

Steelers' Dazzling Dozen:

A look at fits among the Top 100 Prospects

Round One Considerations (Pick No. 20)

Graham Barton, OC, Duke (6-5, 311, ranked No. 20 on Big Board) – The struggles have been numerous in finding a long-term solution for this important position, and although Barton spent a majority of his time a left tackle for the Blue Devils, he projects not just as an interior player, but one with Pro-Bowl caliber upside. Value (mid-first) meets biggest need in this case, and it would be hard to question the team nabbing the best center at No. 20. Barton was a pre-draft “official-30” visitor of the team.

Amarius Mims, OT, Georgia (6-8, 340, No. 23) – Scattered throughout the Top 100 are a plethora of distinguished offensive tackles, and while yours truly believes the conundrum at center outweighs the need to upgrade tackle, Mims has been a young man shown plenty of attention by the team this Spring. He was an official-30 invite to the team facility, but also had VIP attention by the team head-honchos at the Bulldog Pro Day. Amarius has potential to play either tackle spot and the team could be smitten with his massive frame; he is a projection nonetheless, with a high probability that his best days are still ahead of him.

Jackson Powers-Johnson, OC, Oregon (6-3, 328, No. 29) – Another high-level interior offensive line prospect who also visited the UPMC Rooney Sports Complex recently is Powers-Johnson. One of the positive attributes of both him and the formerly mentioned Barton is their age. Both are 21 years old currently, with Barton turning 22 in June. As for “JPJ,” he plays with a fierceness and strong hand use. His strength, awareness and overall athletic profile projects favorably towards the thought of “oh, finally an answer at center!” JPJ was this year’s Rimington Award winner for the nation’s best center.

Round Two (No. 51)

Ricky Pearsall, WR, Florida (6-1, 191, No. 35) – A moderate need on the Steelers team is to find more talent at wide receiver. Pearsall, another facility visitor, has a knack for getting open and creating massive separation during the game footage viewed by this site; he will transition to be a difference-maker in offensive ball-possession. On the downfall, Ricky will turn 24 in September, but his sticky-hands and consistent work would fit in well to an offense that is evolving into something new.

Mike Sainristil, CB, Michigan (5-9, 182, No. 37) – The first of two Wolverines in this section, Sainristil gets my nod as “favorite player in this draft class regardless of projected slot. And, yes, I probably propped up his slot a little bit out of bias towards his football character and the “hunch” that this is one of those special guys. Because, otherwise, the 5-9/182 frame will not be worthy of placing him in the territory of “first guy off the bus.” Mikey Sainristil is the best nickle/slot CB in this class and that remains a need on the Steelers. Tough. Character. Future Captain.

Max Melton, CB, Rutgers (5-11, 187, No. 40) – If Sainristil is off the board by the time the Steelers are up in round two, I advocate for the size and speed of Melton as a fall-back. In large part, as evident by the names used here, I advocate that round two really looks ripe for a pick at CB or WR. Mad Max is an overused cliché for sure, but Melton plays with fire in his gut and seems to consistently make good things happen for his team; turnovers, special teams plays, and a sense of attitude. He visited the team facility as an official-30 guest.

Xavier Legette, WR, South Carolina (6-1, 221, No. 48) – While he’s raw and still has developing to do, Xavier is a massive-bodied receiving target with 4.39 timed speed. One can’t help but think of DK Metcalf while watching his footage, but he is a couple inches shorter than DK. Legette was an early (March) official-30 visitor to Pittsburgh. If the new offense involves a lot of ball-control and running game mixed in with vertical passing (play-action), this pick would make some sense, as Legette could quickly develop into a #2 receiver.

Roman Wilson, WR, Michigan (5-11, 185, No. 51) – Head Coach Mike Tomlin and GM Omar Khan, along with other staff members, visited the Michigan Pro Day. One of the motivators in attending that event would obviously be the massive amount of future stars to see in one setting. But here’s believing that wideout Roman Wilson was one of the chief focuses on this visit, as was previously mentioned in the snippet about Sainristil (above). While Michigan never tried to make passing a huge part of their success, they were proficient. Overall, Wilson seems to have a deep desire and intrinsic motivation for success. He’s competitive and also has versatility in his horizontal and vertical route tree. He’s certainly a fit for the selection at No. 51 or in scenarios where the team has movement up or down in the second and third rounds.

Round Three (Nos. 84 and 98)

Maason Smith, DL, LSU (6-5, 306, No. 67) – Another player who’s on the younger side (still 21 years old) is Smith, a high-upside, but possible boom-or-bust prospect, out of LSU. While his biography reads of inexperience, the thickness of his body along with violent hands makes this a potential project worth kicking the tires on. He could be valued enough to go anywhere from the mid-second to the late third round, so it’s hard to put lock on his placement, but Smith was

yet another official visitor for the team. *Note: It is evident that the team is using more of these visitations for Day Two prospects than at any time in the past; this year's bundle of official visits is full of prospects who slot into that territory.*

Ruke Orhororo, DL, Clemson (6-4, 294, No. 74) – (*Oh-roh-roh-roh*) is a player who is, maybe, being under-considered by those who follow the Steelers draft plans. His best days will still be ahead of him, as is evident by his play-strength, motor, and physical attributes (4.89 timed speed at 294 pound frame). He wasn't a facility visitor, but the team did attend his Pro Day at Clemson. Continuing to find long-term consistent pieces to the defensive line puzzle is also more of a goal than what popular thought might be. While not an immediate need, the team showed moments of crumbling (on defense) when the aged Cameron Heyward was out of action in 2023. While still unpolished and with much development to do, there is an endless potential with this athlete, one who has had experience playing all over the Clemson defensive front.

Sedrick Van Pran-Granger, OC, Georgia (6-4, 298, No. 92) – If the team misses out on one of the “big three” early center prospects (Barton, Powers-Johnson, or Zach Frazier of West Virginia), the golden nugget still hanging on to this draft need is SVPG. He was the number one center recruit in the 2020 collegiate class and showed consistency as a Bulldog. Awareness, leader, two-time captain, strength, movement traits are the attributes I can appreciate; while the short arms and inconsistent base can keep him from being discussed for an earlier projection round. If center is not addressed early, I do believe SVP will be a sought-after target, even including a possible trade to go get him at some point. Decision-makers were at the Bulldog Pro Day.

Final Spot: A tie! Call this batch a Baker's Dozen...

Elijah Jones, CB, Boston College (6-1, 185, No. 88)

Jarvis Brownlee, CB, Louisville (5-10, 194, No. 98)

Both players offer mature positional upside and versatility for inside-outside action. They would have been participants scoped-out at the Reese's Senior Bowl. Brownlee (*currently age 22, will turn 23 in July*) is an aggressive and tough nickel prospect who moves with plenty of twitch and could be a perfect “late round three” consideration should the team not be able to address this need earlier.

Brownlee's career started at Florida State, but he ended up at Louisville for the final two years of his collegiate career where he's gained experience both inside and outside. He's a player I really like and while he's certainly “fringe” Top 100, his aggressive nature could get him into that third round!

Jones will be a bit of an older prospect, as he is currently 24 years old. While Brownlee projects an inside/slot/nickel player, Jones has accumulated most of his experience on the outside. His 6-1 frame makes for great cover skills and exceptional tackling. I won't go on and on with this, but he's another player who may or may not make that "round three" category on a draft board, but I happen to care for his style.

Just like Sedrick Van Pran-Granger, my third round center fall-back option, I would consider both Elijah Jones and Jarvis Brownlee as proficient options for cornerback if it is not addressed in the first two rounds.

Mini-Mock Draft Projection – Could it go like this? “The ACC-SEC Steelers Draft Class”

- No. 20: Graham Barton, OC, Duke (ACC)
- No. 51: Xavier Legette, WR, South Carolina (SEC)
- No. 84: Ruke Orhororo, DL, Clemson (SEC)
- No. 98: Jarvis Brownlee, CB, Louisville (ACC)
- ... Or *Elijah Jones, CB, Boston College (ACC)*

* *In theory:* Trading back, say, a half-dozen spots in Rd. 1 can net a decent third round (mid-to-late third), where an additional prospect from this rich Day Two slate can be had.

* *A second thought:* I really like Sedrick Van Pran-Granger. Here's believing if the talent / value at other positions (OT/CB/WR) are too good to pass on early, SVPG will be a chief target of the team; he's an extremely under-appreciated and valuable round three target.

To those who follow the Steelers and the Draft... Enjoy!

Doug / Draft Board Guru