

NEW PURPLE PROS



GENEVIEVE ROSS • Special to the Star Tribune
Flanked by Vikings coach Leslie Frazier, left, and GM Rick Spielman, first-round picks Matt Kalil and Harrison Smith met with Minnesota media at Winter Park.

● Matt Kalil learned early, and well, about the unsung and hard-earned rewards of life in football's trenches.

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On the day Matt Kalil went suit-shopping for the most momentous occasion of his life to date — the 2012 NFL draft — the sales associate at the South Coast Plaza Nordstrom in Costa Mesa, Calif., offered an innocent suggestion.

With the dark gray, pinstriped suit Kalil had picked to wear to New York's Radio City Music Hall for the opening night of the draft, why not add a black tie with fashionable purple stripes?

Immediately, the color scheme had Kalil sold.

"Are you sure you want to do that? With the purple?" his parents asked, worried it might seem too presumptuous to don Vikings colors with no guarantee of a final NFL destination. "Yeah," he replied. "I really like it."

Yep, all along this seemed like a perfect match. Not just the suit and tie. But the gifted left tackle and the rebuilding team in need of offensive line reinforcement. The kid who likes the thermostat kept near 50 degrees

« HE LIKES THE FEEL HERE. ... HE WANTS TO FISH UP HERE AND BE IN THIS ENVIRONMENT. HE FEELS LIKE HE FITS IN. » Matt Kalil's dad, Frank

in order to sleep and the city that can give him all the cold he'd ever need.

The blue-collar lineman who wants to get better and the promising young offense with its attentive coaching staff.

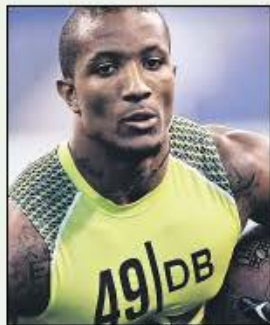
Vikings continues on C7 ►

Notes: Smith is latest Notre Dame player on Vikings roster. C8

Speedy corner Robinson taken in third round

The Vikings used their lone third-round pick to select Central Florida cornerback Josh Robinson. C6

Stadium bill passes test, setting up big weekend A1



TODAY'S VIKINGS PICKS

FOURTH ROUND	FIFTH ROUND	SIXTH ROUND	SEVENTH ROUND
118th, 128th, 134th	138th, 139th	175th	210th, 211th, 223rd



Worthy



Wilson

FRIDAY'S NOTABLES

SECOND ROUND

34. Ind: Coby Fleener, TE, Stanford
43. NY: Stephen Hill, WR, Ga. Tech
51. GB: Jerel Worthy, DT, Mich. St.

THIRD ROUND

75. Sea: Russell Wilson, QB, Wis.
79. Chi: Brandon Hardin, S, Ore. St.



MORE VIKINGS DRAFT COVERAGE ON THE WEB See video from Winter Park, read our Access Vikings and VikesCentric blogs, and get updates on Saturday's draft picks at startribune.com/sports.

2 NEW PURPLE PROS ARRIVE

◀ VIKINGS FROM C1

Kalil's formal introduction to the Vikings came Friday afternoon at Winter Park, fully loaded with a new No. 67 jersey and all the feel-good an offensive lineman could ever ask for.

"I can definitely picture myself living here," Kalil said. "Which I have to stop saying now. Because I will be living here. And I couldn't be more thrilled about it."

Job description

At first glance, it may seem odd that a 22-year-old who grew up near Los Angeles would be so excited about a move to Minnesota. But Kalil is the Vikings' kind of player. And the Twin Cities are Kalil's kind of place.

"In a strange way, Minnesota is a better fit for Matt and how he lives," said his dad, Frank. "He likes the feel here. He's not a loner, but he likes to just hang out. He wants to fish up here and be in this environment. He feels like he fits in."

Kalil's big pre-draft purchase: A black, Ford F-150 truck.

His impressions of his brief Friday meeting with quarterback Christian Ponder?

"It was cool," Kalil said. "He definitely had a big smile on his face. I want to keep that smile on his face for a long time."

That is the vision now, from the top of the organization on down. Kalil is expected to be the Vikings' starting left tackle into the 2020s. And Ponder, it's hoped, will be the lone quarterback behind him, jelling into a true NFL standout in part because of the peace of mind he's getting from his protection.

"We're supposed to be able to allow Christian time to get through his reads," Vikings offensive line coach Jeff Davidson said Friday. "And if we aren't doing that, he doesn't have a chance to advance his career. So we needed to get better players in front of him so that he didn't have to worry about the pass rush. He didn't have to feel that. I want him to only worry about his job.



Vikings first-round picks Harrison Smith, left, and Matt Kalil signed autographs for Denise Carroll, her husband, Jeff, and their son Wendell, of New Brighton, at Winter Park.

And Matt should facilitate that development."

The match game

Even for a California kid, it's too Hollywood to suggest all this was meant to be. That story line can be revisited up the road.

What's not up for debate is that Kalil was always meant to be an offensive lineman. Yes, he tried other positions playing youth football. And yeah, at one practice early in his freshman year at Servite High School in Anaheim, he found himself in line with the receivers and tight ends for drill work.

But only until his dad, a former professional offensive lineman himself, intervened and approached the Friars coach.

"I told him, 'Matt's not a receiver; that's not what he was going to play. So get his butt back over to offensive line,'" Frank said. "Most people ask, 'Why would you do that?' Because it was best for Matt, I thought."

Matt shrugs recalling that straight-line path to excellence. Now that he's the No. 4 pick and being advertised as an immediate starter and potential Pro Bowl player, the "father-knew-best" attitude

makes sense.

But Kalil also admits that becoming an offensive line standout was an acquired taste, something he grew into as he saw how his success in the trenches stoked his competitive fire.

Climb to the top

That success, however, only came after repeated failure — at the hands of his brother Ryan, who is six years his senior and now entering his sixth season with the Carolina Panthers.

In the Kalil household, going to the park to play football meant a unique dedication to

nothing but offensive line drills. And at the outset, as Ryan excelled, Matt was the equivalent of a rodeo clown.

"Poor Matt," his mom, Cheryl, said. "He got tossed around all the time. He had to get tough pretty quick."

Added Frank: "It was bad. Matt would rush. And Ryan would go 100 miles per hour and kill him. All I could say is, 'You'll just have to wait in line. You'll get your chance.'"

That chance finally came when Ryan moved on to college at Southern California. Then, it was Matt who would routinely manhandle his cousins on "leisurely" trips to the

park that included nothing but lineman drills.

The Kalils realize their niche dedication to football was unusual. But look how far it's carried Matt.

"Most dads take their sons to play catch," Frank said. "We never did. Never played catch with a football. Honestly, don't ever ask Matt to throw a football. It's atrocious. I never taught him how. Because what was he going to do with it?"

Oh, well. The Vikings aren't investing in Kalil to throw the football. His job for the foreseeable future is simply to safeguard the guy who does.

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