



The Draft: A Year Inside the NFL's Search for Talent

Pete Williams

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An explosive look at the NFL Draft from the inside out that exposes the multilayered feeding frenzy that swarms around America's top college players.

The Draft follows a handful of NFL hopefuls through the ups and downs of the 2004 college football season and the predraft process, culminating with the 2005 draft. Among the prospects are Virginia defensive end Chris Canty, who overcomes a devastating early-season knee injury to reestablish himself as a top draft hopeful, only to suffer a detached retina in a nightclub skirmish; and Fred Gibson, a talented but rail-thin Georgia wide receiver who struggles to put on the weight needed to go over the middle in the NFL.

It's a complex environment, with college coaches attempting to protect their "student-athletes" from exploitation (while fully aware that they can only remain competitive if they attract NFL-caliber players to their schools), along with sports agents and NFL scouts trying to stay a step ahead of their competition.

These parties provide a multi-angled view of the world of emerging NFL talent. The reader follows the season through the eyes of a host of power players and scouts, from veteran agent Pat Dye Jr. to Jerry Maguire clone Jack Scharf, to the coaching divisions of Florida State University and the University of Virginia---headed by longtime Bill Parcells disciple Al Groh. Also central to the narrative are the Atlanta Falcons and executives Rich McKay and Tim Ruskell (now with Seattle), who use a character-based evaluation system to set their draft board. These parallel stories weave together, culminating in draft weekend, to create a gripping and fascinating look at a world few see from the inside.

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