

chris ballard draft history

Chris Ballard draft history has been a topic of great interest among NFL enthusiasts and analysts alike. As the general manager of the Indianapolis Colts, Ballard's approach to the NFL Draft has been characterized by strategic thinking, a keen eye for talent, and a commitment to building a competitive team. His draft history not only reflects his philosophy but also provides insight into how the Colts have evolved under his leadership. In this article, we will take a closer look at Ballard's draft history, analyze his key picks, and assess the impact of his selections on the Colts' roster.

Chris Ballard: An Overview

Chris Ballard became the general manager of the Indianapolis Colts in January 2017. With a background in scouting and player development, he brought a wealth of experience to the position. Before joining the Colts, Ballard held various roles with the Kansas City Chiefs, where he was instrumental in building a competitive roster. His vision for the Colts has been to prioritize talent, character, and fit within the team's culture.

Ballard's Draft Philosophy

One of the defining aspects of Chris Ballard's draft history is his philosophy regarding player selection. Some key tenets of his approach include:

- **Best Player Available (BPA):** Ballard often emphasizes selecting the best player available rather than reaching for a need. This strategy allows the team to accumulate talent and avoid potential busts.
- **Building Through the Draft:** Understanding the importance of developing homegrown talent, Ballard prioritizes the draft as the primary means of building the roster.
- **Character Matters:** Ballard believes in selecting players with strong character and work ethic, ensuring they fit within the Colts' culture.
- **Value in Trades:** He is not afraid to trade up or down in the draft to maximize value, demonstrating a flexible approach to acquiring talent.

2017 NFL Draft: The Beginning of Ballard's Tenure

In his first draft with the Colts, Chris Ballard faced the challenge of rebuilding a team that had fallen short of expectations. The 2017 draft class included several key contributors:

1. **Malik Hooker (S, 1st Round, 15th Overall):** A ball-hawking safety from Ohio State, Hooker was expected to anchor the Colts' secondary. Injuries

hampered his development, but his potential was evident.

2. **Quincy Wilson (CB, 2nd Round, 46th Overall)**: Wilson brought size and physicality to the cornerback position. He has had an up-and-down career but remains a key part of the defense.
3. **Tyquan Lewis (DE, 2nd Round, 64th Overall)**: Lewis added depth to the defensive line and has shown flashes of being a valuable rotational player.
4. **Mark Glowinski (G, 4th Round, 123rd Overall)**: Originally drafted by the Seattle Seahawks, Glowinski became a reliable starter for the Colts' offensive line.

This draft set the foundation for Ballard's approach, focusing on athleticism and versatility.

2018 NFL Draft: The Andrew Luck Era

The 2018 draft was pivotal for the Colts, as it was the first draft after Andrew Luck's retirement. Ballard had to navigate the uncertainty at the quarterback position while also infusing talent into the roster.

1. **Quenton Nelson (G, 1st Round, 6th Overall)**: Perhaps Ballard's most celebrated pick, Nelson quickly established himself as one of the best guards in the NFL, transforming the Colts' offensive line.
2. **Braden Smith (G, 2nd Round, 37th Overall)**: Another strong offensive lineman, Smith has also become a key player, solidifying the interior line alongside Nelson.
3. **Darius Leonard (LB, 2nd Round, 36th Overall)**: Leonard emerged as a star in his rookie season, earning Defensive Rookie of the Year honors. His playmaking ability has made him a cornerstone of the defense.

The 2018 draft was a significant success for Ballard, as it not only addressed immediate needs but also laid the groundwork for a competitive team.

2019 NFL Draft: Building on Success

In 2019, Ballard continued to build on the foundation laid in previous drafts. The Colts targeted players who could contribute immediately while also fitting into the long-term vision of the franchise.

1. **Rock Ya-Sin (CB, 2nd Round, 34th Overall)**: Ya-Sin was drafted to bolster the secondary, and while he faced some growing pains, he has shown promise as a starting cornerback.
2. **Ben Banogu (DE, 2nd Round, 49th Overall)**: A raw talent with high upside, Banogu has been developing his game and adds depth to the defensive

line.

3. **Paris Campbell (WR, 2nd Round, 59th Overall):** Campbell's speed and versatility make him a valuable asset in the receiving corps, although injuries have hindered his production.

Overall, the 2019 draft showcased Ballard's commitment to enhancing both sides of the ball.

2020 NFL Draft: A Focus on Skill Positions

The 2020 draft was crucial for the Colts as they sought to strengthen their skill positions. With the signing of veteran quarterback Philip Rivers, the Colts needed to surround him with talent.

1. **Michael Pittman Jr. (WR, 2nd Round, 34th Overall):** Pittman quickly became a go-to target for Rivers, showcasing his ability to make contested catches and contribute in the red zone.
2. **Jonathan Taylor (RB, 2nd Round, 41st Overall):** Taylor emerged as a dynamic playmaker, becoming the Colts' top running back and earning Pro Bowl honors in subsequent seasons.
3. **Julian Blackmon (S, 3rd Round, 85th Overall):** Blackmon's range and instincts allowed him to quickly make an impact in the secondary, solidifying the safety position.

The 2020 draft highlighted Ballard's emphasis on offensive weaponry and playmakers.

2021 NFL Draft: Adapting to Change

With the 2021 draft, the Colts faced new challenges, including the need to find a long-term solution at quarterback. Ballard's selections reflected the urgency to improve the team's competitiveness.

1. **Kwity Paye (DE, 1st Round, 21st Overall):** Paye was viewed as a high-uptside pass rusher who could help revitalize the Colts' defense.
2. **Dayo Odeyingbo (DE, 2nd Round, 54th Overall):** Odeyingbo, who was recovering from an injury, adds depth and potential to the defensive line.
3. **Sam Ehlinger (QB, 6th Round, 218th Overall):** Ehlinger was drafted to provide depth at quarterback and potentially develop into a starter over time.

Ballard's 2021 draft class demonstrated a focus on addressing both immediate and future needs.

2022 NFL Draft: The Quest for Stability

In 2022, the Colts aimed to find stability, especially at the quarterback position after trading for Matt Ryan. The draft was crucial for the team's future direction.

1. **Alex Pierce (WR, 2nd Round, 53rd Overall)**: Pierce was seen as a potential deep threat and a complement to existing receivers.
2. **Jelani Woods (TE, 3rd Round, 73rd Overall)**: Woods added size and athleticism to the tight-end position, providing more options in the passing game.
3. **Bernhard Raimann (OT, 3rd Round, 77th Overall)**: Raimann's selection aimed to bolster the offensive line and provide depth at tackle.

The 2022 draft underscored Ballard's commitment to building a competitive roster around a new veteran quarterback.

Evaluating Chris Ballard's Draft History

Chris Ballard's draft history with the Colts showcases his commitment to building a competitive team through strategic selections. His ability to identify talent and prioritize character has led to several standout players who have significantly impacted the team's performance. While some picks have faced challenges, the overall trajectory of the Colts under Ballard's leadership has been promising.

In summary, Chris Ballard's draft history reflects a thoughtful and strategic approach to roster building. His commitment to the "best player available" philosophy, coupled with an emphasis on character and fit, has laid a solid foundation for the Colts' future. As the

Frequently Asked Questions

What is Chris Ballard's approach to drafting players?

Chris Ballard emphasizes selecting high-character players with strong athleticism and football IQ, focusing on building a cohesive team culture.

How has Chris Ballard's draft strategy evolved since he became the Colts' GM?

Ballard's strategy has evolved to prioritize building depth in key positions, particularly in the offensive line and defensive front, while also being flexible to trade up or down based on team needs.

Which notable players has Chris Ballard drafted

during his tenure with the Colts?

Notable players drafted by Chris Ballard include Quenton Nelson, Darius Leonard, and Michael Pittman Jr., all of whom have made significant impacts on the team.

What were some criticisms of Chris Ballard's drafting in recent years?

Critics have pointed to a few missed opportunities in early rounds and a lack of immediate impact players in certain drafts, particularly in the quarterback position.

How does Chris Ballard evaluate talent during the draft process?

Ballard evaluates talent through a combination of game tape analysis, in-person workouts, and extensive interviews to assess players' mental and emotional readiness.

What impact has Chris Ballard's draft history had on the Colts' overall performance?

Ballard's draft history has significantly contributed to improving the Colts' roster depth and competitiveness, leading to playoff appearances and a more balanced team.

How does Chris Ballard prioritize positional needs during the draft?

Ballard typically prioritizes the trenches, focusing on offensive and defensive line talent, while also being open to selecting best-player-available options regardless of position.

What was the Colts' biggest draft success under Chris Ballard?

The biggest draft success under Chris Ballard is often considered to be Quenton Nelson, who has established himself as one of the top offensive linemen in the league.

How often does Chris Ballard trade during the draft?

Chris Ballard is known for being active during the draft, often looking to trade up to secure key targets or trade down to acquire additional assets.

What trends have emerged in Chris Ballard's recent drafts?

Recent drafts have shown a trend towards selecting more athletic and versatile players, particularly in skill positions and defensive roles, reflecting a modern, dynamic approach to the game.

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