



Cougar Football

Playing a waiting game with WSU Cougars' Dom Williams as NFL draft winds down



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1 of 5 WSU wideout Dom Williams, left, plays dominoes to pass the time on the final day of the NFL draft with the man he considers a grandfather, Joe Hudson. (Greg Gilbert/The Seattle Times)

WSU receiver Dom Williams sweated out the final rounds, going undrafted, but was quickly snapped up by the San Diego Chargers. Here's how it

unfolded.

By [Stefanie Loh](#) 

Seattle Times staff reporter

For sure-fire first-round draft picks like Jared Goff and Carson Wentz, NFL draft weekend was a blitz of glitz and glamour that began with smartly-clad draft hopefuls drifting down the red carpet outside Chicago's Auditorium Theater.

But for the legions of players who have to wait till the late rounds of the draft or sign as free agents afterward, the three days of the draft constitute hours of interminable waiting for themselves and their agents, followed by a flurry of activity in the sixth and seventh rounds.

Here's a look at how April 30, the third day of the NFL draft, unfolded for [Washington State receiver Dom Williams](#), who finished his career with 192 receptions, third in WSU history, for 2,889 receiving yards and 30 touchdowns, both second all-time. He was hoping to get drafted in the late rounds but [ultimately signed with the San Diego Chargers](#) as an undrafted free agent.



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Dom Williams picked San Diego over Green Bay and Houston and signed with the Chargers as a priority free agent with a small signing bonus

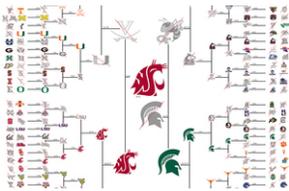
8 a.m.

As Williams was driving from Pullman to Seattle, his agent, Adam Snyder, arrived at the law offices of Ogden, Murphy, Wallace before 9 a.m. to set up for the day.

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The 48-year-old Seattle native is primarily a health lawyer at Ogden, Murphy, Wallace. But in 2010, he founded [Focus Sports Agency](#) and dived headfirst into the cutthroat world of NFL sports agency.

Since Snyder was first certified as an NFL player agent in 2010, he has been through six drafts.

His client list includes former Seahawks safety Ryan Murphy — a seventh-round draft pick out of Oregon State in 2015 — former UW and current Chargers cornerback Greg Ducre, former UW and 49ers receiver DiAndre Campbell and quarterback Jake Heaps, who recently signed with the Seahawks.

As the third day of the draft unfolds, the three-man staff of Focus Sports Agency sets up camp in a conference room whose windows overlook CenturyLink Field and Safeco Field, and hunker down with cellphones, laptops, coffee and pastries.

It's going to be a long day.

9:10 a.m.

The Dom Williams draft day cheer squad consists of Christina Norris, Williams' godmother who flew in from New York, "just so Dom could have someone to celebrate with," and Norris' father, Joe Hudson, who came in from Pomona, Calif., and whom Dom — and everyone else — affectionately calls "Grandpa Joe."

As Norris likes to say, "You don't have to be blood to be family." Despite the distance between New York and Pullman, Norris attended most of Williams' games last season and she and her mother were on the field with him during senior night festivities. Norris and Grandpa Joe arrive at Snyder's office hours before Williams does.

"I feel like I'm being drafted, my stomach is turning," Norris says, rubbing her belly for emphasis.

On the greaseboard at the front of the room is a list of all six of Focus Sports' draft-eligible players, along with a list of teams that have expressed interest in each player. Williams has the longest list of eligible suitors: the Patriots, Texans, Browns, Eagles, Packers, Jets, Dolphins, 49ers and Jaguars are all scrawled in under his name.

Snyder checks his phone and says, "We've got two who say they want him — the Jets and Green Bay. ... But Green Bay specifically called and said they're not going to draft a receiver today."

Snyder is convinced that Williams will find a home at some point that afternoon

because for weeks, he's fielded calls from various NFL teams who've expressed interest in signing the speedy receiver if he goes undrafted.

That's heartening, but Snyder's response to each team is the same every time: "If you want him, you should draft him."

11:01 a.m.

The mood in the room is pretty relaxed as Round 4 ends and the fifth round begins. Williams is still on en route, and the group jokes that it would be funny if he got drafted before he arrives in Seattle.

The Cleveland Browns are up. They spent an hour on the phone with Williams before the draft and seem to like him, but they've already drafted two receivers in the first and fourth rounds, so no one has any idea whether they'll take another wideout with one of their five remaining draft picks.

Still, the Focus Sports team thinks the Browns might select either Williams or their other client, Utah safety Tevin Carter, in the late rounds.

"You know who hasn't gone yet? (UCLA's) Jordan Payton," says Henry Organ, Focus Sports' Executive Director of Brand Management. "I think that's holding Dom back too because he was the leading receiver in the Pac-12, and he had a solid performance at the combine."

Organ might be psychic. With the 154th overall pick in the 2016 NFL draft, the Browns select Jordan Payton. But Snyder and his guys stay optimistic because Cleveland has three picks left in the fifth round.

"That's good for Dom," Snyder tells Norris and Hudson. "(Payton) is the best receiver in the Pac-12."

Late in the fifth round, the Browns embark on their shopping spree, but don't shop where the Focus Sports guys hope.

Cleveland picks up Baylor offensive guard Spencer Drango and Colorado receiver Rashard Higgins.

"Cleveland is kinda screwing us every which way, they're taking all safeties and

receivers. Just not ours,” Snyder says with a sigh.

By the time the Browns take Louisiana-Monroe defensive back Trey Caldwell with the 173rd overall selection, Cleveland looks like an unlikely destination for Williams.

All hope isn't lost though – New England was one of the three teams that flew to Pullman to put Williams through a private workout before the draft.

The Patriots have three picks in the sixth round and one in the seventh, and they need receivers.

12:35 p.m.

Seventeen receivers have been drafted and lunch has been ordered for the Focus Sports crew as the sixth round begins.

The sense in the room is that Williams' time is coming, and New England is high on the list of possible destinations.

Two days before the draft, a New England coach texted Williams with a brief but positive message of encouragement: “Want to reiterate how well you did at the workout. You'd be a good fit here. Hope everything goes well this weekend.”

Neither Williams nor his agent have heard anything from New England since then, but that's consistent with the personality of Patriots coach Bill Belichick. So, regardless of the radio silence, perhaps the Patriots will take Williams in the sixth round?

ESPN's draft analysts are busy discussing the Vikings' selection of German receiver Moritz Boehringer with the 180th overall pick when Snyder's phone rings and a Michigan area code flashes on the screen.

He answers hurriedly. The Detroit Lions have three picks in the sixth round.

“Oh. Just come around the fifth avenue side. Thanks,” Snyder says into the phone, voice devoid of excitement.

Hanging up with a sigh, he grins wryly and tells the room, “Of course the Jimmy John's guy has a Michigan phone number.”

Dressed in a gray sweatshirt and black warmup pants, Williams arrives a few minutes after the Jimmy John's guy delivers lunch.

The receiver greets Norris and Hudson with warm hugs and the threesome go upstairs to the lounge Snyder has allocated for them to watch the draft away from the agents' war room.

The TV in the lounge is tuned to ESPN, but in an attempt to keep his mind off the uncertainty of the draft, Williams and Grandpa Joe begin what will be the first of three marathon rounds of dominoes. Norris sits nearby, eating a sandwich and keeping score.

1:45 p.m.

Back in the war room midway through the sixth round, Green Bay – which has been interested in Williams, but, surprisingly, selected Cal receiver Trevor Davis in the fifth round – is back in touch with Focus Sports.

The Packers want to know if Williams will sign with them as a free agent if he goes undrafted, and they're offering a nice signing bonus, which Snyder negotiates up to \$5,000.

Green Bay shoots to the top of the list of possible destinations for Williams, but Snyder tells the Packers he can't commit to them yet.

"We haven't heard New England's pitch, and they've got some picks coming up here," Snyder tells his associates. "It's not about money."

He looks down at his phone.

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"Then again, they might not have a conversation (about free agents) until after it's over. And they know that if they call us now, they've got four picks left. So it's a little early."

“They’ve only drafted one receiver,” Organ supplies, helpfully, consulting a list.

“So yeah, they need receivers,” Snyder said.

But the group’s faith in New England starts to erode after the Patriots draft two linebackers and an offensive guard with their trio of picks in the sixth round. The only consolation is that the Patriots have yet to draft a receiver, and they have one final pick in the seventh round.

2:30 p.m.

The energy level in the conference room spikes as the seventh round begins.

“If the Kentucky Derby is the most exciting two minutes in sports, then ... the seventh round of the NFL draft is the most exciting hour in sports,” Snyder says.

Things are indeed heating up. The Patriots are on the clock with the fourth pick of the seventh round – 225th overall – and will likely draft a receiver.

Snyder is on the phone with the Texans. Organ is going through his list and tracking the remaining draft picks of each team that has expressed interest in a Focus Sports client.

The distinctive nine-note jingle indicating the submission of yet another draft pick resonates through the TV.

Everyone looks up.

With the 225th overall pick, New England selects ... wide receiver... Devin Lucien, of Arizona State.

“Ahhhhhhhhrrrrghhhh,” Organ groans, voicing the sentiment of his colleagues.

So much for Williams going to New England.

All is not lost, of course. The Focus Sports team huddles to weed through the free-agent offers they’ve received.

They all agree that because of the \$5,000 signing bonus proffered and the fact that the Packers are bringing in only one other free-agent receiver, Green Bay would be a great landing spot for him.

“I’m gonna go upstairs and see Dom,” Organ says.



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Former Washington State receiver Dom Williams did not get selected in the 2016 NFL draft. But he got to decide which team he joined as a priority free agent, and he picked the San Diego Chargers

3:28 p.m.

Williams comes bounding into the Focus Sports war room with his family following close behind him.

The Philadelphia Eagles are on the clock with the 251st pick, but everyone’s attention has shifted from the TV to the phones, which are now ringing incessantly.

“OK, what we got?” Williams says, brisk and businesslike.

Green Bay and Houston are in the mix, but there’s a new contender. The San Diego Chargers have offered Williams a free-agent deal.

“It’s between Green Bay and the Chargers,” Williams says. “What do you guys think?”

It’s a split vote. Two of the Focus Sports crew favor Green Bay because the situation looks advantageous. But Williams seems to be leaning toward San Diego.

Snyder's phone rings again. It's the Packers calling, hoping to seal the deal.

Snyder tells Green Bay they're in the middle of deliberations, and says he'll call them back.

The group gets into an in-depth pros/cons discussion about the merits of Green Bay vs. San Diego. The Chargers are offering a little less money than the Packers, but other than that, not much separates the two.

Snyder's phone is ringing. It's Green Bay again.

"Talk to me guys," he says to the room as he picks up.

"I think I need 180 seconds," he tells Green Bay.

Snyder looks around the room as the Green Bay representative says something over the phone.

"I think he's leaning out," Snyder says. "We've got a few teams who are on him. Houston, San Diego and you. You already offered that. ... Give me 180 seconds, I'll text you and call you back."

"Chargers," whispers Organ. Williams concurs.

Almost as soon as he hangs up with Green Bay, Snyder's phone rings yet again.

This time, it's the Chargers.

Holding the phone in one hand, Snyder looks pointedly at Williams, "We're good?" he asks, by way of final clarification.

Williams pauses, then nods decisively, "We're good."

As Snyder relays the good news to the Chargers, Grandpa Joe sidles up to Williams with a big smile on his face and pats the receiver on the back, "Hey, congratulations. This is it, now. It's over. You're in the mix!"

Realization sinks in for Williams as he shakes hands with Organ, and then turns around and envelops Grandpa Joe in a huge bear hug.

"It's locked," Snyder says, getting off the phone.

At 3:48 p.m., after hours of anticipation, years of training and decades of dreaming, Williams is officially a San Diego Charger.



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