 18, 2013 at 11:39 PM

Nail gunned it!

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Hakung Wong March 18, 2013 at 11:55 PM

Thanks...I think. ;-)

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Hakung Wong March 19, 2013 at 1:22 AM

Packers got a compensatory draft pick at the end of the fifth round. Not they can take even more chances!

[Reply](#)



Anonymous March 19, 2013 at 9:54 AM

THE PACKERS NEED HELP ON BOT LINES. BU FORST THEY NEED TO PROTECT ROGERS. IF HE GETSR TE SEASON IS OVER. I THINK T. THOMPSON IS PENNY WISH AND PUND FOOLISH NOT TO OF DID SOMETHING IN FREE AGENCY. THE PACKERSNEED TODO SOMETHING NOW TO WIN WHILE ROGERS IS SILL ONE OFTHE BESTS QB'S INTH LEAGUE. THIS YEAR WILL BE ANOTHER ONE WERE THE PACKERS ARE ALSO RANS. TIME FOR TT AND THE DFENSIVE COORDINATOR TO HIT THE BRICKS.

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Hakung Wong March 19, 2013 at 11:41 AM

I agree that the Packers have been, on average, pretty passive during free agency. They love the wait and see approach, which can be frustrating to fans. I do agree as well that the offensive line needs work. But a good running back and consistent run game will also take pressure off Rodgers. Ultimately, the Pack are in a good place for multiple championships and need to avoid squandering it. Thanks for posting.

[Reply](#)

Anonymous March 19, 2013 at 10:08 AM



so Riggs & Murtaugh are bi?

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Hakung Wong March 19, 2013 at 2:48 PM

If you mean what I think you mean, then I can not answer that because I don't know (not that anything is wrong with that). But if you mean are they Blonic, like the Terminator or the \$6M Man (which, BTW, is funny to say now since you couldn't buy a bionic pinkie toe for \$6M anymore), then yes, I understand why you would think that based on all the hits they both take throughout the movies without getting seriously injured, but I don't think they are. Thanks for reading and commenting!

[Reply](#)



Anonymous March 19, 2013 at 10:10 AM

sports radio auto load is annoying...

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Hakung Wong March 19, 2013 at 2:49 PM

Unfortunately, I can't do anything about that. But if you listen to headphones while reading my column, I've heard it makes it more interesting. :-)

[Reply](#)



Anonymous March 19, 2013 at 11:42 AM

New OL coach, new DL coach, new DC, and an offensive coordinator that calls the plays! not McCarthy he is as predictable as Dom Capers defense! Then we need some O Line help, D Line help, OLB, and safety, if we can get a RB in the later rounds for competition, great! Other wise we will finish early in the playoffs again! What? three out of the last four? by huge margins? That is a telling trend (more telling about the coaching than the players). Just saying . . . Been a Packers fan since the 60's. I am grateful for the playoffs, but I know with this coaching, it is going to be the same outcome year in year out! What a tease!!!

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Hakung Wong March 19, 2013 at 2:36 PM

I hear ya! But getting that Super Bowl two years ago was pretty solid, and I think the right combination will work again (a bend, don't break defense and an all out arial attack WITH a competent threatening pass catching TE – that was the year that Finley looked like he might become something special – with a competent ground game (when James Starks looked like he might be something special). Being a Bears fan, I'm quite envious of what the Pack have, even without all the draft picks! Thanks for commenting!

[Reply](#)



Mark March 19, 2013 at 12:52 PM

This sounds like a list compiled by a Bears fan. If the Packers are smart, and by all indications, Ted Thompson definitely seems to know what he's doing on draft day, they will focus on the DL, LB, and OL in the early rounds of the draft. They can get Ahmad Bradshaw for a song in free agency to address the need at RB, their receiving corps is an embarrassment of riches even without

Jennings, and while it would be good to get another TE to light a fire under Finley, they'll probably be able to get a guy like Escobar or Kelce in the mid-rounds of the draft. What the Packers need more than anything is a DL or a LB who can put pressure on the QB opposite Clay Matthews the way Cullen Jenkins did during their Super Bowl Championship season. After that, the top priority is keeping Aaron Rodgers upright against the pass rush of the 49ers, Seahawks, and (yes) the Bears. They can only do this by addressing their lack of depth at Center and Left Tackle.

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Hakung Wong March 19, 2013 at 2:41 PM

And in fact it WAS a list compiled by a Bears fan! ;-)

But all kidding aside, I'm not sure if Bradshaw is the answer, and I would be incredibly envious (instead of just simply envious) if the Packers got Lacy in the first round. With a threat like that I can only imagine that skies the limit for the Pack (and I mean literally, the skies would have unlimited pass lanes with defenses having to creep up to watch the gaps). Being stuck with the Bears terrible OL and Cutler spending a significant time on the field on his butt, I sympathize with wanting to improve the Pack's o-line. But in all honesty, Rodgers has such quick recognition in his progression, I don't think he needs much more. But the way the Pack has been in free agency, I wouldn't be surprised if they let James Jones walk next year, so why not get another long term option at WR? Doesn't have to be first or second round, but with 8 picks, one will do late. Thanks for reading and commenting!!

[Reply](#)



Anonymous March 19, 2013 at 1:28 PM

Being a packer fan its hard for me to admit that this year the pack might need more help than the draft can give them. They basically let free agency pass them by.(again)Keeping Finley and letting Jennings go could just bite them in the behind. Finley is locker room poison,and his on the feild unpredictability makes him a huge question mark, so TE is a definite area of concern. Actually the whole offense needs help (O-line, backs) and the defense is lacking depth, so this year might be a letdown. But at least we are not the Bears! Just kidding! Love da Bears too!

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Hakung Wong March 19, 2013 at 2:44 PM

I agree 100% with your comments, except I think with the dynamic offense the Pack has, they always can contend. And being a Bears fan, I'm really jealous of that. I'm just happy if we don't accrue more sacks against and turnovers than points. And I also agree that Finley is not the answer at TE. He has all the talent in the world, but you really need a team player that steps up and doesn't blame his quarterback for issues. If the Bears had Aaron Rodgers, I'd NEVER blame him for anything (even if he ran it into the wrong endzone -- I'd still blame Cutler for that...). ;-)

Thanks for reading and commenting!

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Anonymous March 19, 2013 at 7:14 PM

judging by how much Rodgers got hit (think Seahawks game), isn't line a priority???

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Hakung Wong March 19, 2013 at 9:27 PM

No doubt that the O-line needs work. But part of the problem is a poor ground game (so you're practically inviting linebackers to blitz) and poor TE play (in other words, both of Rodger's escape hatches are terrible). The Packers have always been a high powered offense, which forces linebackers and safeties to back up and DE to really think twice about trying to get around the corner. But with 8 picks, they certainly can spend a few of them on the line.

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Anonymous March 20, 2013 at 7:11 PM

You think 7 picks is a lot? I just wish Pack had as many as SF. Unless someone drops unexpectedly, the need for QBs may make it worthwhile to trade down, exchanging a first for a 2nd and 3rd. Then, in 2nd and 3rd, depending on the player, someone who can play NT and DE then RB, pref. Margus Hunt and Gio Bernard. Safety and WR have lots to choose from in 2nd and 3rd. Center and OL should be upgraded no earlier than 3rd. LB, both inside and outside, should get a pick. In Ted we trust.

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Hakung Wong March 20, 2013 at 8:32 PM

Well, actually 8 picks after the compensatory pick recently added. But your right, as compared to the masterful job that SF did with amassing picks (what a great job getting value from Alex Smith – though I still object to him losing his job due to "injury"), the Pack are just about average. But trading up (or down) in the draft could make sense. I certainly don't see any issue trading away the second round pick for multiple picks later (or next year).

[Reply](#)



Anonymous March 22, 2013 at 6:28 AM

Pack needs to get Deitrich-Smith re-signed and get a left tackle. How about Heyward-Bey for a deep threat. Try to trade Finley, how about Cooley or Dallas Clark, they can catch and have talent. Bradshaw wouldn't be bad but still need to teach these guys how to block. Still great talent out there need to step up Ted if we're gonna get another championship! GO PACK GO!

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Hakung Wong March 22, 2013 at 5:21 PM

I agree with trading Finley, if possible. As a previous reader mentioned, he's not good for morale, and has a history of publicly criticizing essential parts of the organization (i.e. Aaron "I Am the Reason the Pack Wins Games" Rodgers). Cooley after injury is a big question mark, I'm not sure if that's a sure upgrade, but he does have a good team attitude. I'm much rather see Dallas Clark come over, but I still think a young drafted TE would be needed for the future (and why not develop him under a veteran like Clark?). I'm watched a lot of Giants games (being in NYC) and Bradshaw doesn't really fit in my opinion. I think a faster back (a la Bradshaw 4 years ago) would better suit the Pack's offense (and allow for Rodgers to get rid of the ball quickly if the o-line lets every one in).

[Reply](#)



Hakung Wong March 22, 2013 at 5:41 PM

As per the NFL Network, Ertz had his pro day and it looks like Ertz and Eifert will be pretty similar. Grabbing either one is bound to pay off!

Ertz was 6-foot-5 1/8, 244 - down 5 pounds from his Combine weigh-in - and improved on his 4.76 forty time at the Combine to 4.62 and 4.68 at the Stanford Pro Day. Ertz also posted a 35 1/2-inch vertical leap and 9-foot-6 broad jump at the Stanford Pro Day. Eifert's Combine results were 4.68, 35 1/2 inches, and 9-foot-2 at 6'6 / 250.

<http://blogs.nfl.com/2013/03/21/zach-ertz-is-intriguing-prospect-at-watch-atop-draft/>

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Hakung Wong March 25, 2013 at 4:44 PM

And here's an update from Rotoworld -- Looks like Finley is definitely going to stay in Green Bay:

Jermichael Finley announced on his Twitter account Monday that he will return to the Packers in 2013.

Finley thanked his agents in the tweet, indicating some negotiating took place with Packers GM Ted Thompson. Per the Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel's Ty Dunne, Finley's camp came out on top as there will be no restructuring of his contract nor pay cut. Finley will be paid a \$3 million roster bonus on Wednesday, in addition to a \$4.45 million salary, \$300,000 workout bonus, and \$500,000 in per-game roster bonuses. The total stands at \$8.25 million.

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