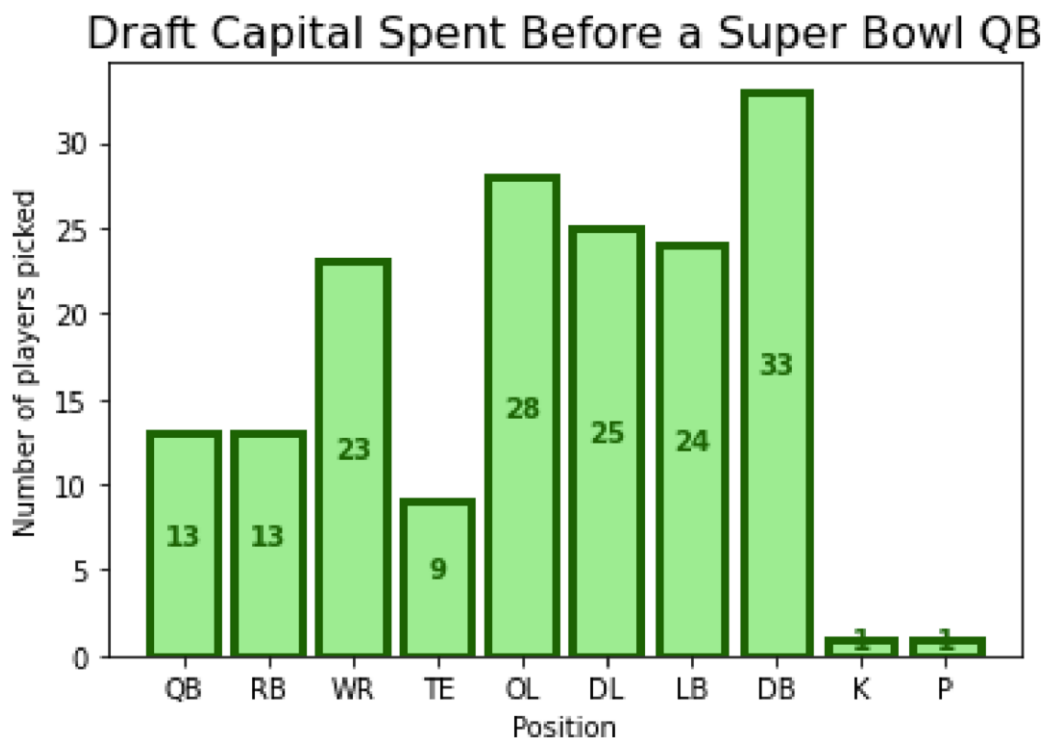


Drafting Around Your Quarterback

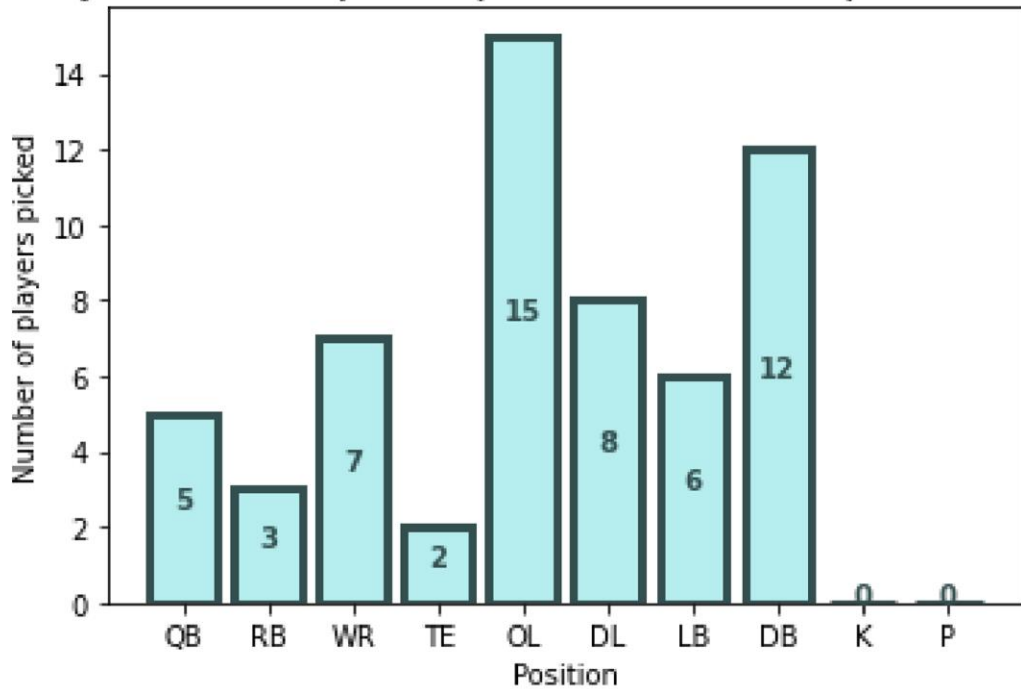
Oftentimes talk around young quarterbacks also revolves around their supporting cast. When discussing the NFL success of quarterbacks in their early years, the talent levels of their offensive lines, weaponry corps, and defense are typically a large part of the debate. That being said, is there a recipe to properly acquiring talent around a young NFL quarterback? How can a front office best approach building a surrounding cast capable of winning a Super Bowl with their young quarterback?



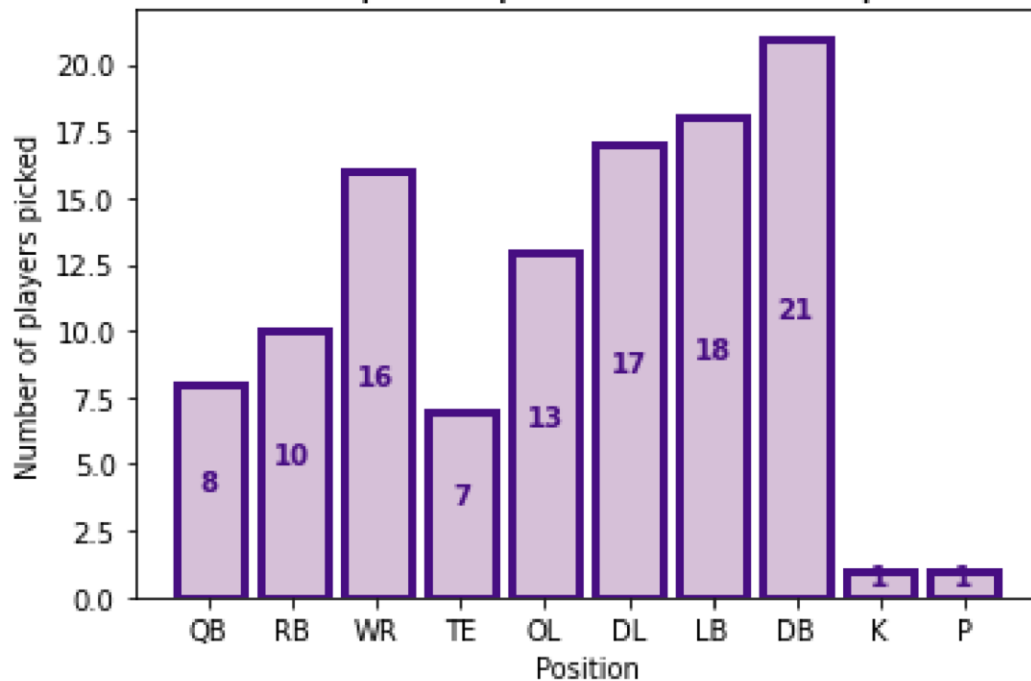
The above graph shows the draft capital spent by teams before drafting a future Super Bowl winning quarterback. The range spans five years, including the year that the quarterback himself was drafted. For example, Pat Mahomes was drafted in 2017. Therefore, the Chiefs draft picks represented in this chart are from the years 2013-2017, a five-year range. Five years was

the chosen span as it is the length of a first-round rookie's contract. Furthermore, only quarterbacks who won the Super Bowl on their drafted team are considered.

Major Draft Capital Spent Before a Super Bowl QB

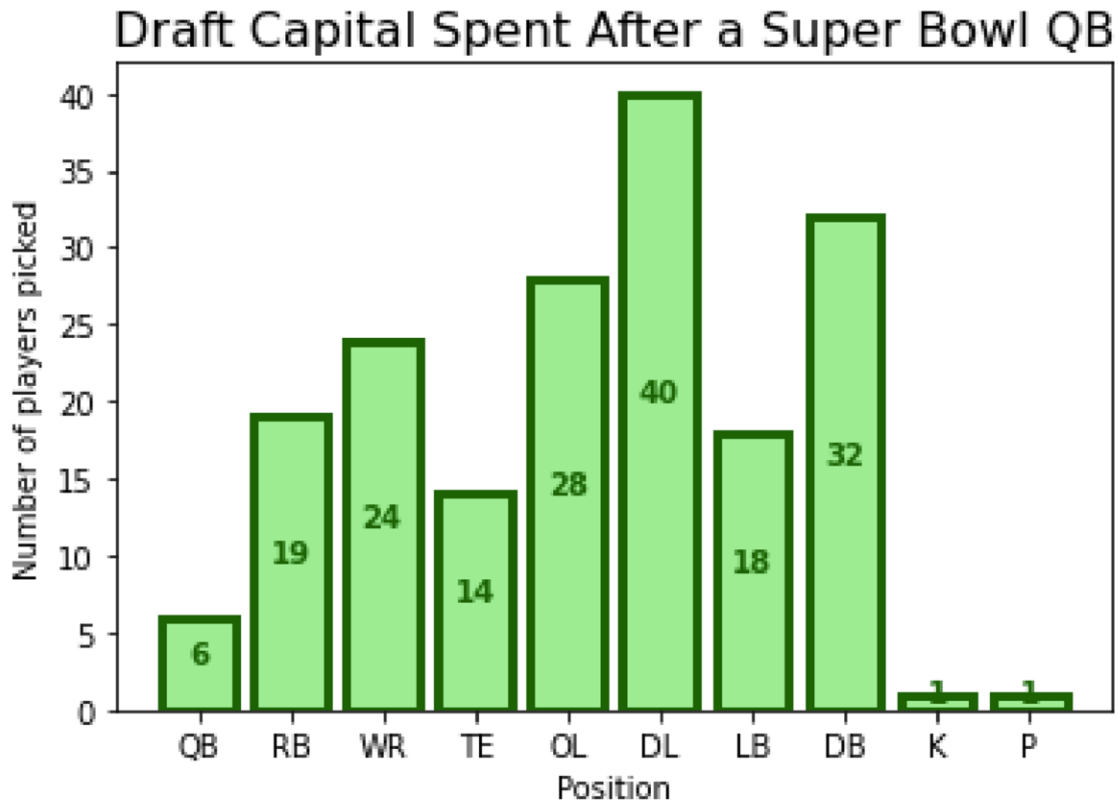


Minor Draft Capital Spent Before a Super Bowl QB



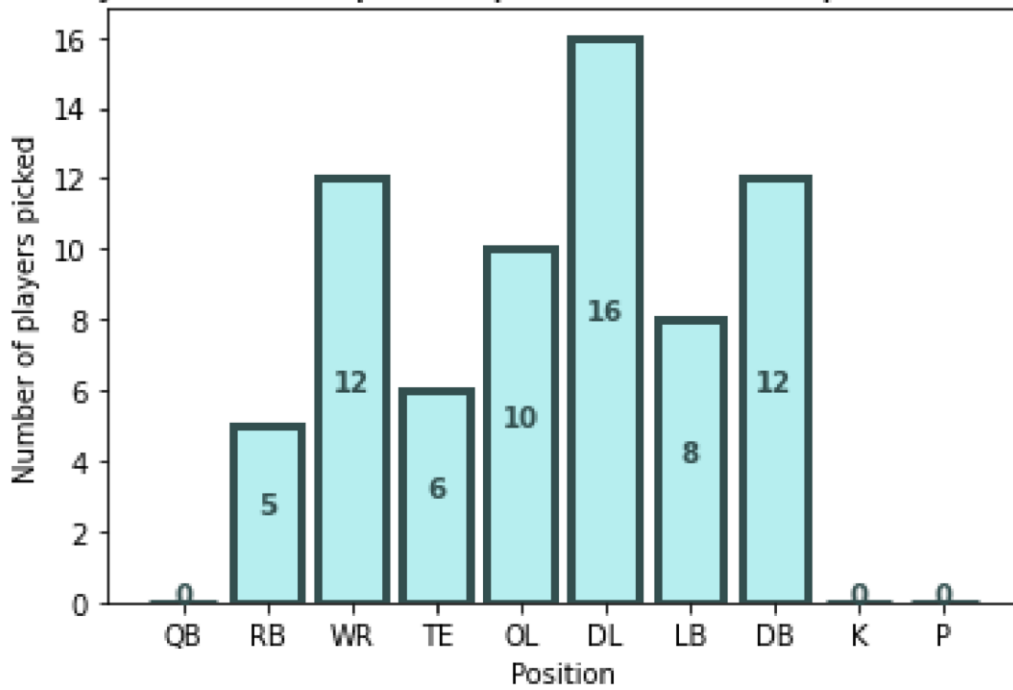
Further breaking down of this data allows us to gauge the perceived importance of each position. The blue chart above shows where major draft capital (rounds 1-3) was spent in that same five-year span, while the purple chart allows us the same look at minor draft capital (rounds 4-7). An important trend shown in the blue chart is that teams will often reinforce their offensive line and secondary prior to drafting a future Super Bowl winning quarterback. The need for top tier offensive linemen is apparent and was showcased during the rookie season of Joe Burrow, where a questionable offensive line led to him getting seriously hurt. The urgency to build a secondary is more curious as pass rush is often viewed as the most important part of a modern defense. That being said, the influx of major draft capital spent on defensive backs in preparation for a Super Bowl winning quarterback is slightly more curious. The outlier here could simply be because the defensive back position includes both safeties and corner backs, but will likely require further research to confirm. Both the green and purple charts also showcase an overwhelming number of defensive backs drafted.

Also worth noting is the number of offensive weapons picked in the later rounds of these drafts. While the number of offensive linemen selected actually dipped, despite the number of rounds being considered increased from 3 to 4 from the blue chart to the purple, the number of selected running backs, wide receivers, and tight ends all more than doubled. It appears as if teams are securing the more difficult to draft positions by picking offensive linemen and defensive backs early, while trying to hit it big on late round weapons which tend to have a higher late round success rate.

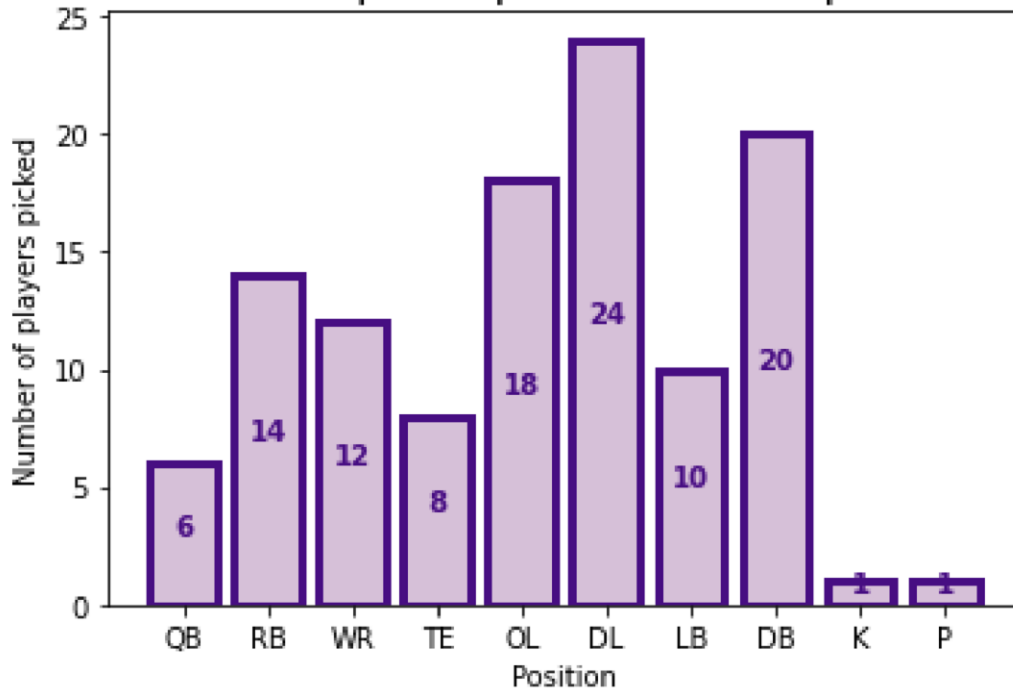


The above graph shows how teams reinforced their quarterbacks through their following five years of draft picks. For example, Russell Wilson was picked in 2012. Therefore, players picked by the Seahawks from 2013-2017 are considered. Once again, five years was chosen as it is the length of a first-round rookie's contract.

Major Draft Capital Spent After a Super Bowl QB



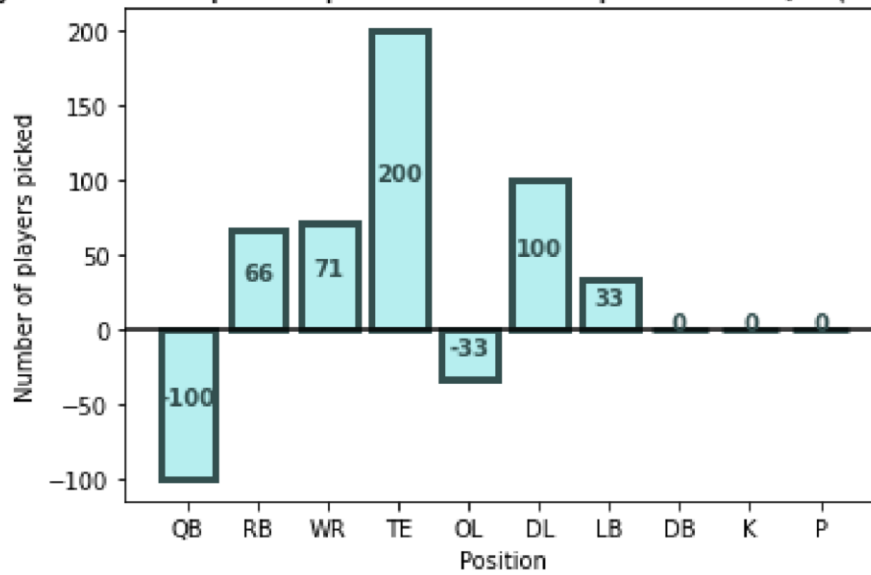
Minor Draft Capital Spent After a Super Bowl QB



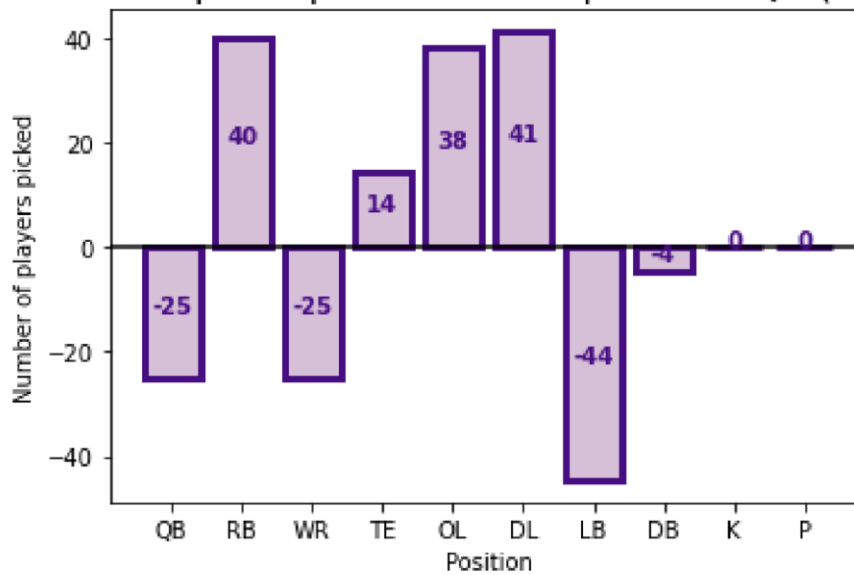
Further breaking down of this data reveals that Super Bowl winning teams greatly change their drafting strategy after drafting their Super Bowl winning quarterback. The biggest change

here can be seen in the teams' selections of first-round talent. As stated, prior to drafting their quarterback, most teams focused on selecting offensive line and defensive backs. While many similar selections are still made post quarterback selection, the focus has greatly shifted to defensive line and offensive weaponry. While the number of first-round offensive linemen decreased and the number of first-round defensive backs stayed the same, the number of first-round running backs, wide receivers, tight ends, and defensive linemen all increased. Likely this increase is such due to the nature of those positions, where each of the four often see its rookie play at a high level immediately, needing little time to adjust to the NFL lifestyle. While it is no secret that wider receivers are entering the league more pro ready than ever, this trend has also been seen in runningbacks, where first round selections like Najee Harris often have an immediate impact and third round selections like Alvin Kamara, Kareem Hunt, or David Montgomery have proven that mid round picks can do it too if given an opportunity. Concurrently, recent tight end selections such as Kyle Pitts or Pat Freiermuth have proven similar ideals about their own position while players like Myles Garrett and Max Crosby prove that edge rushers can be found to have an immediate impact all around the draft as well. In an attempt to showcase the altering draft strategies in an easier manner, here is their percent changes by position in both the major and minor draft capital categories:

Major Draft Capital Spent After a Super Bowl QB (% Increase)

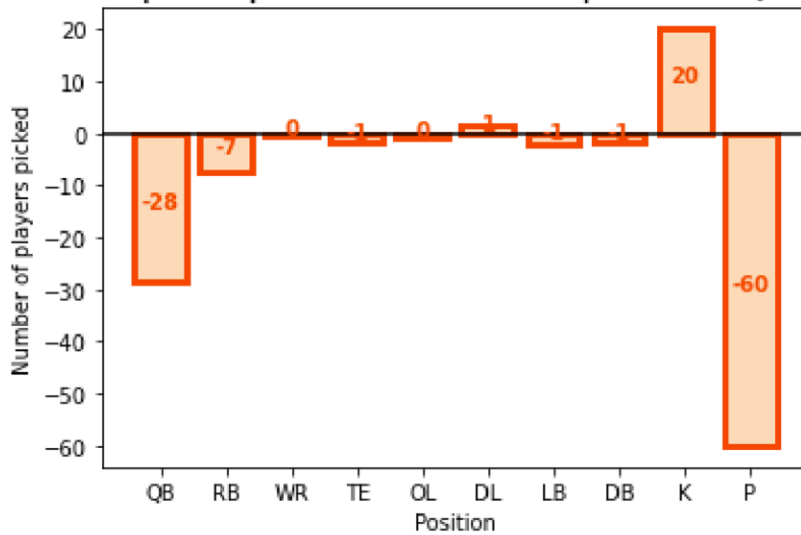


Minor Draft Capital Spent After a Super Bowl QB (% Increase)

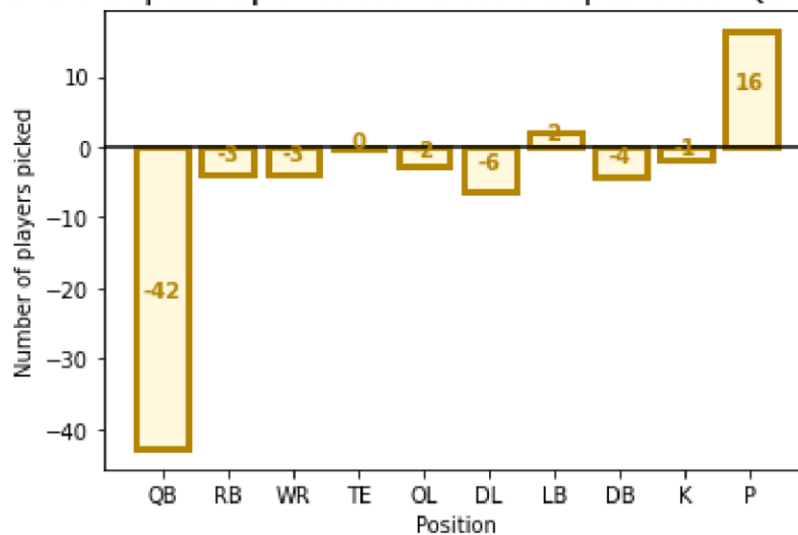


The changes in draft strategy presented by these charts are important. Not only do teams that alter their draft strategies win, but those who stick to their old ways lose. Below are the changes in draft strategies for teams who draft a quarterback and do not win a Super Bowl with him:

Major Draft Capital Spent After a Non Super Bowl QB (% Increase)



Minor Draft Capital Spent After a Non Super Bowl QB (% Increase)



Note that the largest non-special teams or quarterback change presented in these charts sits at just seven percent. By not altering their draft strategy, front offices are putting their young quarterbacks at a disadvantage. All things considered, the following conclusions can be taken from this section:

- 1) Teams should focus on building from the trenches outward on offense, and the secondary inward on defense. Protecting one's quarterback while figuring out others are two important talents that take time to develop.
- 2) More plug-and-play positions should be drafted after a quarterback as been selected to free cap space and fill out a roster.
- 3) A change in draft strategy is necessary after a quarterback is drafted.

Ultimately, the importance of hitting in the draft cannot be understated. The draft is the best way to find cheap and valuable talent in the NFL. While many different strategies can be used to determine which players best fit a team's system, positional value should be heavily considered and where a team is located in the quarterback finding process should play into that value system heavily.