

April 28, 2022

Head Coach Ron Rivera and General Manager Martin Mayhew

On the thought process of trading down for more picks:

MM: "As we talked about before, you know, we had six picks. We had three picks that were in the sixth and seventh round. We felt like we needed more picks and the middle rounds of this draft we thought would be really valuable. So been working on that for a couple days now and talking with several different teams, we were interested in moving up and we finally were able to strike a deal with New Orleans."

On the analysis on WR Jahan Dotson and where he was on their board:

MM: "Yeah, well, he was high on our board. Obviously, we took him at 16. The guy's got speed, he's got playmaking ability. He's got some competitiveness when the balls in the air. He's kind of like [WR] Terry [McLaurin] in the fact that he's not like the biggest guy, but the 50/50 balls, he has the ability to go up and get those. The guys just got tremendous ball skills and he's got some versatility, so he can play in a slot, he can play outside, he can return punts. So, he brings a lot to the table and he helps us in a lot of different ways."

On what he saw in the wide receiver class that gave him confidence in moving down:

RR: "It did, you know, based on the way we had things evaluated, we had several of 'em in the first round. So moving back, we felt pretty comfortable with it and probably the biggest thing, more than anything else though, is one of the guys we really liked was there and that's why we jumped on it. The thing that's really good about the way he plays that you really appreciate is that he goes after the football. He's got a tremendous catch radius, as you saw by some of the highlights. He's focused on the ball, it is tremendous. And as [General Manager] Martin [Mayhew] talked about, you know, those 50/50 balls, he's coming down with it. I mean, he really is. So you're excited about that. You know, it reminds me of [Former Washington Wide Receiver] Desean Jackson a little bit. He reminds me of [Former Carolina Wide Receiver] Steve Smith. A little bit, uh, smaller in stature, but plays bigger than that. And that's what we feel pretty comfortable and very confident about it. As Martin said, you watch him, he lines up in the slot, he winds up as a Z, winds up at X, and he also has some punt returnability as well."

On getting WR Jahan Dotson involved in his rookie year as a punt returner:

RR: "A little bit, but we do expect to put him on the football field an awful lot. He was one of the guys that our offensive coaches had rated a lot higher. And so, we spent a lot more time on him just because they felt confident about him in terms of a fit. You know, we had a couple guys that we had, true fits on and he was one of the guys. And so, you know, like Martin said, and then I said, you know, he's one of the guys that we had rated highly in the first round."

On when it became a reality that he wanted to trade back:

MM: "Well, we had several teams that we were talking to over the last couple of days. Actually, when we did trade back and we were getting ready to make our pick, we had those, some of those same teams were still calling us. So, we could have gone back again if we wanted to, but we felt like Jahan was too valuable in that

spot to take to pass on him. But no, it was a process and as usual, you call around the league, you narrow down the people who are really serious and we had discussions about the different options and which option was best for us in terms of moving back.

On how much he was reacting to other picks being made:

RR: “Not necessarily that as much as you do this based on how many players you feel fit the need that you have, not just at receiver, but there were some other positions that went as well that we had to also pay attention to. But knowing that a guy that we had highly rated and felt very comfortable and confident about his ability, you know, was available, we made the decision he was the guy.

On how WR Jahan Dotson will play with WR Terry McLaurin and WR Curtis Samuel

RR: “I think as a group, not just those two, but I think he's going to be able to mix him with the other guys for the most part, you know, we have 5, 6, 7 guys that we feel very comfortable with, and it's about getting guys opportunities on the football field. He will play a number of positions for us. I'm very confident in his ability to learn and grow and develop as a football player.

On when they were sold on WR Jahan Dotson and felt like they didn't need to communicate further:

RR: “Well, probably the biggest thing is, when you look at guys and you break them down, you also look at who he's playing with. Not to knock any of his teammates, but the quarterback they had was a good player. Okay. He wasn't a great player, but he was a good player and he just seemed to make this guy better. And, and you saw the catches that he made, you know, I'm trying not to kill the kid, but you sit there and you think, well, he didn't throw a very accurate ball, but this guy was making him look good. He caught for over a thousand yards. I mean he set records for Penn State. And you just know that there's more to him because, you know, it's not like there were a lot of weapons there around him. You know, his teammates were good, but they weren't, you know, I mean, you look at some of the other teams that had 2, 3, 4 weapons on the field at the same time. And you think, wow, this guy, you know, they knew the ball was going to him, but he was still making plays. And that's what gets you excited when, especially when you put the tape on and you watch game after game and you see him catching 7, 8, 9, 10 balls a game. I mean, that's pretty impressive.”

On how WR Jahan Dotson compensates for his size:

RR: “His play quickness is terrific. His ability to get off the line by using it and getting vertical very quickly into his routes. He runs very good routes, very precise. He's got a, good stutter step to him where it looks like he may be trying to change directions, going somewhere else. And he just kind of hits it and goes, he's got a little bit of a burst to separate. And when the ball is in the air, you see him gather and go up and get it. I mean, his catch rate is really terrific.”

On if it was the plan all along to trade back:

MM: “Well, we certainly had targets that we talked about. But we've been working on a move back for a couple days now, like I said, and then we were leaning that way from the very beginning. It was a process, like I said, and we felt like we needed more picks coming into this draft. Obviously, you know, there's certain guys, if they had been there, we would've taken them. But the move back was something we've been talking about for several days.”

On finding a more polished receiver instead of a good athlete:

RR: “That was important to us because again, we want to make sure there are our weapons around [QB] Carson [Wentz]. We want to make sure we can protect him. And so as we go through this draft, we're keeping that in mind. I mean, that's part of our discussion when we looked up at the board and we looked at

how many guys we had in both those categories and felt really good about those guys in categories. That's why we felt good about going backwards because we felt that if one guy wasn't there, another guy was potentially going to be there. And when we got to the point where we felt, you know, these were the values of these guys, then we went ahead and made the decision that, okay, we're where we need to be. Now we can pick."

On why it was a focus to upgrade the offense:

RR: Because we got the quarterback, you know, we have a guy that can make all the throws. You know, [QB] Taylor [Heinicke] did a lot of good things for us, but when you watch some of the things that Carson has done, you know, we've got to now get guys that can get in that position to make those plays as well. So, we just feel that getting a guy that's a polished receiver right now and ready to go, will fit in very nicely with the rest of them. And you've got to have weapons, if you don't have those guys making the plays and you know, we've got to find them well, now's our chance to put those guys in position. But then again, as I said, too, one thing that we did talk about is we got to protect them, you know. We've got what, six more rounds to go, you know? And so, we're going to keep that in mind, but we also got some things on the defensive side we want to take care of as well."

On the goal for Day 2 of the draft:

RR: "Well, what we'll do is, we'll look at the board, we'll adjust it for rounds two and three. We'll talk about what we feel our needs are. And then we'll try and compare it to the value of the players that we have on up on the board. And one of the things that, you know, again, Martin will look at and with [Executive Vice President of Football for Player Personnel] Marty [Hurney] and the rest of the scouts, you know as to how to order those guys in terms of, well, how we're going to stack 'em."

On if he would have gone back further than five picks upon trading the 11th pick:

MM: "We had opportunities to go back pretty far in it. We had teams that were in the teens. We had one team in the twenties, and we had one team in the thirties that we were talking to. We felt like, having a good number of players that we felt comfortable with and not going past that group was important. Jahan was certainly one of those players and we felt good about that group and felt like at 16, we were going to get one of the guys that was really important to us."

On if he could have gone further back in the draft and still had a receiver that was good enough to draft:

MM: "We had an opportunity, honestly, it's really funny because when Jahan was there, we talked about it. We had an offer to go back. We decided to turn the pick in and all of a sudden the phone rang three different teams calling at the same time, and I had one phone and, and then the other phone and I'm handing other people to talk to people. So there were opportunities there. And it's funny because coming into it, everybody was trying to move back. But once we got in, you know, around 11, 12, 13, people started trying to move up. So you know, it worked out great for us. We're really excited about Jahan and what he brings to the table. Again, his versatility, his playmaking ability, and he's an awesome young man as well. And, you know, you asked, somebody asked a question about how come we didn't spend much time with him. A lot of times we're spending time with guys to answer questions that we have about them. And a lot of times we're not spending time with guys because we don't have a lot of questions about 'em and Jahan is that type of guy."

On considering the draft value charts when trading back:

RR: "Well, there's several charts and there's different ways to value it. [General Manager] Martin [Mayhew] handles that portion of it. As we were going through it, he would show me and then on one chart he says, 'We're not getting all the total points, but when we look at the value of it we're way ahead.' So, if you sit there

and you only win on one chart, well you may lose on that. It may just be a simple 30, 40, 50 points. But then when you see the value chart and you see the money and you sit there go, 'Okay, that makes sense.' We try to use 'em just as tools to help us make the decision more so than anything else. Martin was on top of everything as we went through that and he was punching it into the computer and it was spitting it back out and we're looking at it and we felt very comfortable. We really did. I thought Martin was on top of it."

MM: "Yeah, the charts are really guidelines for you in terms of value. We actually have two charts that we use. And so in that particular trade, we actually lost on one chart and we won on the other chart. When I was in San Francisco, we had two charts as well. Some teams have three or four different charts, so they're all across the board. It's really a guideline. It's about if you've been doing this long enough, do you feel comfortable making that trade? Are you comfortable with that value that you're getting? We got a third round and a fourth-round pick, so going into tomorrow, we will have our two, we'll have that three and then going into the final day, we have two fours now that we didn't have. We went from six picks to eight picks and the value of those picks is what's really important to us."

On if they throw out the traditional value of the charts in a draft where there is more talent than usual in the middle rounds:

RR: "Well see that's exactly it because now we're gonna get into it where you are gonna see some value and you're gonna see people clamoring to get up now. People are gonna try and get into the second and third round again. And you'll see guys doubling up and offering two of these or two of those or something from next year. We really felt strongly about getting back into the third round and being able to get the extra fourth. So, we feel very confident and comfortable going in that we have a chance, I think to add on some guys that will contribute and that could end up playing 50% or more next season for us. There's some guys now coming up that really their value -- if guys hadn't gone back this year from the COVID year, some of these guys could have potentially been considered earlier picks. But, because so many guys were in this draft, this is where the value's gonna come and that was one of the reasons why Martin the last few days has been working on trades."

On if trading back is still a priority or if they are happy with what they got back from that trade:

MM: "Yeah, I think we've got a good group of picks now but we're gonna look at every opportunity to make ourselves better. If we get an opportunity to go back tomorrow that makes sense for us and we've got a good group of players we feel comfortable with, and we're not going past that group then we'll consider going back."

On if the trade tonight could allow them to package picks to obtain another Night 2 selection:

RR: "It does, but again it's gonna be all about, do we see the value in the player we want? One of the things that we were just talking about and we're counting 'em up, you know, guys as to where we're gonna project they're gonna fit. Are these gonna be the value guys for us in the second round? And is this list gonna be the value guys for us in the third round? And that list or that number of guys could be anywhere from eight to 10, that we project for second round. Go down now and look at the third, that could be anywhere between six and five or just a small number. So we have to really, as we decide that we feel we gotta come up to get that guy, then you could take your two fourth rounders and package up. So yes, we have to look at that."

On if there is any concern with Dotson being too small:

RR: "Not necessarily just because of his catch radius, his ability to go up and get the football. Again, the thing that you see is the contested catches. I mean, going after the football, doing those things. [WR] Terry's [McLaurin] over six foot, [WR] Dyami [Brown] is over six foot, [WR] Cam's [Sims] way over six foot. [WR] Dax [Milne] is right at six foot. So, it's not like we have guys that are all 5-8. We don't have the fun bunch. Which

would be cool though. It would be. But, what we do have is we got a good group of guys that will go after the football, are known for making contested catches and so you want guys with catch radius. I think that makes up for it more so than anything else is that they have the ability to go up and get the ball."

On what parts of Dotson's skillset made him a good fit for this offense:

RR: "His interior route running is one thing more so than anything else. We look at guys that have that skillset last year, [WR] Adam Humphries filled that role for us very nicely. Dax is developing into that type of guy as well. So, we feel we have a couple of guys right there that can do it. We can get a healthy [WR] Curtis [Samuel] back on the field as well and now you start creating different combinations of guys for situational football. That's really what you feel good about. Again, he's got the ability to go vertical and make some plays because he understands route running on how to stack people, how to set people up. A lot of those highlights really show some of the things that got our attention."

On what a good interior route runner can allow offensive coordinator Scott Turner to do:

RR: "Well, what it does is now you have those different skillsets that you need. You got the guy that's gonna go vertical and challenge through the middle post. You've got a guy that's gonna run a specific type of combination underneath with a guy over the top. You have to be able to threaten and attack zones a specific way. You have to have guys that gotta win quickly against man coverage. We feel that watching him on the tapes that we watch, that this guy's more than capable of getting off the line, using his quickness and getting into his route quickly."

On how much of the scouting process around the receivers was centered around QB Carson Wentz's skillset:

RR: "Well, I think a lot of that happened once we got Carson. Obviously then the focus really became on getting him the weapons, looking at these guys and saying, 'Okay, you see the biggest target was [WR Drake] London.' I mean you said, 'This guy's just gigantic catch radius, a big body who knows how to separate.' But, then you started looking and this is a speed guy that's gonna get downfield. He'll make these plays over here, but he's not as polished an underneath route runner, you know? And then you got to Dotson and you sit there and go, 'Wow, this guy's a polished route runner under who works very well underneath, but he also has the ability to go vertical.' And we thought, this is how we'll rank him. This is how we'll put him. This is where we think he fits the best and when we got to there, as Martin said earlier, we knew this is where we couldn't pass him up."

On how comfortable was he with selecting Dotson when he didn't have him in for a Top 30 visit:

RR: "Well, a lot of the things that happened as Martin said is there's some guys that are so clean, you meet him one time, you get an opportunity to talk to him one time and you like who he is. Then you don't have any more questions. Well, we brought 30 guys in because we had questions on every one of them, or we hadn't had an opportunity to interview them, but we wanted to at that point and that's how you do it. I mean, there are some guys, I met [LB] Luke Kuechly one time. Okay. [QB] Cam Newton, I met repeatedly. So, there are some things that you have to get answered and then there are some things that just answer themselves and Jahan was one of those guys. You talk to him, you see him and you go, 'Okay, that's a guy. We're good with him.'"

On what his conversation on the phone was like with Dotson:

RR: "He was very cool. I mean, just very casual. Sounded like they were having a good time. You could hear everybody in the background. He was composed. Some of the guys I've talked to you can tell they're fired up. They can't control themselves. He just seemed composed. 'Yeah, it's great. Hey, I'm fired up coach. Ready to go.' Okay, cool. I told him, 'They're gonna announce your name.' And we got a chance to watch it on TV. Then

we talked to him again."

On if they were comfortable trading back knowing that some of the guys ranked higher on their board would get taken:

MM: "I mean, it's interesting. A lot of guys get linked to us and they're not necessarily linked to us, you know? We have guys that we target and guys that we like, and it's not always in the media who those guys are. Jahan is one of those guys, for example. I hope that answers your question."

On what he thought about the Philadelphia Eagles trading for WR A.J. Brown:

RR: "Well, it's obviously a decision they felt was best for their team. They felt they were getting the same type of receiver, I think in [WR Treyton] Burks. Burks is a guy that we liked. He's also a guy that we brought in and wanted to get to know or not brought in sorry, but we actually did do a Zoom with him and we sent one of our coaches out to visit with him, to get to know him even better. So, that's pretty much what they did."

On if he thinks A.J. Brown's new deal will impact the team's negotiations with WR Terry McLaurin:

RR: "I don't think it impacts it. A different player, different style more so than anything else. It's just one of those things that you go through negotiations based on what the player is for you. Obviously they're going to tell you what they think about what his value should be. So, we'll just work through it and negotiate it and go from there. Just so you know, we have started that process. I'll give you guys that right now."