STARS & STRIPES
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June 2017

On Deck with Jim Henderson

Saints fans...in fact fans of NFL teams everywhere...wanted to see their team be aggressive in this past April's draft. Yet often-times the best deals you make are the ones you fail to make. History will judge if that was the case for the Saints in 2017's first round.

With the top-rated cornerback --Ohio State's Marshon Lattimore -- still available, the saints said afterward they explored moving up from their first pick at 11 to select him, but judged the asking price too dear. Instead, when Cincinnati at 8 reached for speedy but diminutive and brittle wide receiver John Ross and Kansas City traded into Buffalo's spot at 10 one choice ahead of the saints, Lattimore fell into the Saints' lap at 11.

The Chiefs shocked the NFL world by giving the Bills two number ones and a three to move up a whopping 17 spots to select Texas Tech quarterback Pat Mahomes, content to have him sit and learn behind veteran Alex Smith.

Afterward, Saints Coach Sean Payton volunteered a most interesting tidbit: the Saints planned to select Mahomes at 11 if the Chiefs hadn't jumped ahead of them with the blockbuster trade with the Bills. It was an uncharacteristic bit of candor by Payton that is interesting on a number of levels.

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Was Payton trying to soften any media backlash for a respected colleague in the Chiefs' Andy Reid from those who might have deemed the trade too costly and the quarterback who doesn't figure to have any immediate impact a "luxury pick?" Had the Saints put out a smokescreen that they would take Mahomes, enticing the Chiefs to jump ahead of them, assuring the Saints would get Lattimore, satisfying a major need?

What would the selection of Mahomes have said about Drew Brees' future with the Saints beyond this season? Even the Saints' stated intention to do so.

Brees has gone on record as saying ---for his future and that of the Saints and probably theirs together --- the saints must improve this off-season to win now. Mahomes' selection as his successor would hardly have contributed to that. What it would have contributed to probably would have been Brees' determination to hit the open market at the conclusion of 2017 to chase a second Super Bowl championship with a defensively dominant team who are only lacking a proven veteran quarterback. Think Peyton Manning and the Broncos.

Brees is in the final year of a contract that will leave him after paying him 24 million dollars this season an unrestricted free agent. Unless his play falls off precipitously, someone in the aforementioned category will want him. I think that's exactly what you'll see. Drew Brees...as did Manning, Montana, Moon, Unitas, Favre, and others...playing in another uniform and another city as the curtain comes down on a hall of fame career.

Enjoy watching the best player in New Orleans Saints history as a New Orleans Saint this season. I don't think you'll see another.

God Bless,
Jim Henderson

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Tim Rebowe

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Saturday, November 11th

Congratulations to the winners of the Quarterly *Stars & Stripes* Drawing!

Mileina Battaglia of Thibodaux
Ella Bennett of Labadieville
Wayne Waguespack of Vacherie

Each won a $50 Visa Gift Card by entering last issue's contest drawing.

Thank you for reading this publication of *Stars & Stripes!*

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Please return by July 31, 2017 to be eligible for this drawing.
Winners will be announced in the next quarterly publication of Stars and Stripes.