

**ARIZONA CARDINALS
HEAD COACH KEN WHISENHUNT (KW) AND
GENERAL MANAGER ROD GRAVES (RG)
DISCUSSING THE SECOND DAY OF THE DRAFT**

On if there was a consistent theme among all their picks:

(KW): “I couldn’t say that. I think it was young talent that we’re excited to see where they fit in. They come in here and get the opportunity to show they belong on our football team. It’s a good position to be in, because I feel like these are talented players, and it increases the level of competition on our team, which is something you always want to try to have.”

On if drafting a safety and cornerback with their first two picks today, given their depth at those positions already, showed they were open to taking anybody:

(RG): “For the most part, for the entire day, we stuck pretty much with our board. We’ve always built that board with the idea of best player available. Obviously, we’ll take a good, hard look at our needs and that sort of thing, but these were two football players that Ken [Whisenhunt] felt very strongly could have a chance to compete and make us better, and enhance our situation, so we felt very good about selecting both of those players, as well as the others.”

(KW): “I know the safety [Rashad Johnson]. Coach [Nick] Saban is a very good friend of mine, and he’s a guy that has a very good pedigree, as far as being an NFL coach and outstanding college football coach, and he speaks very highly of this player. That coupled with the fact that we had some very good grades on him really made it an easy decision for us to take him. So I think that was a good pick and then, obviously, I think if you ask just about anybody in this league, they’ll say you can never have enough cornerbacks. A lot of people have compared Greg [Toler] to Dominique Rodgers-Cromartie. Well, obviously, we had success with a smaller-school corner that played very well for us, so we weren’t against drafting a player like that. So that contributed to that a little bit, but once again, like Rod said, we’re very excited about all of these players, and feel like they have a chance to help us improve, which is what this is all about.”

On fifth-round pick Herman Johnson:

(KW): “Our fifth rounds have been a little bit unique, and we continued that trend today with Big Baby. He was the biggest baby in the state [of Louisiana] ever, and he’s a humongous man. Obviously a talented player, the question now is what position is he going to play for us? Is he going to be a guard, or is he going to be a tackle? I think that getting him in John Lott’s off-season program and working on some of the things that will help him, whether it’s some of the lateral movement, the foot speed, those kinds of things, is going to help us determine that. We’ll see. That’s what OTA’s and training camp is all about. He has very good hands. If he gets his hands on you, at his size, he does a great job. So, we’re excited to get him, and certainly, hopefully, he’ll keep up the tradition of our fifth-round picks to date.”

On if this class will require more patience than a usual draft class:

(KW): “I think we’re in the third year of our system, so a lot of our veteran players understand what we’re trying to get done. That helps with young players like this. I think we have a lot of outstanding character and leaders on our football team already, and they’ll help these young guys get better, and that’s what is important. We’re not so much concerned about the time that it’s going to take, because I think they’ll transition to their positions more readily because of the fact that we have a veteran crew that will help them. But, competition is competition. We expect these players, these young ones that we drafted today, to come in here and compete, and earn their way onto our roster. That’s what good football teams do, and hopefully that’s the progress we’ve made over the last few years.”

On if LaRod Stephens-Howling can return kicks for the team:

(KW): “Yes. I think that there were a number of things that we liked about LaRod, from the standpoint of a dynamic playmaker that has made some big plays at a good program. I’ve watched Pitt for a number of years, just because I watched Larry [Fitzgerald] there when I was coaching for the Steelers, so I still have a little bit of an affinity for the University of Pittsburgh and Coach [Dave] Wannstedt, who’s been very good with us. So, I knew a little bit more about him, just the type of character he is and the way he works. I think that some of the things that we do offensively, he fits very well. That’s going to be an interesting thing. One of the questions you ask about him is pass protection, because of his size, can he protect? He’s shown to be a very physical pass protector. I think another attribute that he has is that he’s an outstanding special teams player, very physical, very fast. Something that can make a big contribution on our team in an area that we need to improve. So, I think he’s going to have an opportunity to come in here and compete for a spot, show what he can do. We’re certainly open to where he can fit in and what he can do for us.”

On the emotion Stephens-Howling showed on the conference call and what that says about him:

(KW): “I think he’s had a number of knocks against him his whole career because of his size, and he’s fought through those things. I think he was a very good football player at Pitt and all he wants is an opportunity. It’s easy to say you can’t have enough of those guys, but they do have to have some talent, and I think that there is no question that LaRod Stephens-Howling has talent. So it’s going to be exciting to see him come in here and compete and see what he can do.”

On if Trevor Canfield can play guard or center:

(KW): “Well, he hasn’t really played center. He did it coming out of high school. I think he’s worked on it some since his season has been over. We look at him as a good guard, and that’s an area that we need to solidify and have some competition going. I think that we’ll look at him and see what he can do from the standpoint of a center, but that’s down the road. That’s not something we’re going to look at right away. He’ll come in here as a big guard that’s played well, and we’re excited about that.”

On bringing in undrafted free agents:

(RG): “We will bring in somewhere between eight and 10. Somewhere in that area.”

(KW): “That is good. That means we have a good core group of veteran players and that Rod has done an outstanding job of signing our players back which is one of the things we wanted to focus on in the off-season. I think it was last year that we had 13 or 14 plus our draft picks which is a big number. This is something that is exciting because we have a good core group of guys and they have been in here working out.”

On if Coach Whisenhunt is looking forward to mini-camp next week:

(KW): “For me, this is a great time of the year because we get a chance to be with these guys on the football field and in the meeting rooms again. That is something you really enjoy. We have been watching tape, breaking down film, looking at some of the things that we have done. We haven’t really had the interaction with our players, except for the chances when they are in here working out. It is nice to be able to get involved with the actual football aspects of it, studying the plays, running the plays out on the field, going through the meetings. All that is great so it is an exciting time for us.”

On if he is happy with what the team accomplished this weekend with the draft:

(KW): “I am very excited because I think we did a very good combination of addressing our needs and getting good football players. We didn’t reach for anybody. We had a very good plan. I compliment Rod and Steve Keim on that. We were very prepared. We had two or three picks at each point that we felt very good about. There were a number of people who called that wanted us to make decisions about trading in or trading out. We always had a good plan and felt good about where we were and had a good strategy. To me, I think it was a very productive two-day draft for us. We are excited about the players that we got. We really want to get an opportunity to see them on the field. After the little bit of the bitter taste the last time we left together which was after the Super Bowl. It will be great to get everybody back together again next week and get out onto the football field. We are excited about that.”

On if the team put extra value on players that had to struggle and fight hard to even earn spots on their college teams’ rosters:

(RG): “I think going beyond that, we tried to look at guys who had strong character, who were highly competitive. I think these are things that these players exhibit and have shown throughout their careers. They have shown leadership in the locker room and so forth. I think the mental toughness is a big aspect of it. I don’t know that we were exactly focused on their circumstances. I think it goes to show you that these kids are tough. They love football. Those were the kinds of guys we really wanted in our locker room.”

On if S Rashad Johnson’s big play ability in the competitive SEC drew the attention of the coaching staff:

(KW): “In that conference, yeah. I think there is something to that. That is one of the reasons we had some higher grades for him because he has performed at a high level against some pretty good athletes that came off the board very early in the draft and did a nice job. That is always a factor when we are trying to evaluate these guys. I think you

always feel better about players where you have that kind of evidence. You can't always get that. A lot of times you are making your assessments based on what you see them do on the field. But, when you do see players in an SEC Conference going against a (Matthew) Stafford and making plays in those situations, it certainly makes you feel better about how you had them ranked and what they can do at this level."

On if the signing of veteran Anthony Becht solidified the tight end position:

(KW): "We looked at it in the draft, but there was never a player that we felt was a good fit for our system. There were a lot of talented football players at that position, but not one, besides some of the guys that came off the board early, that fit us well. We did feel a lot more comfortable signing Anthony Becht, and I do feel that we are in a much better position after the way that our guys played; Stephen Spach, Leonard Pope, and Ben Patrick did late in the season. It is exciting that we have all these guys healthy now. Last year at this time, Leonard was coming off the fracture and we had a couple of questions. Now we are in a position, other than Stephen coming off the ACL, we feel very good about that position. (Signing Becht) did take the need out of that for us in the draft. Don't make a mistake, if there had been one that could help us, we would have picked one."