

Anything possible for rookies

Q. Do you like what you've seen so far from Antwaan Randle El?

A. Well, he's got a lot being thrown at him. We've given him about two or three different positions to play, but he looked OK. When he

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was going in the right places, he was fine. So if we can get him straightened out I think he'll be just fine.

Q. He seems to have good hands. Is that an accurate assessment?

A. Oh, he'll catch it. He's got a good feel for those things. This is not a transition that hasn't been studied. He went down to the Senior Bowl and played receiver there all week in practice and played very well in the game. I think he kind of had a sense of what he could do, and I know he practiced it some at Indiana. They opened up against North Carolina State with him as a receiver, but they just couldn't get the ball in his hands enough and that's why they moved him back to quarterback.

Q. Are there any possibilities of using Randle El as the fourth quarterback?

A. He presents many possibilities.

Q. Might he be a good option to save a roster spot?

A. He presents many multiple possibilities.

Q. With all of the new wide receivers, is this a big offseason for Troy Edwards?

A. I think it's a very competitive situation. I think Troy will respond as I would expect him to. I think we have some good competition. Lee Mays made a couple of nice plays during rookie orientation, so we have good depth there. Certainly we've been trying to upgrade over the last few years, and I think we're in a position to do that. We have to continue to develop the passing game and not let it take three or four games to get untracked like it did a year ago. If we can come out and have that same type of balance, then I think it's going to make us a much better football team.

Q. Was John Allred more of a blocking tight end or a receiving tight end when he was with the Chicago Bears?

A. He was probably more of a receiver. I think he has good hands, so he should excel in some of the passing things that we're doing right now and hopefully he'll be a good contributor in the running game.

Q. Do you see a lot of good special team players in this group of rookies?



While the Steelers aren't counting on their draft choices to become immediate starters, it's not unrealistic to expect some of them — Larry Foote (47) and Antwaan Randle El, for example — to make contributions right away.

Digest Photos/NATALIE FALLON (Foote) and MIKE FABUS (Randle El)

A. That's something where we'll have to wait and see until we get the pads on. That will be the tell-tale sign. I think we've added some speed and some guys who like contact. They're going to have to have some on-the-job training, because a lot of these things you ask them to do, they haven't done in the National Football League. On paper, it gives you a chance to upgrade speed in all areas of the kicking game.

Q. Larry Foote didn't run a real good 40 time, but he seems to make a lot of plays. How does he get it done on the field?

A. At linebacker, the 40 time can sometimes be a little bit misleading. That's an instinctive position. It's a position where angles are more important than straight-out speed. Linebackers are usually measured by the size of their heart, and maybe not the size of their body or the speed with which they run. He was a very productive player at a major college and I think that he also played this system for a number of years. I think he'll be a big contributor.

Q. Do you see any of these rookies starting this year?

A. That's hard to say. When you put the pads on, sometimes that separates people, and you never know from an injury standpoint. That's the unknown element of any roster. And you want to create solid depth, not just from an injury standpoint, but from a competitive standpoint. People are getting pushed. People are competing. You don't like a situation where people are staying status quo; they are pushing themselves. And you have to think all of the players will do that, and sometimes you can't address that in every position. But if you can create as much competition as you can, it's just going to take everybody to another level.

I'm not going to say that none of these guys will start this year, but certainly, we'd like to think they can contribute. If the opportunity presents itself, these guys were all starters where they came from. There is a degree of transition involved, but nothing is out of the realm of possibility.

Q. Will Kendall Simmons start out working at right guard?

A. We have Oliver Ross there with Keydrick Vincent, and we probably will move Kendall over there, too.

He's going to have to swing anyway because that's a backup position. We may move him in there and see how it goes. He's going to be a guard, and right now there are only three guys who will be rotating in there. Alan Faneca is set at left guard.

Q. You have quite a few guys who play multiple positions. Is that a recurring theme?

A. When you have the team we have, that gives you some more flexibility. You get these guys acclimated in maybe a year, and if a guy doesn't come in and start right away you can use him in the event of injury. If he can play different positions, maybe you quicken the process of a guy getting on the field.

When you get to game day, putting together a roster, a lot of times backups are not just backing up one position. They have to be backing up a couple of positions to be on the field on Sundays. If you get some young guys who give you speed and can help you in the game, while being able to handle more than one position, you have upgraded the speed and the youth that you'll have available on game day.