

THE TALON



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Under New Management Introducing the ‘Hawks new GM

The Seattle Seahawks immediately had an interesting offseason without one contract issue or player move happening. A sudden change at the top of the organization came unexpectedly, and the WDFL was soon looking for a new ownership group and management for the ‘Hawks.

Enter William Blandford, endorsed by the WDFL and took over Seattle with just weeks to prepare for free agency and the rookie draft.

“Talk about hitting the ground running,” Blandford quipped to reporters. “Getting to know my scouts and coaches in the rush-hour of the offseason is a tough. Great group of folks know who seem to know what they’re doing,” he continued.

Offseason in Full Swing

When management changes, one may expect a little lag in offseason activity. That has clearly not been the case with the Seahawks. GM William Blandford has already made one intriguing trade (see page 2) and was among the first to submit

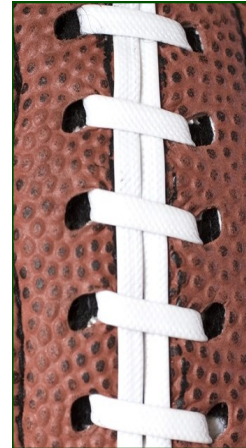
William Blandford is a native of Virginia and has been a football fan all his life. And while he enjoys the Xs and Os of the game, building a team and finding the right mix of players is truly his passion and his (due to that) expertise

“What I’ve learned is you learn what kind of scheme you can run given the players you have. In a perfect world you get to build a team from player 1 all the way up to 53 and you tailor your players to what you want to do. That’s the fun in having an expansion team but Seattle is an established team albeit in a young league. You shouldn’t force round pegs into square or triangular holes. You build your system around who you have at first. In time you can im-

plement change, such as switching to a 3-4 D. But in the beginning you almost have to build your system around your players not the other way around.”

Blandford shortly after his initial interview shared with reporters he’d be having a press conference in a week to lay out his assessment of the Seahawks and his plans. Look to page 3 of *The Talon* to get the transcript from that conference.

Blandford during his inaugural press conference. He later shared how his role is to improve the team as best he can. He was very complimentary of the previous GM and how well they did. “Great nucleus”, were his exact words.



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DID YOU KNOW ABOUT YOUR GM

- William Blandford is a life-long Seahawks’ fan, a fellow 12
- Originally from Norfolk, VA
- Is a foster parent
- Has coached youth flag football
- Has volunteered as the mascot (Bulldog) for his children’s rec league

How We Stack Up: Offense

Management has gone through the roster and is finalizing their plans of action. GM William Blandford took a few moments to share what he thought of the three phases of the Hawks. First, offense:

“Overall, this part of the team is in fine shape. The one missing cog I saw right away is a workhorse back. We have candidates though in Henry, Langford and Yeldon; one just has to step up. I’m very happy with our O-line. Having Villanueva and Gilbert at the tackle spots with Cordy Glenn rotating in., excellent. Max Unger is a stud at center and if Pouncey can stay healthy, holy

cow. Guard was a little weak but by adding Greco and Taylor to go with Trai Turner, we’re looking pretty solid in the middle. That’ll help our whole offense.

Currently we have Gronk and Walford at tight end, and I’m pretty pleased with them. Gronk has been a little tougher to get a read on but if I go to war with these two, I’m good. I’ve mentioned the backs and I like them all. (Derrick) Henry is the one I see the most potential with but time will tell. One to not forget is Chris Thompson, who’s a solid receiver out of the backfield.

Our wideouts are potent when

they’re healthy. Quite a luxury to have a quartet like (Marquise) Lee, Diggs, Moncrief and Lockett. Plus we just added Keenan Allen., talk about quality targets for our QBs.

Last but certainly not least, we have a nice group of quarterbacks. Bortles has promise but has to ramp up his efforts. Foles is good and a QB I’m familiar with. Dak Prescott is the wildcard. Great kid and one I followed during his time at Mississippi State. Reminds me of a bigger Russell Wilson; just needs to put more film study in. If he gets that on par with his physical talents, look out!”

How We Stack Up: Defense

We asked our new GM what he thought of the defense so far. Here’s what he had to say:

“Defense wins championships is the old saying ; it’s one I feel rings true to this day. When I look at our defense I see a mixed bag but this group has a chance at greatness. Our line is huge and potent. Aaron Donald, Linval Joseph, Cameron Heyward and Jordan Cameron are about as intimidating a line as you’ll find in our league. And

if you move Clowney to end, whoa! Our linebacking corps needs a cog in the middle but with Jadaveon, Jarvis Jones and Craig Robertson ... it’s solid. Robertson may man the middle for us. We will likely target some ‘backers in the draft; we’ll have to see how that plays out.

Our secondary is good but a bit light at safety. I’ve got my eye on a few free agents and hope to land one or

two. I like Duron Harmon’s upside; he has some potential. Jimmie Ward does too but he needs to stay healthy. At corner, we’re set. So set I may move one to help bolster our team in other ways. Darius Slay, Trumaine Johnson and Logan Ryan make an awesome trio of corners. As I shared, I may deal one as I’ve heard some back-n-forth between them as to who is starting. Very good blend of talent, just a matter of meshing the personalities.”

Our Special Teams: They Will Be Special

When asked about special teams, Mr. Blandford has the following to say before expounding on the Seahawks special teams unit.

“Special teams are called ‘special’ for a reason. How important are special teams? Winning the battle of field position is essential to winning. Having a guy who can pin the enemy deep in their territory, forcing them to drive a long way to score ... cannot be stressed enough. What I can tell you is our special

teams unit will be elite. I want to ensure our ‘Hawks have a kicker who can nail a clutch field goal but also hit a long-distance one when needed. I want returners who can excite the fans, gaining the most from each return opportunity and we need a punter who can keep the other team’s returners at bay while also pinning them as far back as possible. Those are goals we will meet this offseason, one way or another.

“How important are special teams? Controlling the battle of field position is essential to winning.”

Interior Line Bolstered: Welcome Greco & Taylor

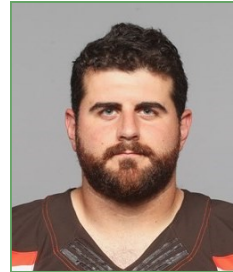
Within a few days of settling in the, Seattle's new GM pulled off his first deal. This was not a deal without The 'Hawks sent rookie DE Noah Spence to the Carolina Panthers for a couple of guards: John Greco and Lane Taylor.

"The interior of our line was a bit suspect outside of Trai, so I began to wonder if I should make a deal. A day later both John Urschel and Joe Reitz came to me and shared they were retiring. They shared it had nothing to do with me coming in. In fact, in Urschel's case his heart was telling him to pursue his education goals, returning to M.I.T (yes, the M.I.T.) to pursue his doctorate."

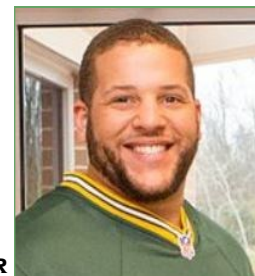
Blandford supported their decisions and knew right away his O line needed help and fast. "I could have gone FA, but you never know what can happen so I

Greco is a stout, savvy veteran who immediately upgrades the O line and provides mentorship for the younger players such as Lane Taylor. Taylor, who played at Oklahoma State, has good size and can develop into a good player.

"Parting with Spence was not easy. In fact had I drafted him I likely wouldn't have pulled the trigger. But I was able to look at the big picture and felt this would improve our team especially offensively. Spence will do well and the Panther fans will love him."



JOHN GRECO



LANE TAYLOR
LANE TAYLOR

Seahawks take a chance on Keenan Allen

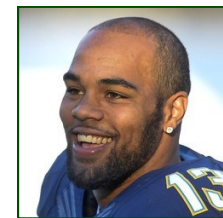
WR Keenan Allen, when healthy, is one of the more productive pass catchers in the game. Last year he suffered a terrible injury. Still, that didn't stop the Seahawks from trading for him, as they sent CB Trumaine Johnson to the L.A. Chargers.

"Johnson wanted a

better chance to start and he wasn't going to get that here, to him," William Blandford shared. "So I honored his request and found him a good team with a good chance to start. I'm taking a chance here but if Allen comes back 90% of who he was he's a great

addition. When told of the trade, Keenan was a man of few words.

"Man. The Seahawks. Great group of receivers there; I've got to get healthy and fast."



*"Great group of receivers there; I have got to get healthy and fast."
- Keenan Allen*

Free Agency Around The Corner

Management is burning the proverbial midnight oil scouring the free agent market. Their mission: to add the best mix of players that will help not only fill gaps in the team but players who can contribute and help this team win.

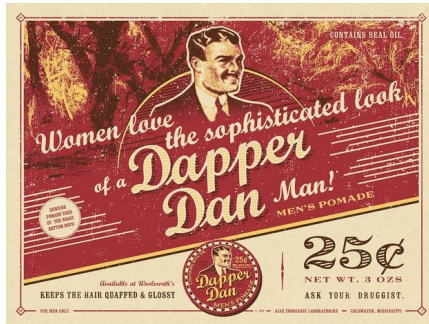
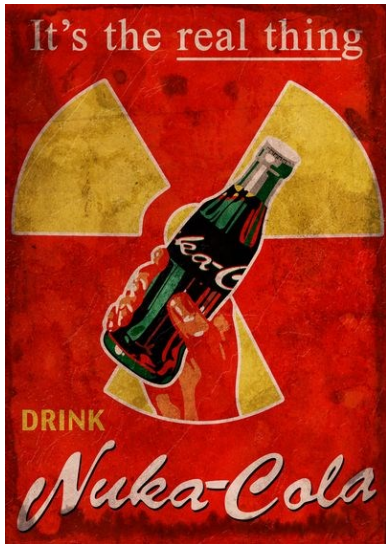
"Free agency is not a means to an end, it's a means to help us win," shared William Blandford. "We need to build not only via the draft, which is crucial, but also through free agency. You can't expect every

draft pick to pan out and develop into a starter ... though it'd be great. Our free agents are men who should be able to step in. If they can't help us, then why would we add them?

Who will the Seahawks bring in via the free agent waters? Stay tuned and see for yourselves.



QWEST FIELD



2017 WDFL ROOKIE DRAFT: Who might the Seahawks Target?

The offseason is definitely not just a race, it is truly a sprint. Free agency is about to begin and, likely before this hits the newsstands, free agency will be over and the rookie draft will be kicking off.

Seahawks management has shared time and again that while filling needs is always paramount, they reiterate that adding the best players or athletes available is the ultimate goal.

“In an ideal, the best player you can get will also fill a need and fill it more than capably,” Head Coach Pete Carroll shared with the media. “We want to bring the best players here that will also make this team stronger ... better. That’s the perfect storm. Doesn’t always happen that way but I have a feeling the new management will embody that, at least for this year. We have a solid team all in all. Sure we have a couple of holes but Blandford and his guys have a plan and it’ll hopefully work out.”

So, what positions will the Seahawks target via the rookie draft?

Based on limited intel from league sources, Mr. Blandford and the ‘Hawks brain -rust are eyeing: RB, TE, C, LB and DB.

William Blandford shared during an interview that, “the key to building a quality team is anticipating your future depth and addressing it before it becomes a need. When I took over the franchise, inside linebacker was a hole and one that must be plugged in timely order. We will look hard to address it in free agency but those are the type of situations I plan to avoid. We have a great group of scouts

and coaches here. We’re constantly talking and becoming more in-sync on what our team needs to be competitive and a winner.

The draft class this year is a solid one with some intriguing prospects, some of which we see as a great fit for our offensive or defensive scheme. And while we will do our best to not fill needs, we do see some great athletes who both fill a need and bring, with them, a great player.”

The Seahawks free agency spending has been semi-successful we’ve heard ... details to follow in the future. If it has been as successful as hoped, it will make their draft a little more fun (for the Seahawks) and a bit more perplexing for Seattle’s rivals.

With players like (Myles) Garrett, (Marcus) Lattimore, (Jabril) Peppers, (Evan) Engra, (Jamal) Adams, (Forrest) Lamp and (T.J.) Watt, there will likely be moving and shaking during the draft as well as what should be a fascinating conclusion full of both as-expected along with some unexpected twists and turns.

Personally I see the Seahawks trying for a guy like Corey Davis, Christian McCaffrey, Deshaun Watson or O.J. Howard at the top of their draft . By the end I see them grabbing a young kicker or maybe a young bull like OL Will Holden. We have a new GM so anything is possible. Here’s to a fun rookie draft and seeing what Seattle’s management brings into the Seahawk family.

