

NFL DRAFT

Draft day was fruitful for black collegians



Kevin Little's versatility at North Carolina A&T should put him in a prime position to play middle linebacker for the San Diego Chargers.

Photo by Max Dunhill

The 1992 NFL Draft was very fruitful for predominantly black colleges as 29 players were selected in late April.

Four players could have been picked in the first round, but Robert Porcher, a South Carolina State defensive end, was the only black college player to get the nod in Round 1. Porcher, who was chosen by the Detroit Lions with the 26th overall pick, became the first player from a predominantly black school to be taken in the first round since Mississippi Valley State wide receiver Jerry

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Rice in 1985.

"Robert, I think, will add a new dimension to our team because he can get upfield," said Ron Hughes, director of player personnel for Detroit.

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Or maybe it was just plain economics. For several years, many cynics in the world of black college football have said that NFL teams purposely pick black college players in the later rounds because they allegedly don't want to pay them as much money — even if they warrant being selected in a higher round.

Still, Porcher was one of the four black college players selected with the top 40 picks. After Porcher, four black collegians were taken in the second round.

The Indianapolis Colts selected Mississippi Valley State cornerback Ashley Ambrose; the Dallas Cowboys picked Jackson State wide receiver Jimmy Smith; Minnesota selected Southern University defensive end Robert Harris; and Houston picked Alabama State linebacker Eddie Robinson Jr.

The Colts are excited about picking Ambrose at cornerback, says defensive coordinator Rick Venturi. "We feel he has cover ability," Venturi said. "He'll get down and challenge you and he's a fine, all-around athlete and did a real good job of returning kicks."