

Gridiron Genesis: The NFL Draft Unveiled

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Paper Length: 1128 words
Process Paper: 444 words

Our fascination with the NFL draft sparked when we began watching it, leading us to choose it as the subject for our History Day project. We were intrigued by the process of how the league selected its picks and the historical origins of the selection methods. The NFL draft was the first to create all the rules and how it would run. This was very important to the league being able to have all the teams as close to equal as possible. This would sell more tickets because the games would be more competitive. The biggest part to them was having the worst teams have the best picks in the draft. This would make the league a lot more enjoyable to watch. One team couldn't get one of the best picks if they won the championship last year. The draft would help give balance to the league.

Our research started on the internet by visiting websites like *NFL.com* and *Brittanica.com*. Then we started to focus on the man who proposed the idea, Bert Bell. We used websites like *profootballhof.com* and *profootballnetwork.com*. It was very hard to find primary sources but we eventually found one. It was a book by Bert Bell's son called, *Present at the Creation*. Our secondary sources were mostly websites involving the creation of the draft or how the draft was run. This was used in all of our sections but mostly with our build-up. We also went to the Hennepin County Library, but sadly we didn't find a lot of information there.

We opted for a website to leverage technology, seamlessly integrating visuals with our narrative to effectively convey key points. This was also our best way to present information in an orderly format being easy to read. We did have trouble using the website-building software, but after some getting used to it, it got easier. One of the hardest parts was trying to find a color for the background that didn't look unappealing. Once we learned how to use the software it became fun to try to create a website.

The first NFL draft was a turning point in the history of organized sports, by creating and setting the rules of drafting as we know it today. This draft set the bar for any other drafts by being the first professional draft ever, it showed how they would/could be conducted. The NFL draft is significant as it serves as a crucial mechanism for distributing talent among teams, promoting parity, and influencing the competitive balance of the league. Additionally, it has become a major event, attracting widespread attention and shaping the future of football franchises.

Annotated Bibliography

Primary Sources

Bell, Upton. *Present at the Creation*. Nebraska Press, November 1, 2017.

This book helps us further understand what it was like to live in the time of the first draft. Like how exciting it was for the people who knew the sport of football and what the draft would change. I like how this book made it easy for us to understand by putting all the different parts of the draft in chapters.

Secondary Sources

"Bert Bell: Pro Football Hall of Fame." *Pfhof*, www.profootballhof.com/players/bert-bell/.

Accessed

06 Nov. 2023.

Bert Bell has impacted the NFL in so many ways. This website gives us information about who he was and what he accomplished. This will help us a lot when we reveal who Bert Bell was and what his life was like.

"eLibrary Minnesota." *eLibrary Minnesota at Minitex*,

school-eb-com.content.elibrarymn.org/levels/high/article/American-football/108490#234278.toc. Accessed 02 Nov. 2023.

The start of American Football is a lot different than the football we know today. The start of football had no helmets, the ball had no laces, and there was 12 people on the field instead of 11. This source also gave us knowledge about the roots of the NFL like where it came from and what it was modeled after. It was modeled after soccer and rugby.

"Evolution of the NFL Player." *NFL Football Operations*,

operations.nfl.com/inside-football-ops/players-legends/evolution-of-the-nfl-player/.

Accessed 12 Nov. 2023.

This source/website has let us know more about the NFL's progression and the progression of the player. For example back in the day NFL players were still working regular jobs and they weren't full time football players they also didn't get payed as much that is why they couldn't only do footbal. Also the athleticism changed overall for more players, players eventually were put into set positions and couldn't just played multiple positions. We will use this in the part about our evolution in our website.

“Evolution of the NFL Rules: NFL Football Operations.” *Evolution of the NFL Rules | NFL Football Operations*, operations.nfl.com/the-rules/evolution-of-the-nfl-rules/. Accessed 12 Nov. 2023.

This source/website improved our understanding on the rules of the game of football and how they were put in place. They have differed over the years and many have been created. For example back before the facemask rule was set into place, to ensure a player's neck was not hurt and so it wasn't an easy tackle, players would constantly grab the facemask of another player to take them down. We shall use this piece of information in our evolution part of our website.

Flynn, Kerry. “NFL Draft: Everything You Need to Know.” *CNN*, Cable News Network, 27 Apr. 2022, www.cnn.com/2022/04/27/sport/nfl-draft-explainer-2022-spt-intl/index.html. Accessed 13 Nov. 2023.

There's lots to know in the draft but this website covers it all. All the little details like how the teams are selected and what the value is to each team. The team's value on a pick is determined by the incoming draft class and what player they think they can get at that pick. We will use this article in our introduction to showing how players are selected.

John.Mckeon. “The Evolution of the NFL: A Look at How the Game Has Changed Over the Years.”

American Football International, 13 Mar. 2023, www.americanfootballinternational.com/the-evolution-of-the-nfl-a-look-at-how-the-game-has-changed-over-the-years/#:~:text=When%20the%20NFL%20first%20formed,league%20implemented%20sudden%20death%20overtime. Accessed 03 Nov. 2023.

This game of American Football has changed an incredible amount. They have implemented rules from when it was first created to make the game safer and more entertaining for fans watching. Like when they put in sudden death overtime. They have also advanced the technology within the game, for example when they created instant replay so referees could take a closer look at the plays they called. We will most likely use this information in the evolution part of our website.

"Learn the History of the NFL Draft." *NFL Football Operations*,
operations.nfl.com/journey-to-the-nfl/the-nfl-draft/the-history-of-the-draft/#:~:text=At%20a%201935%20league%20meeting,inaugural%20NFL%20Draft%20in%201936. Accessed 26 Oct. 2023.

This website helped us learn more about how the NFL Draft class was thought about then created and that it didn't just pop up out of nowhere. We will most likely use this information in the beginning of our website so the people reading get an understanding of how the NFL Draft was produced.

Michael, Jackson: Author. "History of the NFL Draft: The Game Before the Money." *The Game Before*

the Money | An Oral History of Pro and College Football, 28 Oct. 2021,
www.thegamebeforethemoney.com/draft/. Accessed 30 Oct. 2023.

The NFL draft has changed over the years and it has stayed the same. There are a lot of things that this website helped us with, for example, it has provided us with information on when the NFL Draft has changed. It has changed for example the first draft in 1936 had nine rounds, and then that number was increased to 10 in 1937. In 1939, it was increased to 20 rounds. In the 1940s, there were as many as 32 rounds.

Mountainproductions. "A Condensed History of the NFL Draft." *Mountain NEWS*, 18 Apr. 2017,
www.mountainproductions.com/blog/2017/04/12/condensed-history-nfl-draft/. Accessed 31 Oct. 2023.

This source/website has helped us understand not so much about the creation of the NFL draft but about the history and how it has evolved. This website showed us exactly what has changed throughout the years and what has stayed the same. For example how the board elected for more rounds or how they have found that the worse teams get drafts earlier in the round so they can get a better pick.

NFL. "WATCH: NFL Explained: Innovation in Player Health and Safety." *NFL.Com*, NFL, 28 Feb. 2023,

www.nfl.com/playerhealthandsafety/equipment-and-innovation/aws-partnership/nflexplainedinnovation. Accessed 12 Nov. 2023.

This website helped us further our knowledge on the topic of revolutionizing the game of football. It helped us discover new perspectives on how the game is played on and off the field, so we looked more in to the progression of behind the scene health and safety technology as it makes the game safer overall for each and every player involved. This source/website will help us improve our subtopic on the evolution of the NFL in our website.

Schalter, Ty. "History of the NFL Draft: How Has the Process Evolved over Time?" *Bleacher Report*, 2

Oct. 2017,

bleacherreport.com/articles/1077925-history-of-the-nfl-draft-how-has-the-process-evolved-over-time. Accessed 30 Oct. 2023.

This website helped give us a deeper dive into the NFL draft. It showed us the ins and outs of the draft and how it operates. It also gave us vital information on the history of the NFL draft, for example, how Bert Bell rounded up all the coaches/teams to agree on a universal draft to increase the chance for worst teams to win. It also showed us which team picked which player during each draft.

"The First NFL Draft - 1936: Pro Football Hall of Fame." *Pro Football Hall of Fame*,

www.profootballhof.com/news/2018/04/the-nfls-first-draft-1936/. Accessed 26 Oct. 2023.

The first NFL draft shaped the future for other drafts in other sports. This was the first ever draft in any sport. The NFL draft set the bar for other drafts and how they would take place. This source will also help us determine why it was a good draft and what made it a good draft.

“The Rules of the NFL Draft.” *NFL Football Operations*,

operations.nfl.com/journey-to-the-nfl/the-nfl-draft/the-rules-of-the-draft/#:~:text=When%20a%20team%20decides%20on,member%20known%20as%20a%20runner. Accessed 13 Nov. 2023.

The rules of the draft have changed a lot. To changing the number of rounds and how the players are selected. Like what scouts and coaches look for in a player. We will use this information to inform our audience about the rules and how they have changed.

“When Was the First NFL Draft? History of the NFL’s Annual Event.” *Pro Football Network*, 13 Oct. 2023, www.profootballnetwork.com/when-was-the-first-nfl-draft/. Accessed 30 Oct. 2023.

This website helped us get a better look at how the NFL draft works and when it started it wasn’t the same as it is today. The number of rounds and players selected in each draft and how the teams are chosen, are some of the changes made.

Images

“A Rough Draft: Pro Football Hall of Fame.” *Pfhof*,

www.profootballhof.com/blogs/2016/03/blogs-joe-horrigans-over-time-a-rough-draft/. Accessed 30 Jan. 2024.

This image shows Jay Berwanger, the first Heisman Trophy winner. He later decided to be a foam rubber salesman instead of being a pro football player.

Benton, Dan. "Giants Select Saquon Barkley in Latest NFL.Com Mock Draft." *USA Today*, Gannett Satellite Information Network, 27 Mar. 2018, giantswire.usatoday.com/2018/03/27/new-york-giants-select-saquon-barkley-latest-nfl-com-mock-draft/. Accessed 30 Jan. 2024.

This image shows Saquon Barkley showcasing his skills at the NFL combine in 2018. He later got drafted by the Giants.

Buchmasser, Bernd. "NFL Combine 2023: Schedule, Workouts, Position Groups, How to Watch, and

More." *Pats Pulpit*, 28 Feb. 2023, www.patspulpit.com/2023/2/28/23618209/nfl-combine-2023-schedule-workouts-position-groups-how-to-watch. Accessed 11 Jan. 2024.

This image shows how the 40 yard dash is conducted and how they start. This also showcases what the NFL combine typically looks like.

<https://www.cantonrep.com/story/sports/pro/pro-football-hof/2020/04/04/joe-stydahar-big-hit-for/1406569007/> Accessed 10 Jan. 2024.

This image shows Joe Stydahar recovering a fumble from Sammy Baugh in the 1940's championship game. This helped us show how the NFL used to look like when they played.

"Learn the History of the NFL Draft." *NFL Football Operations*, operations.nfl.com/journey-to-the-nfl/the-nfl-draft/the-history-of-the-draft/. Accessed 30 Jan. 2024.

This image shows the order of draft picks by team in the first NFL and AFL combined draft. It helps us show how the NFL draft changed over the years and didn't stay the same.

Nfl. "Tom Fears Through the Years." *NFL.Com*, 27 June 2009,
www.nfl.com/photos/tom-fears-through-the-years-09000d5d811087ae. Accessed 11
Jan. 2024.

Image of Tom Fears diving for a football. This allowed us to show what the typical
football player looked like back in the day.

www.si.com/nfl/2020/04/22/how-espn-televised-nfl-draft-for-the-first-time. Accessed 09 Jan.
2024.

This image shows how the first televised NFL draft was conducted. This helps us convey
the fact the NFL draft wasn't always a big amazing event. It sometimes was hosted in
hotels and not personal stages.

Today's Tidbit... The 1876 Harvard-Yale Game, *Football Archaeology*, 5 Aug. 2022,
www.footballarchaeology.com/p/todays-tidbit-the-1876-harvard-yale. Accessed 09 Jan.
2024.

This image shows the dominant yale college football team. It was taken shortly after they
won the college championship.

University of Wisconsin - Stevens Point Athletics,
athletics.uwsp.edu/honors/hall-of-fame/eddie-kotal/17/kiosk. Accessed 01 Feb. 2024.

This image allowed us to show the first ever scout that was paid by an organization. His
name was Eddie Kotal and was hired by the Green Bay Packers.