



**LARRY FITZGERALD:** Wide receiver from Pittsburgh was picked No. 3 overall in the first round.



**KARLOS DANSBY:** Linebacker from Auburn was picked No. 33 overall, in the second round.



**DARNELL DOCKETT:** Defensive tackle from Florida State was picked No. 64 overall, in the third round.

# Cardinals land their man

Arizona selects Fitzgerald with first-round pick

By DARREN URBAN  
TRIBUNE

The Arizona Cardinals hired Dennis Green as coach because of his lofty winning percentage during his years in Minnesota.

Now they're trying to build a team in the image of Green's Vikings.

The Cardinals, as expected, took wide receiver Larry Fitzgerald with their first-round pick in Saturday's NFL draft, the third selection overall. With Fitzgerald on one side and reigning Rookie of the Year Anquan Boldin on the other, the Cards have the foundation of an offense that mirrors the Vikings powerhouses with receivers Randy Moss and Cris Carter.

"I took careful note how (those teams) were successful," Cardinals vice president of football operations Rod Graves said.

The idea certainly sounded good to Fitzgerald, who grew up in Minnesota, was a ballboy for the Vikings for six seasons under Green and who learned from both Carter and Moss.

"That is something we are definitely going to try to do," said Fitzgerald, who is only 20. "Anquan has definitely set the bar high for Arizona receivers. I just want to come in and help contribute to the productivity of the offense."

The Cardinals got Auburn linebacker Karlos Dansby in the second round and Florida



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**HAPPY DAY:** Cardinals vice president of football operations Rod Graves, left, and coach Dennis Green share smiles Saturday following their selection of wide receiver Larry Fitzgerald in the NFL draft.

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State defensive tackle Darnell Dockett in the third, both of whom had popped up as late first-round choices on some mock drafts.

It was a nod to the notion the Cards were taking the best player available, because cornerback was probably the team's biggest area of need.

But, said Graves, "Things fell right for us. Not only were they the highest-rated players when we picked, but in areas where we had need."

Indeed, both could end up as starters at some point as rookies.

But the thrill for Graves and Green came from Fitzgerald, whom Graves said was the consensus No. 1 player on the team's draft board.

Green said they had heard from a "good source" that Jacksonville was making a hard push to trade for Oakland's No. 2 overall pick so it could grab Fitzgerald. But the Cards benefitted from the Jaguars' No. 9 pick, which would have been too far down for the Raiders to drop.

But that was the only real worry of the day and a minor one at that. The early draft went exactly as expected, with Oakland taking tackle Robert Gallery after San Diego had picked quarterback Eli Manning.

Green reiterated the Cardinals were prepared to take one of another couple of players if Fitzgerald had been taken, but he declined to say who it was.

"I think (Fitzgerald) is ideally suited for our offense," Green said. "We have said from the start we are going to be a playoff team in 2004, and if you're going to do that, then you have to have a playmaker."

around these parts. Boldin became a playmaker as a rookie, but that wasn't enough to save the Cardinals from being the worst offense in the NFL last season.

Green is so enthused about getting Fitzgerald he was talking not just about improving the NFL's 32nd-ranked offense but jumping all the way into the top 10.

He also reiterated for the umpteenth time Saturday that the Cards don't need another quarterback because "Josh McCown is our man."

And that man is ready to handle an offense where he can toss the ball to Boldin and Fitzgerald.

"We hope to form something special," McCown said from California, where he was competing in the made-for-TV quarterback challenge.

"For us, it's patience but urgency. I hope they have the patience to let us grow. It's all about improvement so they will stick with us."

McCown wanted to get Fitzgerald's cell phone number, so he could call his new teammate and have their first chat, anxious to get started on the future.

And unlike Manning and his tiff with San Diego, Fitzgerald talked about how happy he was to be going to the Cardinals, a sentiment rarely felt by draft picks over the years.

"I know Coach Green is going to address a lot of the needs of the organization," Fitzgerald said. "With Coach Green running the show, I don't feel like there is going to be too much more of (the same old Cardinals) in the future."

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