

On the Clock: The Story of the NFL Draft

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Ken Rappoport

Taylor Trade Publishing (April 2015)

Softcover \$17.95 (232pp)

978-1-63076-101-1

Wilner and Rappoport use coverage of the 2014 season as a jumping-off point to provide a thorough history of the NFL draft.

The days of baseball claiming to be “America’s pastime” are long over—a title clearly wrested away by football—so, too, are the days of the National Football League draft being an inconspicuous event. As long-time Associated Press sportswriters Barry Wilner and Ken Rappoport describe in their book *On the Clock: The Story of the NFL Draft*, the inaugural draft was held in 1936 in the suite of a Philadelphia hotel. Media and fan attention was nearly nil.

Fast-forward nearly eighty years to a red carpet outside Radio City Music Hall, where two different television networks broadcast the 2014 NFL draft live over three days, and where one of the best draft classes of all time jockeys for million dollar contracts. Those television broadcasts will draw more viewers than the National Basketball Association and National Hockey League playoff games it goes head-to-head against.

In *On the Clock*, Wilner and Rappoport use coverage of that intriguing 2014 draft as a jumping-off point to provide a thorough history of the event and its somewhat illogical popularity. Along the way, they share stories of the front-office personnel, players, and growing media frenzy.

Having come of age in the heyday of print journalism, the authors end with a chapter of quick-hit short stories. It’s the equivalent of the notebook that has complemented main stories in newspaper sports pages for decades, and it contains some of the book’s most interesting and fun facts. Still, these clearly aren’t guys trapped in that bygone ink-stained era. They’re savvy enough to know that top-five lists are journalism’s version of the NFL draft when it comes to reader analytics. Accordingly, *On the Clock* includes historical lists of the five best and five worst draft picks by position, plus lists of the best pick and worst pick by each franchise.

On the Clock’s heavy emphasis on reporting the 2014 draft may make it seem dated, but the historical lessons and draft-day tales woven into that narrative are timeless and well presented.

RICH REZLER (Summer 2015)

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