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Monday, June 20th, 2011 at 10:15 am | 2 responses

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NBA Draft Analysis With ESPN's Experts

The Worldwide Leader's Jay Bilas, Chad Ford and Fran Fraschilla break it down.

by Kyle Stack / @KyleStack

The NBA Draft will be televised on ESPN this Thursday starting at 7 p.m. EST, a time at which NBA fans will learn where the maligned Draft class of 2011 will make its impact whenever the NBA continues its next season. It's been postulated that this Draft, while relatively deep in potential role players, won't produce a perennial All-Star. In order to fully discuss that in lieu of its coverage Thursday, ESPN provided in-house Draft experts Jay Bilas, Fran Fraschilla and Chad Ford last Thursday to discuss anything and everything Draft-related.

I joined the conference call from the beginning but wasn't able to stay on it to its conclusion. Rather than transcribe the 40-plus minutes I was on the call in a word-for-word format, I'll translate the questions asked from reporters and the answers given by Bilas, Fraschilla and Ford. Here we go:

Question: Brian Mahoney of the Associated Press asked if the NBA Draft is less of a priority for NBA general managers given the ability of teams like the Dallas Mavericks and the Miami Heat to reach the Finals with players acquired primarily through trades and free agency.

Answer: It's still important, according to all three experts. Bilas cited the [Oklahoma City Thunder](#) as an example of a team built through the Draft. ([Kevin Durant](#), [Russell Westbrook](#) and [James Harden](#) were top-four picks selected by the current Thunder brain trust from 2007-2009.)

Ford brought up the point that it's all about accumulating assets. That's what the [Boston Celtics](#) did years ago when they traded for [Kevin Garnett](#). [Al Jefferson](#), a core element of the trade package that enticed the [Minnesota Timberwolves](#) to deal Garnett, was drafted by the Celtics. The Celtics used their fifth overall pick in the 2008 Draft to convince the then-SuperSonics to deal [Ray Allen](#). Many other examples throughout the NBA exist; draft picks are, at the very least, a way for teams to gain leverage in trade and free agent talks.



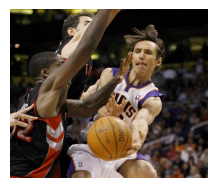
Question: The USA Today's Jake Kaplan wondered to whom Kyrie Irving compares among point guards taken high in recent drafts.

Answer: Ford said the most apt comparison is to [Chris Paul](#), although he was quick to point out that Irving isn't as talented and certainly not as accomplished as was Paul coming out of college. Which means he's not comparable to more explosive athletes at the position, including [Derrick Rose](#), Westbrook and [John Wall](#). Irving doesn't do one thing that sets him apart from the competition, according to Ford. Yet he's still quite good across the board. "The thing that is intriguing about Kyrie Irving is that he doesn't have a lot of holes in his game," Ford said.

While Fraschilla noted the 6-3 Irving was taller than he had believed as well as being one of the best three-point shooters among recent lottery-pick point guards, Bilas noted he's a good athlete in ways not related to his jumping ability or speed. "He changes pace and direction really well, he has a good feel for the game," Bilas said. "He's a good leader. He's a really mature kid." Fraschilla also emphasized that Irving is a "very dominant left-handed driver," which is unusual for a righty. The consensus was that Irving is a very safe pick despite his lack of potential superstardom.

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Question: The question from Paul Coro of the Arizona Republic regarded the depth of big men in the lottery range. Coro also asked about a shooting guard who can be a go-to scorer.

Answer: Fraschilla likes Klay Thompson from Washington State, who he called a very good shooter and a better athlete than people think. Bilas cited Texas' Jordan Hamilton for his scorer's mentality and Providence's Marshon Brooks, who he said is a terrific scorer.

Ford thought Nikola Vucevic from Southern Cal is a big man on the rise. At 6-11, Vucevic has a 7-4 wingspan; he can disrupt shots and passes. Fraschilla said Enes Kanter of Kentucky is a power forward-center hybrid in the spirit of [Al Horford](#). He noted Lithuanian big Jonas Valanciunas is the only true center expected to be selected in the lottery.

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Zach Morris Posted: Jun.20 at 4:15 pm

Jerry, I'm fairly certain that teams are relying on Kanter's ratings on rottentomatoes.com to determine his draft value. Currently, he's certified fresh but there's always the chance that critics could go sour on him before the draft. You're welcome for the info!

SportShouting Posted: Jun.20 at 5:00 pm

Here's another mock draft posted this week <http://bit.ly/iJr78U> – it's going to interesting to see how this plays out

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