

In Depth Draft Grades for the Miami Dolphins

Written by Jason Clary (MiamiFinsJC)
Saturday, 28 April 2012 19:47

QB Ryan Tannehill, Texas A&M

Grade: A

Analysis: This was the consensus pick for Jeff Ireland, Joe Philbin and Stephen Ross. Tannehill was the highest quarterback ever taken from Texas A&M. He is also only the third quarterback the Miami Dolphins have EVER taken in the first round. The other two – Dan Marino and Bob Griese – leave a huge legacy behind.

While Tannehill isn't the most experienced quarterback, he has shown the ability to command his offense. Running a similar offense in college, Tannehill will make an easy transition in terms of verbiage and learning the playbook.

Tannehill, a former starting receiver for Texas A&M, brings a superb athletic ability to Miami. Along with great athleticism, Tannehill has shown an ability to make accurate outside throws and anticipate routes before his receivers complete their route. Miami needed a quarterback, and they got their guy. Great pick.

OT Jonathan Martin, Stanford

Grade: B+

Analysis: Martin spent his time at Stanford protecting Andrew Luck's blind side. As an NFL player, Martin will play on the right side. This pick doesn't receive an A simply because the second round is an opportune time to draft skill players. Nonetheless, Martin will start immediately on the right side, which is all you can ask for from a second-round pick.

Martin fits the mold as a zone blocker and has an uncanny confidence about him. Listen to his interview on the Dolphins website and you will see what I mean. The knock on Martin is that he lacks true power. If Miami was drafting players for last year's regime, Martin would not have been selected. Fortunately for us, Martin was selected and he fits the mold for the type of offensive lineman that will flourish in the West Coast Offense.

Martin is athletic and is a very smart guy. He is the type of player that will make an impact – both on the field and in the locker room. He will make everyone around him better. Martin is the real deal.

DE Olivier Vernon, University of Miami

Grade: B

Analysis: The selection of Olivier Vernon in the third round addressed a huge need for the Dolphins. The biggest aspect of Vernon's game is his potential to be a very good player. With NFL coaching and teammates like Cameron Wake and Jake Long, Vernon will be in good hands. He will need to learn quickly because he will likely see quite a bit of playing time in 2012.

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Some say that Miami reached at this pick, and others say that Miami got a steal. While Vernon's 2011 season at the University of Miami lacked production, he showed a lot of promise and production in 2010. Vernon was suspended for part of 2011 because of taking improper benefits from Nevin Shapiro.

Overall, Vernon will be a talented player and he should also benefit from being able to play in his hometown.

TE Michael Egnew, Missouri

Grade: A

Analysis: Previously, I graded this pick a B. I will explain why the more I look at this pick, the more excited I get.

The NFL continued to evolve. The new trend in the NFL is the athletic, seam-threat tight end. Egnew is exactly that. Not only does Egnew show great hands and speed for a 250-pounder, he will create a mismatch on almost every route he runs. He was one of Blain Gabbert's favorite targets in 2010, hauling in 90 passes. While production dropped off a bit in 2011, the ability is still there.

Not only was this a timely pick, but it also gives Miami an immediate improvement in the red zone. Miami is bringing a plethora of tight ends into training camp.

RB Lamar Miller, University of Miami

Grade: B

Analysis: The fact that Miller lasted until the fourth round is just astounding. Many scouts considered him the second or third best running back in the draft. The only reason this pick receives a B is because it wasn't a position of need. Whether or not we needed Miller, I love the pick regardless.

It is apparent that Miami wants to come into training camp with high-level competition. Miller adds to Miami's backfield of Reggie Bush, Daniel Thomas, Steve Slaton and recently-signed CFL star Jerome Messam.

The Miller pick makes sense because it gives Miami great depth at a very important position. Reggie Bush was healthy for most of 2011, which was a surprise. If Bush misses any time, Miami will barely miss a beat because of Miller.

OLB Josh Kaddu, Oregon

Grade: B-

Analysis: This pick adds depth at outside linebacker. Along with being a capable linebacker, Kaddu has also shown the ability to rush the passer. In order for him to play defensive end or go up against powerful blockers in the NFL, he will need to add some weight to his 240-pound frame. The draw with adding weight is that his speed and agility could suffer.

Kaddu was 1st team all Pac-12 in 2011 and was a full-time starter during the 2010 and 2011 seasons. Kaddu will be a project player, but the potential is definitely there.

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WR B.J. Cunningham, Michigan State

Grade: A

Analysis: It took until the 6th round for Miami to draft a receiver. While I didn't agree with the late timing, I am very fond of this pick. Cunningham is the all-time leader at Michigan State in receptions (218) and receiving yards (3,088), while also ranking second in school history with 25 touchdown receptions.

Cunningham was voted MVP in 2011 by his teammates while also part of the All-Big Ten second-team. He is a receiver that plays faster than his workout number suggest. With a big frame of 6'2, 215-pounds, he will be a big target in Miami's offense. He will likely be in a reserve role, but he definitely has potential.

In 2011, Cunningham caught 79 passes for 1,306 yards and 12 touchdowns. He averaged nearly 94 yards per game in 2011.

DT Kheeston Randall, Texas

Grade: B

Analysis: Randall started in 35 games at Texas. He was first team All-Big 12 in 2011, while being named to the watch lists for the Nagurski Trophy, Outland Trophy and Lombardi Award.

Randall is going to give us more depth along our defensive line that will feature many different rotations. While he isn't a threat rushing the passer, he is a good player in run support. He is strong and gets good leverage despite being 6'5. His main role at Texas was stuffing gaps and causing disruptions in the running game. He is also good at keeping his ground and not getting pushed back, even when double-teamed.

If Randall does see the field for the Dolphins, it will be on first and second down. Not to say that he is completely incapable as a pass-rusher, but he rarely makes plays on passing downs.

WR Rishard Matthews, Nevada

Grade: A

Analysis: Drafting Rishard Matthews in the seventh round gives Miami a great value. He is the exact same size as Dolphins 6th rounder B.J. Cunningham and also shared similar production.

In 12 games during the 2011 season, Matthews amassed 91 receptions for 1,364 yards and eight touchdowns. He is another player who plays on par with the speed of the game, almost making his workout numbers irrelevant. This is another player who has the potential to contribute as a rookie.

As a player selected in the last round, Matthews definitely has a lot to work on. There is no question in that. As history has shown, though, receivers who were productive in college do find some success in the NFL.

Also worth mentioning:

Before the draft even started, Miami added tight end Les Brown – a former basketball player at Westminster College in Utah. Brown didn't play college football, so he wasn't eligible to be drafted. However, he did work out at BYU's Pro Day.

With a sprained ankle, Brown ran a 4.44 in the 40-yard dash and recorded a 39-inch vertical jump. There is potential with this signing. While the only game tape that could be looked at was college basketball and some high school football film, Les impressed scouts with his workout performance in both measurable and pass-catching drills. Miami quickly went from a team with a one-dimensional tight end situation, to a team that could create matchup problems. Les Brown and Michael Egnew could be Miami's future.

Overall Grade: A

It's hard not to be excited about this draft. Though we won't know for a few years, it looks like Ireland hit a home-run with these selections. It was obvious that, outside of picking based on needs, Miami's goal was to improve its red-zone offense.

Unless Tannehill comes into camp lighting it up, he will likely be developed for a year or two, which is a very good situation. I expect Jonathan Martin and Olivier Vernon to start as rookies. Lamar Miller will definitely see the field as well in certain situations. Michael Egnew will also see the field quite a bit, given his ability to make plays and cause matchup problems. Cunningham and Matthews have their work cut out for them at receiver, but I could see one, if not both of these players making the team. Kaddu and Randall will provide depth on the defense and have the potential to see some playing time as time goes on.

This was a pivotal draft that, from the looks of it, has built a solid foundation for Joe Philbin's tenure as the head coach.