

# Michael Sam might drop in draft after coming out

BY REBECCA DOU  
STAFF WRITER

"I am a gay man," said Michael Sam in an interview with ESPN. Those five words from a NFL prospect sent shockwaves globally.

If selected in the upcoming draft, Sam will be the first openly gay athlete in the NFL.

In August, before the football season kicked off for the University of Missouri, Sam's teammates were the first to hear the news. The locker room supported him and his decision.

"It wouldn't be a big issue," said first-year lacrosse player David Felipe. "I would be fine with it as long as it didn't affect the locker room."

Although his sexual orientation was old news to his teammates, the issue raised many questions in the eyes of the public.

"Initially, I thought it was great," said Northern High School cheerleading captain Bianca Decatur in an email interview. "Coming out is terribly difficult for anyone, and doing it in the public eye must be ten times worse."

Many of his peers thought Sam's coming-out announcement would affect his chances of getting drafted.

"People insist that it will affect his draft placement, but he is one of the best football players in the country," said senior football player Faris El-Ali in an email interview. "His sexuality has nothing to do with his ability to compete."

Sam's football abilities cannot be denied. Just this past year, he was awarded the 2013 Southeastern Conference Defensive Player



Michael Sam played for the University of Missouri and will be a contender in the 2014 NFL draft.

of the Year, an accomplishment in its own right.

"According to the experts, Michael Sam is listed as one of the best college football players this year," said head football coach Chris Rusiewicz. "His sexual preference did not impact his abilities to perform his craft on the football field."

Some players, like New Orleans Saints' linebacker Jonathan Vilma, voiced concern about the locker room situation in an interview with the NFL Network.

"Imagine he's the guy next to me, and you know, I get dressed, naked, taking a shower, the whole nine, and it just so happens he

looks at me, how am I supposed to respond?" said Vilma.

Sam, though, has already handled the situation professionally.

"Like I said (before), my teammates accepted me," said Sam. "We showered together in the locker rooms, and it was never a problem."

"It is a business workplace, and we have to act professional."

Sam's announcement comes at a time when an increasing number of people have become comfortable with increased awareness of the LGBTQQA community.

As a result, there is hope that Sam will be

able to change the stereotype that gay men are less masculine.

"Every man or woman who comes out changes the perspective of those around them," said Brian Kitts, co-founder of the You Can Play project in an email interview with The Guilfordian. "In Michael's case, there are a lot of college, pro football players and fans who now know someone who's gay."

"I'd like to think the definitions of masculinity and femininity that define athletes will start to fade."

Others believe he will be seen as an exception rather than the rule.

"The LGBTQQA community is stereotyped as feminine-like males," said an anonymous member of the Gay-Straight Alliance in a phone interview. "Masculinity is, in part, defined as being straight."

"A masculine football player who comes out as gay will simply be seen as an exception to the rule."

Despite the skepticism, Sam said that he wants to inspire gay athletes in school struggling with their identity. He himself faced many struggles that, in his opinion, triumph over issues regarding his sexual orientation.

"Growing up was very hard — very hard to see the things that I saw," said Sam. "Police coming in our home, for my brothers, arresting them."

Sam's history emphasizes the idea that there is much more to a person than their sexual orientation. In the end, he wants to be known in the sports world for his sportsmanship and not the labels around it.

## To weed or not to weed: medicinal marijuana legal in state, but not in sport?

BY JAMES SHARPE  
STAFF WRITER

"The NFL could definitely benefit from medical marijuana," said Elle, an employee at The Clinic Colorado whose last name was withheld, in a telephone interview with The Guilfordian.

In an interview with USA Today, NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell said that the NFL has not ruled out the use of medicinal marijuana for concussions and other head injuries.

"If they legalize, it should be for retired players who sustained significant injuries," said junior football player Josh Williams.

Marijuana is legal for medicinal purposes in 20 states. The NFL has 10 franchises in those states.

If and when marijuana is proven to be beneficial to injured NFL players, it should be legalized to the full extent for medical usage.

"There are many unknown facts about the effects of medical marijuana yet to be discovered," said James Barnhill, a sophomore EMS student at Guilford Technical Community College in an interview with The Guilfordian.

But the facts must be there for 20 states to have legalized the cash crop for therapeutic use.

"CBD, or cannabidiol, can reduce swelling or inflammation in patients," said Elle. "Being that a concussion can consist of brain swelling and severe headaches, it appears that CBD may help reduce inflammation in concussion victims."

According to The Salt Lake Tribune, CBD is a non-psychoactive chemical in cannabis.

The NFL still has a stern grip on the marijuana policy today. There is a zero-tolerance rule, even if pot is permitted in the player's state.

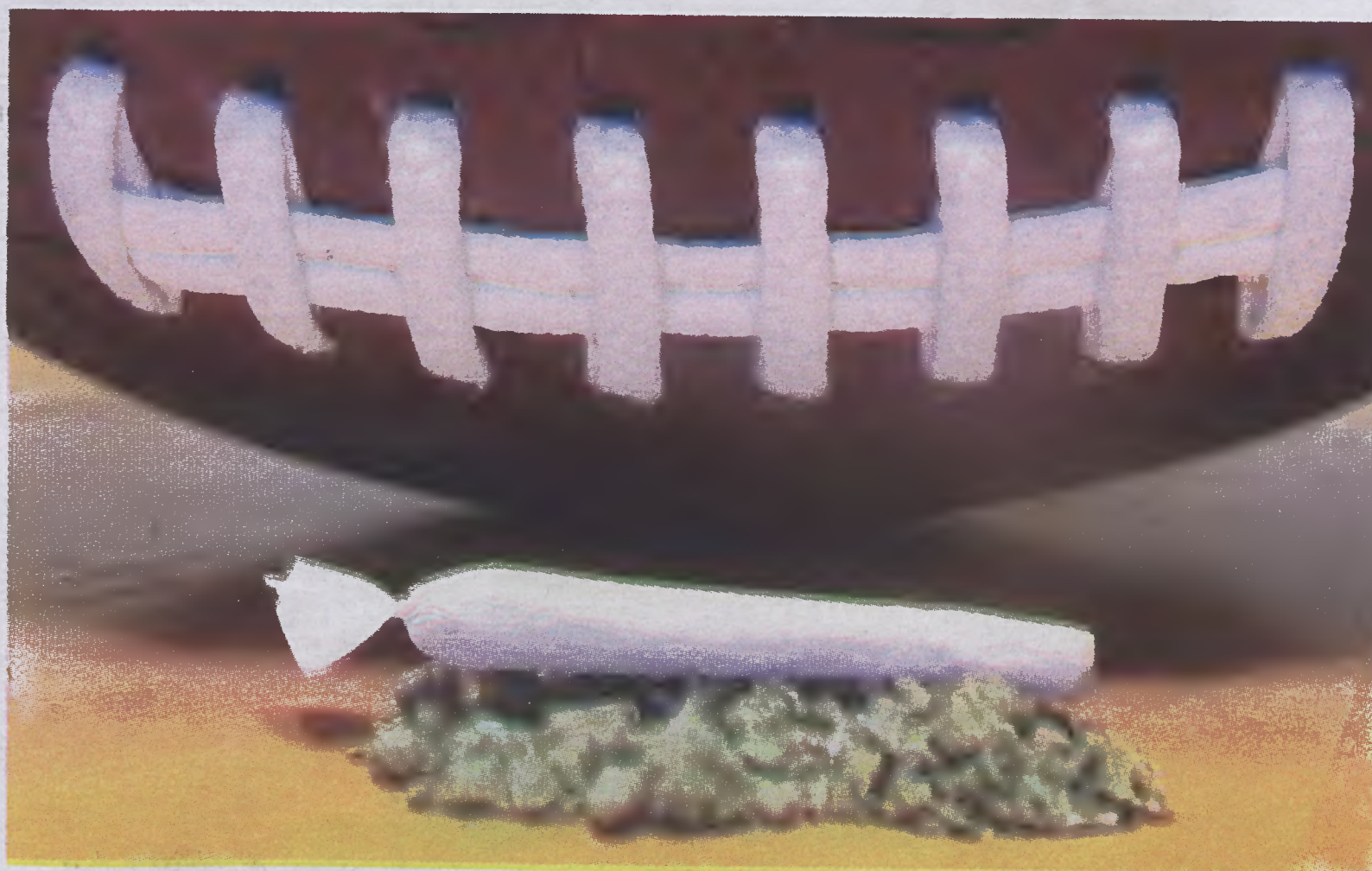
Seattle Seahawk cornerback Brandon Browner missed out on playing in Super Bowl XLVIII after testing positive for marijuana in December.

What if the NFL were to turn a leaf and legalize?

"It could definitely help the recovery process," said Barnhill. "However, there are a lot of variables yet to be discovered."

The NFL does not want to be a direct representative of marijuana, and it certainly does not want to be to blame for a new era of potheads.

"If NFL players were allowed to smoke, then kids and teens would want to smoke as well," said Ryan Scanlan, a junior at Chowan



University in an interview with the Guilfordian. "They look up to the players as role models."

For the NFL to approve medical marijuana, they would need to see the direct effect. This could turn out to be a timely process.

However, Goodell is willing to change the drug policy if it

benefits a healthier league.

"We'll continue to follow medicine," said Goodell according to the Bleacher Report. "That's something we would never take off the table if we could benefit our players at the end of the day."

The NFL has not changed their

policy thus far, but at least they are considering the move.

Medicinal marijuana is legal in nearly half the nation already for its wide variety of benefits. Legalizing marijuana in the NFL would be as highly beneficial as it has been to cancer, glaucoma and seizure patients.