



April 25, 2008

Avril, Keglär eagerly await draft call

By TOM KUBAT

tkubat@journalandcourier.com

While Dustin Keller, former Purdue tight end and Lafayette Jeff three-sport star, may have moved to the head of the class, Cliff Avril and Stanford Keglär also have positioned themselves well for this weekend's NFL draft.

Most experts are predicting that Keller will be a late first-round or second-round selection. But it looks like Avril and Keglär won't be far behind.

"I'm hearing the same thing basically, but I try to tone as much of that stuff out as possible," said Avril, a former linebacker/defensive end for Purdue. "People are telling me that I could go as high as the second round, but maybe the third round."

Keller, Avril and Keglär all boosted their pro stock with outstanding workouts at the NFL Scouting Combine in February.

Avril, who finished his Purdue career as a defensive end, worked out with the defensive linemen and had the best time in the 3-cone drill, his vertical jump was fourth-best and he was eighth in the broad jump.

Keglär, an outside linebacker at Purdue, placed in the top 5 in all seven of the linebacker drills, including first in the bench press, 3-cone drill, 20-yard shuttle and 60-yard shuttle.

"It's been a long process, ever since January, training in Cincinnati, going to the Shrine (all-star) game and then the combine," Keglär said. "This weekend I'll be anxious and at the same time a little nervous. More excited than anything."

In recent weeks, Keglär visited the Tennessee Titans' facilities, while Avril also was flown to the Titans' complex, in addition to taking trips to Pittsburgh, Atlanta, Buffalo, New England and Detroit.

"If teams invite you to visit them they obviously have an interest in you, but you never know," Avril said. "I've heard from so many different people. Sometimes a team that didn't show interest often is the one that takes you. So it's all up in the air until (this weekend)."

Avril is being looked at as both a defensive end and linebacker, depending on whether the team lines up in a 3-4 or 4-3 alignment.

Even though Keglär always has been an outside linebacker at Purdue, he said some teams are considering him as a middle linebacker or giving him a look at defensive end.

"Keglär is an athletic kid who had a nice year and is going to end up probably a third- or fourth-round pick," ESPN draft analyst Mel Kiper Jr. said. "There is some upside, which is what you want. He has yet to play his best football and I think he can get better."

"Avril is a combo defensive end/linebacker who I've thought all along could be a third- or fourth-round pick. It wouldn't shock me if he went a little higher than that. The second round is not out of the question."

Kiper wasn't as optimistic about Dorien Bryant's draft outlook, in part because Purdue's leading wide receiver struggled somewhat at the combine.

"You thought he could maybe be a third- or fourth-round guy," Kiper said. "During the season he was catching a lot of balls. But there's a size issue, and the fact that he's not able to get open and separate like you would expect. He's not as explosive and as fast as you thought he was.

"The system obviously helped him catch a lot of balls at Purdue. I think he's probably now a late-round pick. I'd say like a fifth-, sixth-, seventh-round guy."

Avril and Kegljar both figure that being considered at more than one position creates more opportunities for them.

Kegljar plans to watch the draft proceedings with family in Indianapolis, while Avril will do the same in Green Cove Springs, Fla.

"These past four months have been the longest four months of my life," Avril said. "The time between the end of our season and the combine was very long. It's been a long process.

"It'll be exciting to get drafted but that's just the first step. Then you have to go out and make the team."
