

To share: <https://bit.ly/2Qo13Oa>
[Full Zoom Replay](#) (Passcode: \$E4T7^#2)

April 15, 2021

TRANSCRIPT: ESPN Analyst Kirk Herbstreit Discusses the 2021 NFL Draft Quarterback Class and Previews His New *QB21 with Kirk Herbstreit* Series

ESPN college football analyst **Kirk Herbstreit** – who will be a leading voice during the [presentation of the 2021 NFL Draft](#) (April 29 – May 1) – headlines the new ESPN series [QB21 with Kirk Herbstreit](#), premiering Saturday, April 17. The seven-episode *QB21* series will feature Herbstreit's conversations with six of the highest-rated quarterbacks in this year's draft class – Justin Fields (Ohio State), Trey Lance (North Dakota State), Trevor Lawrence (Clemson), Mac Jones (Alabama), Kyle Trask (Florida) and Zach Wilson (BYU).

A five-time Emmy Award-winning analyst, Herbstreit participated in a Zoom call with media this week. He discussed the *QB21* series, this year's quarterback prospects and the upcoming NFL Draft. Below is a transcript of Herbstreit's comments. (**Note:** Key topics by question are highlighted; a full Zoom replay is available at the link above.)

Kirk Herbstreit (opening remarks): I'm looking forward to the draft finally getting here, it seems like it's been months and months of build-up and analysis and I think all of us are ready, like every year you get to about early April and it's time to for these guys to move on I've had a lot of fun I've known almost all these guys. I've had a chance to get to know, over the last few years and production meetings and just covering their careers, except for Trey Lance from North Dakota State. This is the first time I really had a chance to spend time with him.

I know Jon Gruden's had some of these camps in the past, and in this case, we obviously did not want to mimic that or even attempt to mimic it. We just wanted to put me in a comfort zone with them, and my kind of relationship that I have with them, and it was really more just kind of walking down the path of their journey not just as athletes, but where they grew up, about their family and try to let fans know a little bit more about these guys - as opposed to just breaking down cover 2 and talking just X's and O's, which I know we get a lot of this time of year, so I'm hoping people enjoy it and tune into it and happy to answer any questions you might have.

I want to ask you about the 2020 college football season – in general, a very strange season. Shrunk schedules, a lot of guys didn't play – did you find the film just as useful this year as it was in years past? Watching these guys, what was the football like last year?

Herbstreit: Great question. I don't think it was apples to apples. I think there were some moments. I don't think you could just throw a blanket statement over everybody. I think a great example of that would be Zach Wilson at BYU. If you looked at Zach Wilson pre COVID and looked at the BYU schedule, you would have been like rolling up your sleeves and saying: "Man, we're going to get a really good look at BYU and, in fact, Wilson, and of course they didn't really have that opportunity with the schedule they played. And yet there were some teams that, and I think Justin Fields kind of falls into that, I mean he got some big games late, but he didn't get the same amount of games with some of the others. But you could also look at it, maybe Alabama plays 11 SEC games and what they had to go through to get to a National Championship, so I think it varied.

But I think your point is very astute I think it's it's dead-on because I think that with COVID, just like in the NFL, every week everybody's holding their breath. You know who's contact tracing, who's going to be out, who's going to play. It was just a strange year, obviously on so many fronts. So, I think the NFL is doing the best they can, to manage the film work and not having the opportunity to sit down with a lot of these guys and go over things in person as often as they would like because of COVID restrictions. So I think that's another obstacle and hurdle that these NFL GMs and head coaches and owners are going to have to try to get a handle on. That's a good point.

A question about Justin Fields. How much do you think the reputation of Ohio State quarterbacks in the NFL may or may not play into kind of the perceived or real slide that Fields has taken over the last month?

Herbstreit: Well, I know what you're saying obviously. It seems like every time they put his name up there's a panel that comes up and it shows the Ohio State quarterbacks that have played recently, and it shows their records. I talked with a lot of people myself. I don't think Justin Fields, his experience, has anything to do with what Dwayne Haskins is experiencing. Or what Terrelle Pryor or Troy Smith or really anybody has experienced as a quarterback at the next level. Same can be said for Alabama and their quarterbacks what Mac Jones is trying to attempt. To me, these guys that have played at Alabama going on to the NFL have not had a ton of success. It doesn't have anything to do with Mac Jones.

I don't know what's real, to be honest – that this time of year, there's so much out there you're saying that Justin Fields is quote unquote, how he slid in the last month and yet everybody that's picking up near the top, I don't think they're divulging a lot of information to a lot of people about what they intend to do. I think it's the media that's speculating. I think it's the media that claims they're in the know and what I want to know is, how are you in the know when people that are making these decisions aren't talking to anybody. It happens every year. It's not surprising. It just happens where it's a big class for quarterbacks and this position creates a lot of drama, a lot of hysteria. Most people I've talked to with Justin Fields, they look at the film. You could pull a play out and find a play that things didn't go well, or you can pull a Northwestern game out and say, 'wow, he wasn't what he normally would be'. But you can pull out another 18 or 20 games and say, 'wow, 6-3, 224 runs a 4.4 coming out of Ryan Day's offense – made a lot of big decisions in a lot of big games. Played through a lot of pain. A competitor. Could have opted out when the Big 10 shut it down. Decided to kind of stick with it when the Big 10 decides to play. He led a 'we want to play' petition that got over 300,000 people to sign up.

You can spin this however you want, and unfortunately that's why I said I'm ready for the draft. I'm ready for all the nonsense and the noise to go away and I'm ready for reality to set in and to me reality is April 29 when we're all in Cleveland and Roger Goodell walks out, makes the announcement, and the draft starts with the Jags on the clock and then all the BS goes out the window. Then, if whatever quarterback goes down, then we can talk about, hey wonder what happened to that quarterback and wonder why he slid down a little bit – wonder what the concerns were. Then we can talk about it, but right now it's just all BS.

I want to ask about Zach Wilson. On the field, you referenced the schedule before – about who BYU played. How do you factor that in when you evaluate these quarterbacks on and off the field? Also, about someone who grew up in Utah, went to school in Utah, now coming to New York City as the quarterback of the Jets and everything that comes with that. From seeing his personality and spending a little time with him, how do you feel that will go for him?

Herbstreit: You know how that is, trying to predict how a player, whether it's baseball or football or basketball, how they're going to project from a personality standpoint into that market. I was impressed. When I had a chance to sit down with all these guys and what I liked about Zach Wilson is this guy has a chip on his shoulder. He wears a wristband that says 'prove them wrong', and I was like who are you trying to prove wrong my man, like everyone loves you. But he wasn't recruited heavily. He grew up in Salt Lake. His dad played at Utah. Utah didn't recruit him. And I think, from that point on, he had a chip on his shoulder and he has not let it go. How about during COVID, the guy lives in southern Provo and we're in a global pandemic. He wants to get his work in. The quarterback coach that he works with is former BYU quarterback John Beck. He drives 10 hours one way on a Friday to go to Los Angeles Orange County to work with John back for Saturday and Sunday workout and then drives 10 hours back. And he did that numerous times throughout the pandemic, so I think the mental toughness, which is what you need to be able to go into that situation. I don't think I personally would question it. I'd be careful of looking at him with his baby face and growing up in Utah and judging the cover of book on what you see. This kid's got some good wiring. I love guys that are out to prove everybody wrong, and I think he's not emotional about it, or he's not like, yeah, you know and social media you'll see it's nothing like that. It's like an internal fire that's burning that I think is real.

As far as the concern about who they played, you know the guy started for three years. He played in some big games. He took a step at a whole different level this year, obviously some of that mayby had to do with their competition, I think some of it had to do with just, they were better. They're better around him, they were better on the offensive line they were deeper. They're better in the backfield. They were good at receiver. They lost an All American tight end, who would have taken them to another level before they played their first game. I would have loved to have seen them play against some of those Pac 12 teams and some of the Big 10 teams that were scheduled, but we didn't get a chance to see it. But I don't think it takes away from the player that he is based on the way I saw him grow from year one to year two, and then having an entire offseason to get stronger and get physically better and the commitment to work on his game is there and I don't think it'll change. I don't know if he's going to end up being the guy we all seem to be assuming. That that he's the guy that New York's going to take, but if you end up getting him, I think he can handle the market. We'll see, and I think you're going to fall in love with the kid as far as his attitude and determination.

The Jaguars taking Trevor Lawrence – obviously, they need him to be a franchise quarterback, but they need him to be essentially a franchise savior as well. Is he ready for that?

Herbstreit: Well, I think he's going into a unique situation with Urban Meyer coming in there in year one. And Urban went out and hired Brian Schottenheimer and Darrell Bevell, a couple guys that obviously have a ton of NFL experience. I think that helps him. Urban Meyer is going to create an energy – I think it's your question to me. I think that falls more on Urban Meyer shoulders than just the quarterback, and I think Trevor comes in, and he ends up ultimately going there. Obviously anytime you're the first pick overall you're going to feel some of that weight too. But as far as that franchise needing to go in a different direction, I think the timing for him is good because you've got a high profile first year head coach that has many people every week dissecting his every move as much as the quarterback. Like if that were a Doug Marrone, everything's going to be on Trevor Lawrence because he's been there for a number of years. How's Trevor? Maybe he's going to save the day, and I think right now it's a combination of Urban Meyer trying to save the day and then of course Trevor Lawrence as well.

One thing I'll say about Trevor that you should really appreciate. This kid, of all the guys I talked to, these quarterbacks, this is the one guy maybe Justin falls in this category a little bit too, this is the one guy since middle school the way colleges are looking at players. He was already about 6-4 in eighth grade he was already 'Oh my God, have you seen this kid out of Georgia. Holy cow, this kid can make every throw. He's an eighth grader, I'm telling you.' I mean, he's been in the spotlight in this quarterback world that now is going down in some cases to middle school. That's all he's known since he's been about been about 14. The guy started as a freshman in high school. And in a football rich state, he went 52-2 as a high school quarterback. I'm as impressed with playing as a freshman in high school with 18 year olds as anything he's accomplished in his career at Clemson and so, then he goes to Clemson and he's the savior at Clemson. Deshaun Watson had already been gone. They had a one year with Kelly Bryant. And the very next year, all the media, all the fans were like we've got a player, like Deshaun Watson if not better and so that bar was so high and that pressure was so intense. And he just never really showed like it was too much for him or he was uncomfortable with it, so I don't think there's anything that he's going to see in Jacksonville that's going to make him feel weight that he has not already felt and – to be honest with you – is what he knows. He's known that weight to a varying degree since he's been in middle school and to me, I know that that's probably his greatest strength – how he'll handle the pressure of trying to turn a franchise around.

Kirk, for the third year in a row you and the College GameDay crew will have your own distinct draft telecast on ABC. How it's going to be different from the more traditional ESPN coverage and why do you think it's been hit with viewers?

Herbstreit: It's been a little bit of a moving target the first couple years. The first year that we tried this, it was in Nashville. We had unbelievable setting in Nashville. Every day that the draft was here and in town. Great weather. Great setup there on lower Broadway. And we were told, listen, ESPN is got a history of decades of doing the draft a certain way. ABC is network television we're going to be more about storytelling and we're going to be more about you guys know these guys better than anybody, and we want you to share some of your stories that you learned in production meetings and various conversations, and have fun with who these players are and let's celebrate them. It wasn't the Lions, for

example, need to do this or what's Philly going to do with this pick – obviously had nothing to do with that. You can turn ESPN if you wanted that. It was more of a college football feel and more of a celebration of careers that were culminating and being celebrated that night, and I think it went off really well last year. And our second year everybody was, you know, on location, because Rece (Davis) was on site, I believe, Maria (Taylor) and Tom Rinaldi might have been on site for some of their stories, but the rest of us, we were at home because of COVID. NFL Network canceled their show. We didn't know if we would have a show. It was a real challenge on our production team back in Bristol. And somehow we were able to pull it off, but I would say that this show is going to go back to being more – now that we're out on the road and things aren't quite normal but they're closer to being normal than they were last year. I think you'll see us go back to how things were in Nashville.

But I think if there's one area that we've really grown and learned over the last couple years is try to stay mindful of the NFL teams. What those needs are. How this player might fit in. That was kind of a blind spot for us in our first year because we were trying so hard not to be like what you would see on ESPN. And I think this year you're still going to get storytelling. You're still going to get that celebration, oh man, I remember this one time, I was in a meeting with Mac Jones and this happened – just allow the viewer to get to know the player a little bit better. But I think we're going to be dialed in. We're going to have Todd McShay – it's another big bonus, I feel like this year on ABC. Todd lives it like Mel (Kiper). And Todd is going to be our Mel and I think, in order for us to really hit a home run we've got to put the ball on the tee for Todd, and let him hit a home run and I think when the draft is over, on Monday I'm going to predict that a lot of the media, when they break down how the NFL or ABC or ESPN did – a lot of the media is going to be celebrating the job that Todd McShay did. Todd does a great job leading up to the draft. Todd's never really had as big of a role as I think he deserves, until this year. So I think Todd's going to be the MVP and I think it's very well deserved. I'm happy for him and I can't wait to work with he and Rece, Maria, Jesse, David, our whole team. I think we're going to have a lot of fun. Like I said, I think the biggest difference is having Todd keeping us plugged in to not just the players, but the needs of some of these teams and how they might fit in to what these teams need so I'm very excited about this year and I think, as I say, the addition of Todd.

Are you buying the possibility that Mac Jones could go No. 3 for the 49ers ahead of Justin Fields or Zach Wilson, and is there a concern at all that his supporting cast was so good – that it's harder to judge, like maybe Matt Leinart on the USC teams, that were just incredible, and he was a first round pick and it didn't quite work out the way everybody thought it would.

Herbstreit: I'm fascinated by this position because every year we look at these quarterbacks that are potentially going to go in the first round, and the guys that end up going – like you're bringing up Matt Leinart. If you would have told me the Matt Leinart wouldn't have had a better NFL career coming out of USC, are you crazy? This guy's played in the NFL style of offense. He's going to be just fine and it obviously didn't work out to the level which he had hoped. I went back, and I looked since 2009 – this doesn't include last year's crop of (Joe) Burrow in that group, but if you go back since '09, there have been 33 quarterbacks selected in the first round, and I would say about 10 of those 33 would be considered not to be average to below average or busts, so you're talking about two out of three don't make it, don't live up to it, and yet as we sit here right now in April, we've got an ESPN show that I'm a part of and we're excited about Mac Jones and even called (Kyle) Trask and you know, obviously, the big names that everybody's talking about with Trevor Lawrence and Zach Wilson, all these guys, Justin Fields. And, if you go by '09 to this year to up the last year, two thirds of these guys aren't going to make it and so it makes you think No. one, why is it so hard to evaluate this position? Why do so many guys not make it when you look at them on paper and you break their film down and you think, oh man, this guy's definitely going to make it. We're only analysts – people on the outside. I mean these NFL scouts these NFL GMs, head coaches, they lose their jobs because they miss on quarterbacks, and yet they continually miss, so I don't know why it is. I am fascinated that guys have found ways to instead of taking Pat Mahomes from Texas Tech and making him learn Andy Reid's West Coast offense that he's been running forever, Andy Reid said, you know what I'm tired of trying to figure out these college quarterbacks that are all in a shotgun running some kind of Air Raid offense. I'm going to adjust my offense to Pat Mahomes or Texas Tech coach's Kliff Kingsbury gets hired by Arizona. He's going to run his offense that fits Kyler Murray. Or what Cleveland's doing with Baker Mayfield – like these guys had

figured instead of saying you're going to learn how we do it in the National Football League, they're adjusting things to these college quarterbacks.

So I can't sit here and predict. I think Mac Jones would be on paper, a great fit in that system. I think the one thing that blew me away about Mac Jones and that's looking at him and all the quarterbacks this year, is how his ability coming out of Steve Sarkisian's offense and Sark was in Atlanta with Matt Ryan running it, you know as a coordinator. But to watch Mac Jones process information and how quickly he thinks and how quickly the ball gets out, man, there's a lot to like about that part of his game. But then you could sit there, just again, we're trying to get into the brain of Kyle Shanahan. You know he's had guys like Mac Jones in the past, but then you could look at Justin Fields and say oh my gosh, how do you pass on 6-3? 224 runs a 4.4. Really accurate passer. Really consistent with his decisions throughout most of his career. How do you pass up on what he could potentially do in the NFL so again it's a guessing game. But at the end of the day, the guys that make it, they go to the right fit, the right system, and they're lucky enough to play for a Sean Payton. They're lucky enough to play for an Andy Reid. We would never know who Joe Montana was if he didn't play for Bill Walsh and playing a West Coast offense for the 49ers, and I don't think having talented players around you should be a knock on you at all. He ran an offense that Tua ran the year before, but they ran a very different offense if you compare Tua and Mac Jones and had a lot to do with Mac Jones's ability to think quickly and get the ball out fast and that to me should be celebrated not questioned because of what he did.

When you're looking at a guy like Trey Lance, everyone likes to bring up his limited starts and age – only 20 years old. You also hear how smart he is, maybe one of the smarter quarterbacks in this class. Do you think he might get a chance to play earlier than people think?

Herbstreit: Well, in a perfect situation if he were to go – and I'm not saying he's going here, I'm just thinking about where he might go – if he could go to a quarterback who's a seasoned veteran who's almost like a coach at this point in his career like a Matt Ryan type of guy he would benefit so much from having a chance to come in for a year, kind of like Patrick Mahomes did with Alex Smith, and just have a chance to just kind of – it's not that he's only had 17 starts, it's that he didn't even play at this position, didn't even play all but one game in 2020 with COVID. That to me is more concerning than he only had 17 starts. You know what he did in '19 stands for itself – 16-0, you know throws for over 2700 yards, 28 touchdowns, doesn't throw an interception, over 1100 yards rushing. That's absurd in high school, let alone in college, and so what he can do as a player, his physical traits and abilities, speak for themselves.

But I just think because he wasn't able to play a year ago, I think it would be ideal for him to go somewhere where he just gets a chance to kind of learn how to be a pro. Learn under a guy that's not intimidated or afraid of him. Learn from an offensive coordinator, head coach and quarterback that are helping him kind of move throughout the year and grow and then handing the reins and let him go. But this guy is one of the most gracious people that I spoke to this entire year in college football. Just a wonderful humble and engaging guy. And just like I said, I hope he goes somewhere it's all about fit at this position. I can only hope for him that he goes somewhere where like I said he's got either a quarterback or OC or head coach that isn't impatient, feeling the pressure to get him out there and just let him get his feet under him a little bit, learn the system, learn the NFL defenses and then turning loose a year later and watch what he can do.

Deshaun Watson 6-4, 225 pretty solid, and yet, people were questioning whether he was solid enough to play, yet Zach Wilson is 6-2, 210, but no one questions that. How do we handle the hypocrisy when it comes to analyzing these college quarterbacks?

Herbstreit: Well, to me, I don't know how you filter the noise that's out there. I try to filter it the best I can. I don't speak to a ton of NFL folks leading up to the draft. I don't know if all this noise that you're referring to is coming directly from the NFL or if it's coming from media, the media, you know it seems like often it comes from anonymous sources when it comes to evaluating these guys are questioning. These players, I think they all know going in they've watched it since they've been in high school. You know that once they get ready for the draft, if they're lucky enough to be in that position, especially as a first rounder that they're all going to be scrutinized to a certain degree, I know what you're referring to. I know I personally don't really get caught up in it, I evaluate the film. I don't listen to things when it

comes to what you're referring to. I break down quarterbacks. I don't break down white quarterbacks. I don't break down black quarterbacks. I break down quarterbacks and because to me that's what all these guys are. If you want to talk about the system that they come out of. If you want to talk about the consistency they have played with or maybe have not played with, I'll talk about that all day, but when I hear – like I called it earlier, BS or nonsense about any of these players that I'm not familiar with any of that information on my own, it's like a lot of stuff that you hear on social media or a lot of stuff that we consume whether it's sports or politics, it's up to you to on how you want to filter out what makes sense and what's real and what isn't. And, to me, I haven't heard an NFL GM or an NFL head coach in the last four, five, six weeks come out and say anything in a derogatory way about Justin Fields. Is it happening? I have no idea are people saying quote unquote sources are saying things? That's happening, but I haven't spoken anybody, and whenever I do talk about quarterbacks I've never spoken to anybody in my life that's it college or in the pros that breaks down a quarterback and has certain concerns because a quarterback is black or because the quarterback is white. The people that I speak with they break down quarterbacks and they're more concerned about how he's playing and how he's leading, what kind of intangibles does he bring to the table, what kind of decision maker is he? I've just never met anybody that really gets caught up in that. I don't want to say naïve. I've just never experienced it and so, when I hear people talking about that I just kind of tune out. I just don't participate. I don't really hear much about that on a personal level.

If you are Justin Fields' NFL offensive coordinator, what would be your go-to concepts to take advantage of what he does best?

Herbstreit: Well, I mean you probably want to look at a lot of what Ryan Day did because it worked pretty well. I think the good thing about him is he can work out of the gun. He can work under center. I think there's some versatility there, you know, if you're a team that really has an ability to control the line of scrimmage and run the football and want to work off play-action like a Baker Mayfield is doing a lot in Cleveland. Justin Fields can do that. If you want to work out of a gun and you want to be able to use an inside zone running game with him and a gun and occasionally he can pull it because that backside end is crashing down, he can pull that and he can get those big yards for you. The guy is much more physical than I think people realize when it comes to him running the football, you know, he was often injured in Ohio State, especially in '19 when he had his big year that second half of the season, he really played on one leg. So I don't really know, not to say he's going to go to the NFL and run all over the place, but you know as much as I know. The game in the NFL is changing. The days of Tom Brady and Peyton Manning seven-step drops, sitting back there and making full-field reads and making great reads and being consistent, that's a tough guy to find in 2021. Justin Fields to me is exactly where the NFL is trending as far as his physical skill set, and there's a lot of evidence and proof and a lot of big games that he played in his career, so I guess my answer to that would be I love his versatility. He can throw the ball downfield. He can throw the ball intermediately. He's got the levels concepts and he can create off platform very comfortably so I don't think you're pigeon-holed if you take him. I think what I just described covers a lot of offenses and I think any notion that he's not committed to the cause or doesn't work at it, according to my conversations over the last couple years with Ryan Day, it's been actually the exact opposite. His teammates have been blown away by his commitment. His coaches have been blown away and appreciative of his commitment, so you know it'd be hard for me, and I didn't really say this, three years ago when Dwayne Haskins was coming out, this is not an Ohio State thing, this is just watching the NFL, watching how the game is changing, as I keep saying the way guys like Patrick Mahomes and Baker Mayfield and Kyler Murray, and many others, the way the game is evolving and changing and you got a guy that is physically as gifted as he is and has played as many big games and is performed incredibly well and his teammates want to play for him, I don't know. That's a hard one to pass on for me personally.

What did you learn from talking to Justin Fields and Trey Lance? What might help them in their transition to the NFL and off the field? Also, the Lions at No. 7 are determined to take a QB. If Lance and Fields are there, who's the best fit?

Herbstreit: Well, first of all with Trey Lance, without talking to him on a consistent basis or weekly basis with him in North Dakota State, I really enjoyed talking to him because I hadn't spent a lot of time with him, so I wondered how he ended up in North Dakota State. I'd read it, but to hear from him, he's

another guy that kind of has that chip. He wanted to play big time college football, wanted to play quarterback, and his dream school was the Minnesota Golden Gophers and they just didn't have room to offer him as a quarterback, and none of the FBS programs had an offer for him at quarterback, and so they offered him as a safety, but not as a quarterback. And so, instead of just saying, well, I want to play big time football and I want to go to the Big 10, I'm going to go to Minnesota and be a safety. He said now I can't let go with this dream that I think I can play quarterback and he decided to go to North Dakota State because they were the only school to offer him a chance to play quarterback and you know he sits for that first year. And, and then he gets a chance to play in that second year, and he wins a national championship and, I don't know, I think that that stood out to me. And then the other thing is the humility, he talked about Easton Stick, who was a quarterback before him. And he just talked about him as a just a guy that he idolized sitting behind as a freshman. And I just love to hear as much as he's accomplished, as he's about to be a first round pick, he's going back still to his guy who ended up winning a couple national championships himself as a quarterback and just paying homage and how much to this day that's his guy and that's the guy that he really admires. I cannot say enough good things about Trey Lance as a person, and how impressed I was with his humility and just how engaging he was. So I'm excited to see him get his chance.

Justin I've just known for so long, it was really hard to uncover something that was that new. The timing of my interview with him was very interesting because the night before I was scheduled to sit down with him, a story broke on social media questioning his ability. To be committed, and you know, last one in first to leave, and I really question, do I bring that up here, that was the night before 10 o'clock at night and then my interview with him is the next morning and I thought, do I bring this up or do I? I don't want to bring this up. I think I'll just kind of let that go. That's not what I want to really get into with him. Well, as I start to ask him a couple questions, I can just see his face, because I know him pretty well and I could just tell he's bothered. And somehow he brought up on his own, he answered a question I asked him and he brought up how social media how damaging, it can be. When you're in that position he's in and how hurtful things can be, and I just said I knew what he meant, but I said, what do you mean what's going on he's like well people questioning my commitment as a quarterback to my team, that's hurtful. If you want to question other areas, then that's fine, but don't question what kind of worker I am and how committed I am, and so I just thought the timing of the interview and to see how somber he was, was very telling to me about what these guys go through, and especially when you're going to attack that aspect of their game – not he doesn't have the arm, he can't read coverage or whatever it might be. This is questioning his commitment to be a franchise quarterback which is like taking him out at the knees, and so I think what stands out to me, is, I already knew him really well but just the intensity that he had and the pain that he was kind of enduring and you can tell the process has taken a toll by the time we did this interview. Whatever it was like a week or a week and a half ago, so sorry about a long winded answer there. As far as who the Lions should take, I wish Todd were here to kind of help me. You know, if they're sitting there in a position to be able to get a quarterback, I don't think they can go wrong with any of these guys. I mean, Trey Lance like I talked about having a (Jared) Goff there to help him learn under a guy that's a veteran would be very beneficial, and I think Trey has a tremendous upside. Justin Fields I talked about a lot on this call about what I think he can be. It'd be hard for me to pass on him at two personally because of what he provides as a player. And then, if Mac Jones is sitting there, Mac Jones – he's a surgeon, and he's probably of all these guys, as we sit here right now, probably because of the offense he's coming out of – he probably processes as quickly as anybody that's coming out in this draft. I mean by processing recognizing pre-snap coverage if they change coverage at the snap of the ball, being able to instantly know where to go with the ball without any hesitation. That to me is the secret sauce to me of these guys that really go to another level, is how quickly they can read such complexity on the run and I think he may have a chance to be in a pretty good spot, to be able to handle that.

In terms of your assessment of Mac Jones, what specifically strikes you about the football acumen and then also the football acumen during a play that gives them a chance to the next level?

Herbstreit: I was just kind of touching on it there, I spent a lot of time with Sark this past year, talking about Mac and the offense and how different it was you know when they had Tua. Tua had ridiculous numbers and, obviously, was one of the greatest quarterbacks that Alabama has ever had and they ran

a lot of RPO – they had talented receivers, they had great backs and Tua is really comfortable being able to get his eyes on that second level defender, and it was just a rhythm that they went to a lot. And they went into 2020 thinking that they would be similar to that and then, as time went on in practice, you know being short-handed because of timing standpoint, they were learning as the season was going where Mac Jones really had a chance to take off. And as the season went on, Sark was like, man this offense could not be any more different. We still mix in RPO, but we're pounding the ball with Najee (Harris) and we're play-action right now. We're moving Smitty around, Devonta Smith, and Jalen Waddle, the other first-rounder, was out most of the year, so they had to come up with some creativity and Mac Jones all through that never wavered. They adjusted things every week, they change things around and they were allowed to do that because his ability to understand the offense, and it was like Sark was the guy and Mac Jones was brilliant. If you look at since he's been in high school, it's just the way he takes his academics seriously. He's just gifted in that way, but he really takes the time to study the football playbook and understanding film and how things work. So he was right there in alignment with Sark on every adjustment and everything that they did. And his accuracy, on top of that, with the ability to make quick decisions, it's just special. It's the best way to describe it and I don't care that he had a lot of talent around him or the guys were wide open. The kid distributed the ball to people who are open, made good decisions and consistently was accurate. And he's got an assassin's mindset on the field. I mean he wants to eliminate you much like Joe Burrow the year before. So, there's again a lot there to fall in love with and look at the potential of what he can be.

-30-

Contact:

Bill Hofheimer, ESPN Communications – bill.hofheimer@espn.com