

Jake Cardonick

NFL Draft 2024

The following picks are predictions, not what I would do. In many of the picks, I explain what I would personally do.

1. Caleb Williams, *Chicago Bears*

Duh. People have seemingly soured on Williams over the last few months. It is not clear to me why. He is a generational prospect, and I am higher on him than most. His ability to extend plays sets him apart. This is obvious, and the Bears' franchise is finally on the rise.

2. Jayden Daniels, *Washington Commanders*

I am not a Jayden Daniels fan. I have a mid-round 2 grade on him. At 23 years old, he should be much further into his development than he is. His deep ball is great, and he is an elite runner. Here is the difference in his playmaking ability and Caleb's: extending plays. Daniels can run downhill as well as any QB we've seen. However, he doesn't manage the pocket well. He doesn't extend plays, and his downhill running leads to dangerous hits. He has drawn a lot of comparisons to Anthony Richardson last year, who I had ranked as my QB1. I find this to be ridiculous. Richardson was 3 years younger. Furthermore, what really sets them apart is pocket presence. I loved Richardson's ability to sit in the pocket and make throws over the middle of the field. I see this as a weakness in Daniels' game, not a strength. His pressure to sack rate is beyond scary, and this is not something that will improve with the faster game speed of the NFL. I think Washington has fallen in love with Daniels' upside, and he will be the pick here. I don't agree with this pick, but the Mariota signing would make sense here and believe this is where they go.

3. JJ McCarthy, *Minnesota Vikings* (projected trade: #11, #23, FRP in 2025, 2nd in 2026 for #3)

The Vikings have made it crystal clear that they have every intention to trade up. I don't think the Patriots have fallen in love with any of the QBs, and they could get a generational haul from Minnesota. Minnesota could very easily fall for "The Stroud (technically Anderson, but really Stroud) trade ended up being worth it" and get absolutely fleeced

here. Do I agree with the capital Minnesota gives in this trade? No. But the organization likely feels pressure to get Jefferson a QB and McCarthy would fall into a very ideal situation for a rookie QB. For the Patriots, this is a no brainer. I recognize that McCarthy is a good prospect, and the QB class in 2025 is rough, but this package is too much to ignore. The organization is very far from competing, and the best thing they can do is push their contention window back a couple additional years and fix the entire roster. If I'm choosing between drafting JJ McCarthy or Drake Maye to throw to Kendrick Bourne and Demario Douglas, or adding 3 FRPs and a 2<sup>nd</sup>, there's no question I want the picks. A report came out today that the Patriots are not happy with any trade offers they have received for the pick. I believe this to be a purposeful leak, a sign that they are indeed looking to trade the pick.

With regards to McCarthy as a prospect, I'm a fan. I don't care that he is a "winner," and we have seen that really doesn't translate. What I do see is a 21-year-old QB who is extremely accurate and intelligent. He has a relatively strong arm, is a good athlete and is poised in the pocket. I don't see him as nearly a Caleb Williams level prospect, but I do prefer him to Maye and definitely prefer him to Daniels.

#### 4. Drake Maye, *New York Giants* (projected trade: #6, #70 for #4)

I personally am a little higher on Daniel Jones than the public. I found the decision to extend him reasonable at the time. Clearly, I was wrong. Jones is fine, but he will not be a Super Bowl-winning QB. If I were the Giants, I would probably trade down, not up. However, I see the reasoning here. Maye is a good QB prospect. His ability to extend plays and arm talent are elite. The inconsistency is a concern, but I like him as a prospect. The Giants make a big franchise decision here and get their future QB. For the Cardinals, this is free capital. They can add No. 70 and still get MHJ or Nabers. Monti Ossenfort loves to work the phones and it wouldn't shock me if they instead traded down further, but I do believe either way they will move out of this pick.

#### 5. Joe Alt, *Los Angeles Chargers*

This is tough. I could see them going Alt, MHJ, Nabers, or trade down here. DraftKings has them -175 to take an OL with their first rounder, and I'm going to agree here. Alt is a premier prospect, and we know Harbaugh wants to build the trenches. I think any of the

above options work here, but I am high on Josh Palmer. And while I never liked Quentin Johnston as a prospect, it is too early to give up on him.

#### 6. Marvin Harrison Jr, *Arizona Cardinals*

What is there to say? Arizona picks up No. 70 and still drafts MHJ, their likely pick had they stayed at No. 4. This could be Nabers for sure—both guys are elite prospects. I still believe in Kyler, and giving him MHJ and McBride — with Paris Johnson Jr. holding down the blindside — puts this offense in good shape looking into the future. MHJ feels about as bullet-proof of a prospect as there is.

#### 7. Taliese Fuaga, *Tennessee Titans*

Tennessee currently sits at –330 to draft an OL with their first pick in this draft. With Alt gone, this gets interesting. Trading down is an option, but who is trading up for this pick? This could certainly be Nabers, but the Titans just paid Ridley and Burks is still there. Levis showed promise, and they opt to protect him here. He and Skoronski start to form a very solid offensive line for Tennessee.

#### 8. Malik Nabers, *Atlanta Falcons*

Fun spot for Atlanta. Not a single defensive player off of the board. I don't think Atlanta walks into this draft planning to take a WR. However, Nabers is a special prospect. Dallas Turner is a great option here, so is trading down. But, the defense is better than the public perceives, and Nabers makes this one of the best offense in the NFL, arguably the best with Cousins, London, Nabers, Pitts, Bijan, and a fantastic OL. As a franchise, Atlanta is about to really take off. I am crazy high on this team and can't wait to watch them run through a weak division.

#### 9. Dallas Turner, *Seattle Seahawks* (projected trade: #16, #102, 2025 2<sup>nd</sup> for #9)

Chicago has very few picks this draft, and I believe they should certainly trade down. Will they? Not sure. I do think they like Odunze a lot, and I wouldn't be shocked if that was the pick. The fanbase wants it too. I would disagree with Odunze here. I find him to be a little overrated as a prospect. He's a first-rounder, don't get me wrong. However, if I can get someone like Verse, an early 4<sup>th</sup>, and a 2<sup>nd</sup> rounder next year, I much prefer that to Odunze.

For Seattle, this would be great. They have their pick of the litter among edges. Turner is an elite prospect, and Seattle has a pretty complete roster.

10. Brock Bowers, *New York Jets*

This is tough. If I'm New York, I'm taking Olu or Fautanu, no doubt in my mind. We need to protect Rodgers, and we have seen him be successful with much less at WR. Additionally, drafting a TE in the first round is simply analytically irresponsible, much less at pick #10. Regardless, I think they take Bowers. They'll tell the analytics department, "Well he's a WR, not a TE" and make Rodgers happy. This could also be Odunze.

11. Olumuyiwa Fashanu, *New England Patriots*

Great spot. Elite OT prospect, and the Patriots build the trenches for whatever QB they end up with in a couple years with all the picks they just added.

12. Jared Verse, *Denver Broncos*

They may honestly take a QB, but man, that would be a reach here. Verse is an elite EDGE prospect who should've been off the board earlier. Denver benefits from a crazy run of offensive players at the top of the draft.

13. Rome Odunze, *Chicago Bears* (projected trade: #16, #75 for #13)

"King Poles does it again." I'll be slightly nauseous as a non-Bears fan living in Chicago. The fans will love it and I'll understand why. They get the guy they all wanted at #9, but they trade #75 for #102 and 2025 2<sup>nd</sup>. For Vegas, they will go CB or OT here. Easy trade-down spot, given the current board.

14. Troy Fautanu, *Philadelphia Eagles* (projected trade: #22, #50 for #14)

These teams just can't help but trade with each other. The Eagles are an O-Line factory. They have two second rounders and opt to move one of them to add Fautanu. He starts at OG this year and eventually replaces Lane Johnson at RT. For New Orleans, trading down is a great spot. This franchise needs a hard reset. Gut the whole roster over the next two

years and add draft capital. Enough is enough. It's time to rebuild. Derek Carr isn't winning a Super Bowl.

15. Terrion Arnold, *Indianapolis Colts*

I think the Colts want Bowers here. If he is available, that will likely be the pick. However, in this mock, he isn't. From here, they get their choice of corners. Arnold and Mitchell are neck and neck to be the first corner selected. Could be either.

16. Quinyon Mitchell, *Las Vegas Raiders*

Good pickup for Vegas. They end up acquiring No. 75 and still get arguably the top corner in the draft. This could be Penix, but that would be a strange decision to me. Good luck beating Mahomes and Herbert with a low-ceiling QB.

17. Brian Thomas Jr, *Jacksonville Jaguars*

Bad runout for Jacksonville. They could really use a corner here, and the top two go right before them. They pivot to Thomas. The offense isn't as dynamic as we all expected it to be with Lawrence. Let's see if Thomas changes that.

18. JC Latham, *Cincinnati Bengals*

This is great value for Cincy. Latham should probably be off the board by now, and the Bengals scoop him up. They'd be very happy here.

19. Laiatu Latu, *Los Angeles Rams*

Another guy that should be going higher. Medical concerns make him a high-variance draft pick to project, so I wouldn't be surprised to see him go much higher or lower. The Rams' defensive line undergoes a major shift with AD out and Latu in.

20. Amarius Mims, *Pittsburgh Steelers*

If you know anything about the AFC North, you know it's going to be physical in the trenches. The Steelers follow the Bengals in taking a T, and they now have both Mims and Jones holding down the fort.

21. Byron Murphy, *Miami Dolphins*

This Dolphins defense got gutted. Murphy should probably go a little bit higher, and Miami scoops up the value and starts to fix the front 7.

22. Graham Barton, *New Orleans Saints*

Weird spot here. I think the Saints shore up the OL with a guy who can play all around. They could trade out of this spot, too. I really like the idea of adding more future capital if I'm New Orleans.

23. Xavier Worthy, *New England Patriots*

Another tough spot. I'm going to say the Patriots continue to set up their offense for their future QB. With Olu and Worthy, the pieces of the puzzle start to come together.

24. Adonai Mitchell, *Dallas Cowboys*

Look, I get that Dallas is -215 to take an OL. But really, Jerry Jones is -215 to take an OL here? The Eagles opt not to go CB, and the Cowboys take advantage. They pair Lamb with Mitchell and commit to the passing game.

25. Nate Wiggins, *Green Bay Packers*

Amon-Ra St. Brown. DJ Moore. Justin Jefferson. Jordan Addison. Rome Odunze. Keenan Allen. The GB offense was firing on all cylinders late last season. They must get a CB here, and they take the best one available. Could also be Kool-Aid.

26. Chop Robinson, *Tampa Bay Buccaneers*

Good player, good fit. Todd Bowles loves a good D-Line, and Tampa adds an impact player.

27. Cooper DeJean, *Arizona Cardinals*

Arizona adds to a weak secondary. DeJean is an interesting player and Gannon is a great coach for him.

28. Troy Franklin, *Buffalo Bills*

Okay, this might be biased. I love Troy Franklin. I think he's going to be a stud. Analytically, he's just a monster. I have him as my WR4 and he's closer to WR3 for me than he is WR5. His first downs per target put him in elite company, as do his YPRR for being an early entry and really every stat you look at. Early breakout, high target share, great yardage totals. I understand the size concern, but he put on weight before his pro day. The kid is going to be a stud. He'd be a great replacement for Gabe Davis, and Buffalo must go WR here. No disrespect to Khalil Shakir, whom I am a big fan of, but Shakir, Samuel, and Hollins just isn't enough.

29. Kool-Aid McKinstry, *Detroit Lions*

Much like Green Bay, this needs to be a CB if there's a good one available. Easy pick for me; their current secondary is unacceptable in this division.

30. Tyler Guyton, *Baltimore Ravens*

-230 to be OL and I agree. Baltimore needs to replace the O-Linemen they lost this offseason. Guyton is solid. Could also be Jordan Morgan.

31. Darius Robinson, *San Francisco 49ers*

I would like to see them go CB here, but I don't project any top guys to be left. This could also definitely be an OT. Furthermore, if they trade Aiyuk, this could be WR (trading Aiyuk would be a major mistake in my eyes, but I see it as a strong possibility).

### 32. Jordan Morgan, *Kansas City Chiefs*

Sportsbooks are very good at what they do. DraftKings has KC -105 to take a WR. I simply don't see it. They have Rice and added Marquise Brown (and of course, they have Travis Kelce). Mahomes just won a Super Bowl with less, I don't see why they would reach for a WR here. The OL needs work and Morgan is a good pickup here. Could also go CB here, but again, all the top dogs are already gone.

If you are still reading, I'm glad I was able to catch your attention. Here are a few notes on my drafting philosophy:

- **Trade Down!** The value gained from trading down almost always supersedes your opinion on prospects. Take the objective value over thinking you are better at drafting than every other team. Everyone wants to trade up. Be the other end of the market.
- Don't reach on players. Again, everyone thinks they can draft better than every other team. This isn't true. The truth is the draft is a crapshoot. Capitalize on value. The Eagles have followed this approach the last few years drafting Jordan Davis, Devonta Smith, and Jalen Carter. Sometimes keeping it simple is best option.
- If you love a guy, don't reach. Trade down. Again, take an economical approach to the draft. Sure, you'll lose the guy every once in a while. In the end, being economical will still create more value.
- Draft Picks > Players. The Titans traded AJ Brown for a pick to select Treyton Burks. I'm here to say that I agreed with the trade at the time for Tennessee and I still do. Did it work? No. But it was a good process. Don't conflate the process with results.
- Oh, and listen to your analytics department. These "nerds" are pretty smart dudes. Numbers >>> your eye test.