

STARS & STRIPES

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JIM HENDERSON: ON DECK

With the 13th selection in the 2015 NFL draft, the New Orleans Saints select Andrus Peat....offensive tackle...Stanford.

What? Of the dozens of mock drafts I had seen previously, none had NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell anointing Peat as the Saints' "chosen one."

How had that happened?

In a word, I believe the Saints found themselves "stuck" at 13.

The Saints' most pressing need was an edge rusher on defense.

There were three who warranted selection in the top ten. Dante Fowler figured to be the first of the three selected and was by Jacksonville at 3. The other two -- Randy Gregory of Nebraska and Shane Ray of Missouri -- saw their stock plummet because of recent involvement with marijuana. Ray fell to number 23 to Denver while Gregory dropped out of the first round entirely...the Cowboys selecting him 60th overall in the second round.

Of the remaining crop at the position, Vic Beasley of Clemson looked to be the best. The problem for the Saints was that Atlanta, selecting 8th, coveted him as well. Had Ray and Gregory been "clean", it's likely they go in the top ten and Beasley is still available to the Saints at 13.



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To get in front of the Falcons, the Saints needed to obtain Chicago's 7th pick in the first round. But the Bears with former Saints' Director of Player Personnel, Ryan Pace, conducting his first draft as the Bears' GM drove too hard a bargain. The Saints concluded that Beasley wasn't worth the price and that no other edge rusher was worthy of selection at 13 and neither was the crop at inside linebacker. The Saints would address that need by selecting Stephone Anthony of Clemson with their second first round selection at number 31.

With no team making it worthwhile for the Saints to trade down, the Saints stayed true to their board, valuing the player more than the need at other positions. Peat was seriously considered by the Giants at number 9 before they instead chose Miami tackle Erik Flowers. The Saints need at the position isn't a glaring one, but they couldn't pass up a player they had ranked perhaps as the best in the draft at his position or second best at worst.

For the Saints, he looms as the heir apparent to Zach Strief at right tackle with the popular Strief entering his 10th season. In the meantime he brings value as the swing tackle at both right and left. On the occasions when either Strief or Terron Armstead was injured last year and Bryce Harris had to fill in for them, he was little more than a human turnstile in preventing pressure on Drew Brees.

Selecting the best player available is a hoary cliché in the first round. But the saints didn't just want to, they had to, and we can all only hope they did.



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Monday, October 12th

Veterans Day
Wednesday, November 11th

Thanksgiving Day
Thursday, November 26th
All offices will close at noon Friday, November 27th

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**Marcella Gonzales of Luling
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Each won a \$50 Visa Gift Card by entering last issue's contest drawing.

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Winners will be announced in the next quarterly publication of Stars and Stripes.