

5-8-2006 Going Pro

1 (File: 20060508_Myles_Brand_pro22m16.)

2 JOSH CENTOR: Last weekend 224 former NCAA
3 student athletes were selected in the seven rounds of the
4 NFL football draft. 2004 Heisman winner and two-time
5 national champion Matt Leinart was taken 10th in the
6 first round, considered by many to be a drop from where
7 he would have gone if he had left school a year early
8 before he had earned his degree. Leinart went back to
9 school for a number of reasons and will likely sign for
10 far less money than he would have had he left early.

11 Did he make a mistake by returning to
12 school, Dr. Brand?

13 DR. MYLES BRAND: You know, we have to
14 listen to what Matt Leinart has to say. I don't think we
15 can decide for him. He made a decision that he wants to
16 help his team, that he enjoyed being in school, and in
17 fact, he had some eligibility left. He was perfectly
18 within the rules, and he made that decision. I think
19 Matt Leinart is going to have a great football career,
20 and I'm not sure he made a bad decision in the end.

21 It is a disappointing decision if all
22 you're looking at is the dollars and cents. There's more
23 to life than that. I don't think Matt Leinart is going
24 to have to worry where his next car payment comes from in
25 any case. So for him, even though it was disappointing,

1 maybe in the long run it was really his best decision.
2 So I'm a little cautious in giving generalized advise,
3 because you really have to look at it case by case.

4 One of the things I would hope is that if a
5 young man decides to come out early, they leave open the
6 option of coming back to school to complete their degree.
7 I mean, sometimes you do have a great opportunity you
8 can't say no to, and I'm going to give you a specific
9 example.

10 When I was president of the University of
11 Oregon, I had a young man come to me who was on the
12 University of Oregon basketball team. He was just PAC 10
13 player of the year. And he had an opportunity after his
14 sophomore year to go into the pros. And he said, What
15 should I do? And he was a wonderful young man who
16 frankly worked hard in school, but his life opportunities
17 really relied on his playing ball. I mean, that's where
18 his expertise was, and he was going to be very successful
19 at that.

20 And what I told him is that, you know, I
21 think you should follow your opportunities. You should
22 go to the pros, but do come back and complete your
23 degree. And he had a great pro career.

24 JOSH CENTOR: And these student athletes
25 who find themselves in these positions need to have

1 people that they can go to to ask for some counsel, don't
2 they?

3 DR. MYLES BRAND: They definitely do. And
4 they need to get counsel of people who are
5 disinterested -- not uninterested, but disinterested in
6 their future. People who will give them honest
7 professional advice, as opposed to someone who has a hook
8 in them for a potential contract such as being a
9 representative or an agent. Or frankly, even good
10 friends of the family or even parents who probably don't
11 have the right amount of information and experience, but
12 nonetheless are willing to give advice. So they really
13 need good, professional, objective advice.

14 JOSH CENTOR: It's a tough position for
15 coaches to be in, though, as well; isn't it? Because if
16 I'm Pete Carroll, I want my Heisman Trophy winner to come
17 back. But if we're looking at 5, \$10 million for him, I
18 mean, what a tough position to be in.

19 DR. MYLES BRAND: Yeah. And I think, you
20 know, actually the coaches could probably handle that,
21 because I think what -- the best coaches, who I believe
22 are honestly concerned about the welfare of the young men
23 for whom they -- who play for them, would say, you know,
24 I'd really like you back. But you deserve to have the
25 best advice and working with the AD or others, let me set

1 up a panel that will give you objective advice. I want
2 you back, but you have to make your own decisions.

3 And I think if a coach does that -- and all
4 the good ones will do that -- I think the young men will
5 have good advice and feel wanted if he comes back.

6 JOSH CENTOR: But to your point about
7 leaving in good academic standing, that's important in
8 terms of APR scores, as well, isn't it?

9 DR. MYLES BRAND: Oh, absolutely, because
10 the team suffers if you leave as a young man to play
11 professional ball and don't complete your academic work
12 for that year. And I think frankly that's unfair to the
13 team.

14 I think people can leave early, and that's
15 okay. But they shouldn't harm other members of the team
16 and they shouldn't harm, you know, the coach's ability to
17 win in the future. I think it's critically important
18 they stay eligible.

19 And not only for altruistic reasons that I
20 spoke of, but also for personal reasons. Many want to
21 come back, and you know, complete their degree. They may
22 have just a few courses, they may have a year or two to
23 complete. And they want to leave in a position that they
24 can come back in good standing.

25 JOSH CENTOR: It raises another question

1 that if you come back, sometimes you run the risk of
2 being injured. We all saw Willis McGahee a couple of
3 years ago in the Fiesta Bowl in a national championship
4 game, he got hurt. And he was fortunate enough to go and
5 be drafted anyway.

6 But this is another tough position if
7 you're hurt and maybe your career -- you don't have that
8 professional career.

9 DR. MYLES BRAND: Well, you know, I think
10 these are hard decisions to make. And each one has to --
11 each person has to reach the decision that they're
12 comfortable with.

13 What I worry about is those who are unduly
14 influenced by people who have an opportunity to gain some
15 financial benefit by someone going early. And they care
16 less about that individual player, that person, than they
17 care about their own pocketbook.

18 And I think you have to be very careful not
19 to come out too early, actually harm yourself -- just the
20 opposite of the Leinart case, which is the more typical
21 case, people come out too early, they give up on school,
22 they leave academically ineligible. And frankly, they
23 don't get to play because they've been misled or they
24 haven't had objective advice to which they listened, and
25 those young men now have a real problem. They're not in

1 school any longer. They don't have a pro career, which
2 they might well have gotten if they were in school for
3 another year. They don't have an education. Those are
4 the people who get lost in the system.

5 So Matt Leinart will be okay, but there are
6 many others who I think were taken in by third parties.

7 JOSH CENTOR: Well, discussing that a
8 little bit, do the professional leagues have some sort of
9 responsibility to ensure that the kids know where they're
10 going and that maybe that they're going to go back and
11 get their education?

12 A kid from Brandeis, who was drafted by the
13 Chicago Cubs, in the 10th round, which isn't a big money
14 round, but he left school early. But the Cubs gave him
15 four years to go back and complete his degree, which he
16 did in the off season.

17 I always thought that was a pretty
18 important thing that the Cubs and professional baseball
19 teams have done.

20 DR. MYLES BRAND: I couldn't agree with you
21 more, Josh. I think that is outstanding on the part of
22 professional baseball and the Cubs organization. We do
23 not see that in football or basketball.

24 I suppose an agent can put that in as part
25 of the negotiation for a young man, particularly someone

1 who goes in a later round. The -- if you go in the
2 earlier rounds, you probably have enough money to go back
3 to school.

4 JOSH CENTOR: Yeah.

5 DR. MYLES BRAND: But in the later rounds,
6 it's probably someone could negotiate that. To the best
7 of my knowledge -- and I wouldn't say I've got this
8 exactly right -- but to the best of my knowledge, there
9 are no such opportunities systemically in the NFL or the
10 NBA. And I think it would be good if there were.

11 JOSH CENTOR: It would definitely be a
12 positive, I believe.

13 Well, thank you for joining us. You've
14 just listened to "Mondays With Myles", featuring NCAA
15 president Myles Brand.

16 "Mondays With Myles" can be found on the
17 NCAA blog, the DoubleAZone each and every Monday morning.
18 If you'd like to subscribe, you can find our podcast on
19 iTunes. We will see you next week.

20

21

22

23

24

25