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When NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell walks across the stage on the last weekend in April and steps up to the podium to announce the next draft picks, Stephon Morris will be waiting at the edge of his seat to hear his name.

Morris, a speedy 5’7” cornerback from Penn State is among the hopeful college prospects with a chance of being selected. For Morris, a lifetime of hard work toward a dream of playing in the NFL came down to a mere 4.24 seconds on March, 11 inside Holuba Hall at his pro day at Penn State. When he ran the 40-yard dash and caught the eye of NFL scouts visiting campus.

Morris, a senior from Greenbelt, Md., will graduate on May 4th with a degree in Telecommunications. He hopes that when he crosses the stage to get his degree he’ll have even bigger things on his mind, like his first upcoming NFL practice.

In football, the difference between a 40-yard dash that is 4.24 seconds and one that is 4.6 seconds is the difference between going to the NFL, playing a sport you would kill to play for a living and making the big bucks or working a day job for the rest of your life making half that money.

“Waiting is the worst part, not knowing where you’re going,” said Morris referring to these last days leading up to the draft. “It’s an experience that you have to go through,” said Morris about the stress of waiting. Morris said he has been training very hard with Penn State Lifting coach Craig Fitzgerald not only to prepare himself physically for the NFL, but to help cope with this stress of waiting.

The upcoming 2013 NFL draft that will air all weekend on ESPN starting Thursday, April 25th will include a crop of eight Penn State football players available for any NFL teams seeking eager, hard-working and talented players to snatch up with a phone call. This is what it comes down to in the draft, a phone call. A call that can make the difference between a winning season and losing season for NFL franchises.

This year’s talent from Penn State will learn their fate in the coming weeks, making these times to wait some of the most nerve wracking moments of their lives. Among these players are linebackers Michael Mauti and Gerald Hodges, defensive lineman James Terry, Sean Stanley and Jordan Hill. Running back Michael Zordich, quarterback Matt Mcgloin, and cornerback Stephon Morris.

Hill is considered the best player available from Penn State according to ESPN. Mauti was named a first team all-Big Ten conference player, an ESPN All-American and was a recipient of the Butkus Fitzgerald Award given to the Big Ten’s top Linebacker this according to ESPN. Hodges was 4th in the Big Ten Conference in tackles his senior season with 109 of them. He was also an all-Big Ten linebacker his senior season, all this according to goPSUsports.com.

Morris’s career was not as impressive as these three players. But to NFL scouts, his speed is what makes him stand out among the rest at his position. Terry, Mcgloin, Zordich, and Stanley all had impressive careers. They do not however have the same amount of hype surrounding them as do Mauti, Hill and Hodges based on ESPN rankings.

Linebacker U is what Penn State is best known for, shipping out All-American NFL caliber linebackers like an assembly line. Every year Penn State seems to have a great linebacker, if not a couple. For defensive backs at Penn State, corners and safeties, it has not been the same story. This has been one of the positions that rarely produce NFL caliber talent.

A speedy corner like Morris may be living his dream of representing Penn State in the NFL very soon. “Penn State has a lot of good players in the NFL,” said Morris. Referring to the graduates of Linebacker U and the other abundance of talent that has been Penn State in the NFL, Penn State fans know, it’s some big shoes to fill. “It will be one the first years the NFL world is going to realize Penn State has not only Linebacker U but they have good defensive backs too,” said Morris about his future in the NFL.

James Terry a senior from New Castle, Del., is another prospect representing Penn State in the draft, coming in at 6’3” and 316 lbs. he has the size to play in the NFL according to NFL standards. Terry is a defensive tackle, one of the most popular positions in the draft especially this year. “I’ll take anything I can get,” said Terry referring to a shot in the NFL. “I’m working hard to get a shot, if I don’t make it, it’s OK I won’t beat myself up about it,” said Terry. He understands what he is up against.

Terry is spending his time leading up to draft training harder than he ever has before, hoping to catch the eye of an NFL team and to cope with the stress of waiting for the draft. Both Morris and Terry plan to go into the workforce if they do not make it into the NFL, but to them this is certainly not ideal.

After all the hard work, their dreams of playing in the NFL are all these prospects really have left. They can only wait, hope, and pray for the best. This time left to wait can be some of the worst stress any human being can experience, their livelihoods on the line. Morris has dreamed of playing in the NFL since he was a kid. “I’ve been a Dallas Cowboys fan my whole life, I’d play for the Cowboys,” said Morris referring to his favorite NFL team. “I would want to play for the Eagles,” said Terry about his dream of possibly playing the NFL. It’s now up to the NFL to decide if they want to grant these wishes.

Interviewed Subjects:

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James Terry, 302-521-5835

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