



Pipeline to the Pro's

by
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Pipeline to the Pro's offers prospective NFL players a head start as they seek to make the transition from the college to the professional ranks and is directed at them.

Get your Degree!
Stay in School!
Select the Right Agent!

You should have three main objectives during college:

- * **Stay in school and get a degree**, an accomplishment that pays dividends both in and after an NFL career;
- * **Don't make a foolish move and declare too early for the NFL Draft;**
- * **Select the right agent**, a procedure that should and can be postponed as long as possible.



The NFL Mega-Entertainment Business

It's vital you have some background about the NFL itself and why **it's a mega-entertainment business**:

- * The NFL remains the **most popular** team sport;
- * That popularity translated into a broadcasting rights contract for the 1998 through 2005 seasons worth over \$2,200,000,000 a season--more than **\$17,600,000,000** overall;
- * And that TV revenue is only *part* of league income that should top **\$4,500,000,000** in the 2001 season--of which the players' share will be over \$3,100,000,000 for salaries and benefits.

The average NFL salary is over \$1,000,000. (For detailed information about NFL salaries and salary trends, see the *Economics Primer* in the Research Documents pages of nflpa.org.) Based on (1) **those huge TV rights fees**, (2) **league expansion** to 32 clubs for the 2002 season, and (3) **new and larger stadiums** coming on-line, the players' guaranteed share of league revenues should expand rapidly enough that the **average salary could double by as soon as 2005** and the average starter would then be making *more than* an estimated **\$2,300,000 a season**.



The Pipeline

What's the **Pipeline**?

The Pipeline is our term for the steps through which you'll go as you move from school to the NFL.

Most college players have been scouted extensively by the NFL starting with your freshman days. The Pipeline progresses from that scouting to the beginning of the NFL season.

Scouting by National & Blesto

The College Season

College Post-Season

Bowl Games

Playoffs

All Star Games

NFL Early Entry Period

Scouting Combine

Individual Workouts

The NFL Draft

Minicamps

Training Camp

Regular Season



Shannon Monroe, Jim Byerly, Kelvin Sigler, Terrance Petty, Todd Frohbieter, Larry Atkins, Tim Curry, Fisher, Dillon Micus, Roy Sampson, Paul Miranda, Cook, Chin Achebe, Matt Hughes, Tige Cadet, Kent Skornia, Dane Wheeler, Autry Denson, Rosevelt Colvin, Jake Stras, Brian Goolsby, Michael Bishop, Marty Booker, Robert Daniel, Chris White, Anthony McFarland, Brandon Stokley, Brad Hill, Scott Mutryn, Mimnaugh Hill, Rasheed Simmons, Pat Sheehan, Gene Miller, Kenny Brown, Dimitruis Underwood, Lamar King, Marcus Ray, Tywan Mitchell, Johannes Bjork, Corby Jones, Rodrick Coleman, Torry Holt, Ebenezer Ekuban, J J Syvrud, Kevin Homer, Chris Hutton, Horace Cook, Jr., Dee Miller, Rahim Slaise, Brandon Carder, Ricky Thompson

Recognize any of these names?

They are just **some** of the 340 players invited to the 1999 Scouting Combine in Indianapolis.

It's a very select group.

What did it take to get there?



What Does It Take To Make To The NFL?

According to the government's most recent
Statistical Abstract of the United States,
there are approximately

971,000

high school football players every year.

Only 65,000 will play at the college level

Only 6,000 are ever scouted for the NFL

Only 340 get invited to the Combine

Only 875 will ever sign NFL contracts

Only 300 will make an NFL roster

And Only 140 will play four or more NFL seasons



Here's another way of looking at it: During the 2000 NFL season, only two schools had more players in the NFL than the University of Michigan. And from the 1991 through 2000 seasons more than an estimated 240 Michigan players ended their college careers. Out of that group **only 89** were seen by scouts as possessing the most pro football potential:

Ninef Aghakhan, Derrick Alexander, Erick Anderson, Tim Biakabatuka, Mark Bolach, Tony Boles, Tom Brady, Corwin Brown, Jarrod Bunch, Alfie Burch, Mark Campbell, William Carr, Joe Cocozzo, Todd Collins, Ed Davis, Martin Davis, Damon Denson, Dean Dingman, Rob Doherty, Tom Dohring, Lance Dottin, Scott Driesbach, Matt Dyson, Peter Elezovic, Matt Elliott, Michael Evans, Steve Everitt, Juaqin Feazell, Chris Floyd, Ian Gold, Elvis Grbac, Brian Griese, Thomas Guynes, James Hall, Woodrow Hankins, Mercury Hayes, Tommy Hendricks, Jason Horn, Chris Howard, Desmond Howard, Ben Huff, Chris Hutchinson, Jarrett Irons, Jon Jansen, Allen Jefferson, Trezelle Jenkins, Deon Johnson, Dhani Jones, David Key, Marcus Knight, Ty Law, Burnie Legette, Felman Malveaux, Joe Marinaro, Alex Marshall, Tony McGee, Steve Morrison, Vada Murray, Rod Payne, Shonte Peoples, Ricky Powers, Marcus Ray, Rob Renes, Jay Riemersma, Jon Runyan, Russell Shaw, Aaron Shea, Neil Simpson, Doug Skene, Greg Skrepenak, Walter Smith, Sylvester Stanley, Glenn Steele, Tai Streets, Mike Sullivan, Sam Sword, Mike Teeter, Amani Toomer, Jerame Tuman, John Vaughn, Dwayne Ware, Andre Weathers, Tripp Welbourne, Tyrone Wheatley, Clarence Williams, Josh Williams, Charles Woodson, Chris Ziemann, Trent Zenkewicz

Of those 89, **only 47** were drafted—just over half of them, 53%

Derrick Alexander, Erick Anderson, Tim Biakabatuka, Tony Boles, Tom Brady, Corwin Brown, Jarrod Bunch, William Carr, Joe Cocozzo, Todd Collins, Damon Denson, Dean Dingman, Tom Dohring, Matt Dyson, Matt Elliott, Michael Evans, Steve Everitt, Chris Floyd, Ian Gold, Elvis Grbac, Brian Griese, Mercury Hayes, Chris Howard, Desmond Howard, Jon Jansen, Trezelle Jenkins, Dhani Jones, David Key, Ty Law, Tony McGee, Rod Payne, Rob Renes, Jay Riemersma, Jon Runyan, Aaron Shea, Doug Skene, Greg Skrepenak, Glenn Steele, Tai Streets, Amani Toomer, Jerame Tuman, John Vaughn, Andre Weathers, Tripp Welbourne, Tyrone Wheatley, Josh Williams, Charles Woodson

And counting undrafted players making NFL rosters, **just 36** were on active rosters as of early April, 2001.

Derrick Alexander, Tim Biakabatuka, Tom Brady, Corwin Brown, Mark Campbell, William Carr, Todd Collins, Scott Dreisbach, Chris Floyd, Ian Gold, Elvis Grbac, Brian Griese, James Hall, Tommy Hendricks, Chris Howard, Desmond Howard, Jon Jansen, Dhani Jones, Marcus Knight, Ty Law, Tony McGee, Marcus Ray, Rob Renes, Jay Riemersma, Jon Runyan, Aaron Shea, Glenn Steele, Tai Streets, Sam Sword, Amani Toomer, Jerame Tuman, Tyrone Wheatley, Clarence Williams, Josh Williams, Charles Woodson, Chris Ziemann



Billy Conaty, Jeff Mitchell, Dan Neil, Harvey Pennpacker, Jeremy Akers, Brad Badger, Lamont Burns, Calvin Collins, Damon Denson, Chris Dishman, Ben Kaufman, Frank Middleton, Larry Moore, Ross Verba, Winston Alderson, Ben Bordelon, Allen DeGraffenried, Todd Fordham, Tarik Glenn, Jay Hagood, Kerry Jenkins, Walter Jones, Tim Kohn, Jamie Nails, Orlando Pace, Adam Treu, Ty Atterberry, Will Brice, Nate Cochran, Brett Conway, Rafael Garcia, John Hall, John Krueger, Todd Kurz, Ryan Longwell, Brad Maynard, Noel Prefontaine, Dan Pulsipher, Sean Reali, Mike Cherry, Jason Davis, Lance Funderbunk, Daniel Palmer, Rod Payne, Juan Porter, Ryan Tucker, Chris Naeole, Brian Newman, Nathan Parks, Scott Rehberg, Bob Sapp, Steve Scifres, Brent Smith, Marcus Spriggs, Darryl Terrell, Donnie Young, Jerome Daniels, Shea Little, Adam Meadows, Todd Perkins, Tony Ramirez, Juan Roque

Another group of players. Are any of them recognizable? They're some of the 329 players who were invited to the 1997 Combine. And, as a representative group, here's what happened to them:

Twenty-one were never offered--or signed an NFL contract.

105 were not drafted and signed contracts as *free agents*.

201 were *on club rosters* at the end of the 1997 season.

And not only did most make rosters, **47** were *starters* by the end of their rookie season.



Million Dollar Differences

Get Your Degree!

Our research indicates that players **with** degrees have both (1) **longer average careers** and (2) **earn higher average salaries**. With average salary already \$1,000,000 a season and with the average career for all players of less than four seasons, the difference associated with having a degree can equal millions of dollars.

That difference in earning capability is equally large for workers with and without degrees once your playing career is over. In an economy where profit margins are the bottom line, employers want to know what you can do for them, not what you did in the NFL—and you already are years behind your peers who entered the workforce immediately after college.

Why do some players make it in the NFL while others don't? All of them are excellent athletes if they are among those scouted by the NFL. Even so, as that pyramid narrows from 971,000 down, so also do differences in pure athletic ability. And so by the time that narrowing reaches down to the 875 players who sign first year contracts, any marginal differences in athletic ability have become very small.



Million Dollar Differences

Get Your Degree!

And yet there is still a key factor that separates those who succeed from those who don't.

Call it **mental discipline**.

You already are asked not only to be a full-time student, but also to hold down a full-time job. Count them and it's obvious how many hours college football players devote to the team. It takes more than just physical endurance to be a successful student-athlete.

But no matter how tough the college football system seems to be, it's rougher in the NFL. No one on a college team has played a *minimum* of twenty games a season—four or five preseason games, then sixteen regular season games, and maybe up to four in the post-season. So, when you hit what's called "The Wall" at around the tenth regular season game, you will need more than just athletic ability to survive the rest of that first season.

You're going to need **discipline**.

Think college practices are hard? In the NFL, more time is spent in the classroom than on the practice field. You will have to deal with at least twenty different game plans and intricate changes during games. All that calls for mental toughness and discipline.

So does another thing: How you deal with mistakes and errors. Because if you make mistakes in the NFL and brood about them, you're certain to commit many more, any one of which can mean losing a game. NFL coaches will only tolerate a few errors before a player is benched and loss of confidence in a player is the surest ticket off the team.



Million Dollar Differences

Stay In School! Don't Enter the Draft Early Unless....

In the eleven seasons starting in 1990 when underclass players could declare for the draft, 364 underclass players opted to come out early.

Of that group just over two-thirds (239) were even drafted and from that group of drafted underclass players just over 40% were drafted in the first round (97).

That means only 27% of the entire group who declared early were top round picks--a significant factor considering that 2000 first rounders negotiated contracts worth nearly an average \$1,500,000 a year while the comparable average for second round draftees was \$647,000 a year--a difference of over 130%.

If you're considering declared for the draft as a junior, check with the NFL first; they have experts there who can advise you about which round you are most likely to be drafted. Don't believe anyone else—especially those persons who have a financial stake in your entering the league early.

(For a detailed analysis of what has happened to underclass players—including why being in the first round alone is not a guarantee that you'll do well—see *Entering the Draft Early—A Risky Proposition* in the Research Documents of the Agents pages in nflpa.org)



The Risks of Declaring Too Early for the Draft

Ken Alvis, Brent Barrington, Toney Bates, Ricky Bell, Greg Black, David Brader, Jason Caudill, Kwame Cavil, Chianti Clay, Jamie Coleman, Tony Daniels, Keith Drayton, Jeffrey Dunlap, Brian Easter, Brian Fitzgerald, Elliott Fortune, Che Foster, Jonathan Gray, Profail Grier, Bud Herring, Brandell Jackson, Ronney Jenkins, Curtis Johnson, Jermaine Johnson, Jimmy Klinger, Derek Krete, Greg Landry, Clarence Matthews, Tariq McDonald, Dwight McFadden, LeVance McQueen, Pearce Pegross, Shaun Peterson, Brian Robinson, Freddie Scott, Michael Sellers, Alfred Shipman, Clarence Sinclair, Alex Smith, Gabe Teninbaum, Roderick Thomas, C. J. White, C. J. Williams, Terrell Willis, Rodney Woodard

Listed above are some players who, for one reason or another, came out early and **who were never drafted.**

And below is another group of players who entered the draft as juniors and were drafted *lower* than the second round:

Karim Abdul Jabbar, Terry Allen, Richie Anderson, Darnell Autry, Ronde Barber, Michael Bates, David Bowens, Rob Carpenter, Ben Coates, Todd Collins, Troy Davis, Na'il Diggs, Ahman Green, Keith Hamilton, Rodney Harrison, Raghil Ismail, Grady Jackson, Jack Jackson, Ben Kelly, Olin Kreutz, Jevon Langford, Tremain Mack, Curtis Martin, Lawyer Milloy, Jerald Moore, Bam Morris, Jamie Nails, A. J. Ofodie, Lovell Pinkney, Derrick Rodgers, Jon Runyan, Corey Sawyer, Maurice Staley, James Stewart, Shyrone Stith, Lorenzo Styles, Lamont Warren, Kenny Wheaton, Moe Williams, Kenny Wright, Frank Wycheck



Hello, where did all that money go?

For most, if not all, players entering the NFL that initial signing bonus represents the most money they have ever had in their lives. But, you must be careful before you start making assumptions about what you're going to do with it.

Let's take, for example, the average third round signing bonus for draftees in the 2000 season--
\$425,000.

Right away, half goes to Uncle Sam: $\$425,000 - \$212,500 = \$212,500$.

Next is the 3% average agent fee: $-\$12,750 = \$199,750$. You've got to have those wheels, so you splurge for the Navigator or Lexus: $-\$50,000 = \$149,750$. Usually, agents advance players money once you've signed the required Representation Agreement, and, of course, that money will be paid back out of your signing bonus: $-\$30,000 = \$119,750$. And then there's your family—mother, father, sisters, brothers, aunts, uncles, etc—and other close friends who've supported you through the years and who you can now “pay back” for that support and kindness: $-\$50,000 = \$69,750$.

\$69,750! Four, if not five, years of college, four years of high school ball, three or four years of Pop Warner or some other youth program. All that and you're left with *less* than \$70,000. Much less for most players drafted because the first through third rounds cover less than 40% of all draftees.

Sure, the amounts above may be slightly exaggerated, but the impact shouldn't be.



Role of the Combine

How fast a 40? How many reps? Vertical leap?

You've heard stories about the Combine. What's it all about?

First, though, do you have to be invited to the Combine in order to be drafted? **No!** Many star players in the league were not at the Combine and even so they were drafted—sometimes in upper rounds.

Okay, so is the Combine really about how fast players run, or how many reps they do, or their vertical reach?

Yes! and No!

As much as the clubs want to see you run, lift and jump, they also want to know how you handle mainly

about one other key test: ***STRESS!***

Remember NFL clubs have been watching you on film and have been scouting you ever since you started playing in college. What clubs *don't* know is how you will react to stress at the pro level.

So, at the Combine one objective is to see how you deal with stressful situations.

Players are watched from the moment you arrive and it continues until you leave. Watching where you sit, what you say, who you hang with, if and what questions you ask or respond to, how you deal with the *concept* of a long psychological test as much as the tests themselves.

And—since most do—especially, what happens if you run 40s slower than you expected and how that situation is handled. Because if you panic after running slow, they wonder what would happen if you make an error in a game when there is both money and jobs at stake.



"You Are The Sorriest, Least Talented 'Kids' Eligible For The Draft In Years!"

And here's another thing that seems to happen every year.

Top-flight players are not going to be seen as great All Pro prospects--at least until *after* the draft.

NFLPA staff have attended the combine starting in 1987, and every years, players' talents suddenly disintegrate from being the cream of the crop to the worst "kids" eligible for the draft in years.

Meanwhile, expect the media to start reporting.

“Comparing This Year’s Combine Players With the Outstanding 2001 Group, Scouts and Other Analysts Say the 2002 Crop of Rookies May Be the Thinnest Group Since Way Back in the 1970’s.”



All that rhetoric is total hogwash!

Players don't get invited to all star bowl games or the Combine if you're no good.

What then is behind all the uproar?



How much money is at stake?

Clubs paid the 2000 season's first year players nearly \$283-million. That's \$283,000,000—and represents more than all players in the NFL earned during the 1982 season. For owners, that's a sizeable investment.

Of course, players didn't take home *all* that money. At an estimated average 3% fee, agents got almost \$8.5-million of it. And of that \$8.5-million, more than \$2-million was charged for minimum base salaries that the union has collectively bargained for.

Agents get *all* the salary information used in negotiating player contracts such as last year's averages, current offers and signings, rookie pool numbers, from the NFLPA. Most of that information is now on-line at nflpa.org in the *Economic Primer*.

What then is the relationship between agents and the Players Association?

Sometimes you might read or hear:

“...the union and agents will demand...” or “...agents and the union pressuring for...”.

But, the Players Association is the Players Association--**plain and simple**. *Only* players make decisions that guide the union. We work very closely with agents, give them the ammunition they need to carry on your negotiations, and many agents are former NFL players. We're glad to offer agents an advisory role, but that's it!



Rules of Thumb When Dealing with Agents

Point blank—Players Need Agents!

That means the key question becomes: *When* do college players *need* an agent? Later rather than sooner **and** definitely *only* after all football eligibility ends. No matter what you hear, **an agent can't positively affect where and when a player gets drafted.**

Never rush the process of selecting an agent. **You are in control!** The agent works for **you**--not the other way around. You're about to make a vital business decision--and a wrong choice can bring about a loss of millions of dollars and a poorly negotiated contract affects not only you but many other players as well.

Remember, as in other important business relationships, you always--**and only**--get what you pay for. You never get something for nothing. **Any agent who cheats the system to sign you will cheat you too!** An agent fee that appears unusually low may also be an indication about the quality of negotiation received. Ignore hype that an agent is rated by the NFLPA--or anyone else--as the "best"; we don't do that and anyway there are always lots of competent, qualified agents available. There are **over 1100** certified agents. Don't believe there's just one, two, five, fifty or one hundred "top" or "best" agents.

To negotiate with any NFL club, **agents must be certified by the NFLPA.** Always check with the NFLPA Salary Cap and Agent Administration Department if you have any doubts that the agent is currently certified, or to learn **what's in the agent's file.** Negotiating NFL contracts--especially rookie deals--calls for detailed technical knowledge. Agents must know how the leaguwide **and** rookie cap systems work. That's why agents now are **required** to go to a teaching seminar **and pass** a test based on the Collective Bargaining Agreement **before** they are allowed to negotiate contracts. And that's also why your mom or dad, your uncle Jake or the family lawyer just isn't qualified enough to negotiate that first contract; *nevertheless, involve family and friends in the agent choice process as much as possible.*



Rules of Thumb When Dealing with Agents

To get an idea of the system's complexities, here are three questions you can pose to prospective agents that will let you know how well they know just some of the rules under which the system operates:

Number one--How many seasons can a signing bonus be pro-rated under salary cap rules if a contract is signed in 2001? (Answer: Six seasons.)

Number two--What's the 25% rule? (Answer: A rookie contract cannot increase at a rate greater than 25% of the first year's salary minus any signing bonus proration.)

Number three--What's the difference between an *accrued* season and a *credited* season? (Answer: *Accrued seasons* are used for *free agency calculations*; a player earns an accrued season when he is on full pay status for **six or more regular season games**; players do **not** get an accrued season if they are on the Commissioner's Exempt List, are on the Non-Football Injury Physically Unable to Perform list, or on Practice Squad. *Credited seasons* are used for *benefits calculations*, use the same criteria as for accrued seasons except that players need only **three games** to qualify and that players on Injured Reserve do not receive credited seasons.)

Experienced agents were asked to take a *voluntary* multi-part CBA test in 1996 and less experienced agents were given a similar mandatory test in February 1998. Both tests were of the "take-home open-book" variety. Fewer than 30% of the experienced agents took the time to take the test. Average score for both groups was 82 points out of a possible 100. Broadly interpreted, that meant the average agent knew only about four-fifths of the system under which contracts are negotiated. That was the motivating force behind the Board of Player Representatives mandate that beginning in January 1999, *all* agents must pass a tough test (1) before they are certified and (2) to retain their certification.



Rules of Thumb When Dealing with Agents

As for other services offered by agents:

- * Know exactly what you're paying for;
- * Check to see if those services fall within the agent's primary specialty field or if the agent merely is referring them to someone else but still collecting a fee from you;
- * Ask yourself if you want so much control in one person's hands rather than spreading those services out to individual specialists that you hire and who are responsible only to you.

Never allow an agent to get “power of attorney”. Doing so is literally letting the agent dip a hand into your pocket *without any further consent ever needed on your part*. Players have been scammed out of millions of dollars by unscrupulous agents who convinced the players to agree to a power of attorney relationship.

Most importantly, as you narrow the field down to a few final choices, the agent you pick must be someone you feel you are fully comfortable with and whom you trust the most. That, and that alone, should be the **most important factor** in your decision. When will that be? For some of you, as soon as your college eligibility ends; for others, sometime around the draft; and, because, over 80% of the draftees sign their contracts with the league after the start of July in the weeks right before training camps open, the decision will be made long after the draft. Again, the key factor should be your comfort level with the agent you choose.

Then, once your decision is made, the *only* form relating to contract negotiations you should sign with an agent is the NFLPA Standard Representation Agreement.



Agent Fees

The *maximum* fee is **3%** a year.

Agent fees are negotiable. The majority range between 2% and 3% a season.. Remember, though, you *only* get what you pay for.

Fees get paid to agents *only* as you earn your salary!

Major expenses *only* can be made with your *explicit* consent.

You *must* receive a yearly statement from your agent detailing *all* services and *all* charges.

Any questions?

**Always feel free to call the NFLPA Salary Cap & Agent Administration Department at
800-372-2000 or through email to**

Salary Cap & Agent Administration Department

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Past, Present & Future