

SPORTS

Paul Farmer | Sports Editor | 425.4646 ext. 264



Kobe Bryant and the Lakers take 3-0 lead over the Nuggets. Page B3

Pitching for a cure

Little Leaguers take part in Strikeouts for Autism

By PATRICK CREAVEN
DAILY REPUBLIC

FAIRFIELD — Mickey Coyne looks and acts like thousands of other 9-year-old boys.

He likes video games, reading and sports, especially baseball. If he liked acting, he would fit in perfect on Nickelodeon.

But growing up, it has been difficult for Mickey to understand why his younger brother Brendan wasn't more like him. Some of his friends even made fun of him because Brendan is different.

"If we were going somewhere, he would sometimes ask if Brendan had to come," said Faith Coyne, Mickey and Brendan's mother. "He wasn't ashamed of his brother. It just didn't make sense to him."

Brendan, who is eight, is autistic. Though he functions well for an autistic child, he still

struggles. Ask him, "What color is this?" and he can answer the question. Ask him, "What did you do today?" and he gets confused.

Brendan isn't alone. According to a 2007 report by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, about 1 in 150 American children have autism. There is debate between doctors if autism is an epidemic, but what is accepted is the causes are unknown and there is no cure.

The problem is vast, maybe even overwhelming for some, but it didn't stop Mickey from coming up with a way to help his brother.

Strikeouts for Autism

In 2005, Major League Baseball pitcher Barry Zito, then with the Oakland Athletics, set up a national project that gives money

If you would like to join Strikeouts for Autism, e-mail Faith Coyne at strikeouts@sbcglobal.net for more information.

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Courtesy photo



Chris Jordan/Daily Republic

Above, brothers Mickey, right, and Brendan Coyne pose for a photo. Mickey got the idea of Strikeouts for Autism when he was watching major leaguer Barry Zito pitch. Zito has a foundation called Strikeouts for Troops that helps military hospitals around the country. Left, Cain Madison watches his team play in a Cordelia Tri Valley Little League game recently. Cain is one of the players that joined the Strikeouts for Autism effort.

2008 NFL DRAFT

Raiders go with RB McFadden

Was two-time Heisman runner up

By JOSH DUBOW
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

ALAMEDA — Lane Kiffin readily admits that running back was not a primary need for the Oakland Raiders in the NFL draft.

Even though the Raiders are pretty well-stocked in the backfield, a player with the dynamic talents of Darren McFadden proved too intriguing to pass up. Oakland selected the two-time Heisman Trophy runner-up with the fourth pick in the draft Saturday, giving last year's No. 1 overall pick, quarterback JaMarcus Russell, a potential game-breaker on offense.

"I knew months ago that this was the guy that we had to have and we had to figure out a way to get him," Kiffin said. "Hopefully, he was going to fall to us. . . . Fortunately, he was still available and in the end we got everybody on the same page. We're all really excited."

Considered by many scouts as the most talented player in the draft, McFadden has been compared by Kiffin

to 2005 Heisman Trophy winner Reggie Bush, who starred at Southern California when Kiffin was the Trojans' offensive coordinator.

McFadden ran for 4,590 yards and 41 touchdowns in three seasons for Arkansas, averaging 5.8 yards per carry. He also showed off his passing skills with seven touchdown passes and caught 46 passes for a team that did not use its running backs as receivers very often.

"I like the way he uses his running backs," McFadden said about Kiffin. "When he was at USC he moved his running backs around a lot. I just love the way he does that, I feel it's something I can bring to Oakland, being a versatile player, that I can move around and give them a different style."

Kiffin talked before the draft how the Raiders were stocked at running back after re-signing Justin Fargas to a \$12 million, three-year contract earlier in the offseason, renegotiating Dominic Rhodes' contract, and with Michael Bush, who missed his rookie

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— Raiders coach Lane Kiffin

season recovering from a broken leg. LaMont Jordan is also on the roster but likely will be gone before training camp.

Kiffin said McFadden complements Fargas and Rhodes well and can be used in a two-back set with either back, out wide as a receiver or at tailback.

While McFadden has some similarities with Bush in terms of his versatility, he is a more accomplished inside runner and might be better suited to the rigors of the NFL.

Bush has struggled a bit his first two seasons, averaging only 3.7 yards per carry for New Orleans. Kiffin said he has to be careful not to use McFad-

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The Associated Press

Running back Darren McFadden, from the University of Arkansas, holds up a jersey after being announced as the fourth pick overall by the Oakland Raiders in the NFL Draft Saturday.

49ers choose DT Balmer from N.C.

By GREG BEACHAM
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SANTA CLARA — The San Francisco 49ers spent draft day in the trenches, replenishing their depth on the lines that too often got dominated last season.

San Francisco picked defensive tackle Kentwan Balmer of North Carolina on Saturday with the 29th overall pick, claiming a stout run-stopper with enough athletic ability to play at end or nose tackle in the 49ers' 3-4 defensive scheme.

The Niners then pulled a minor surprise by choosing offensive guard Chilo Rachal of USC with their second-round pick, the 39th overall. Rachal is a physical talent with ample potential, but he expected to fall



BALMER

further down the board after leaving the Trojans one year early because of his mother's ill health.

"Both will be impact players on our roster, I'm confident of that," coach Mike Nolan said. "How extensive, we'll let that happen on the field. We'll play that out. . . . I think they were the two best players at the time we chose."

Balmer developed into a likely first-round selection during his senior year with the Tar Heels, when the program was taken over by former Cleveland Browns coach Butch Davis.

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The Associated Press

NFL commissioner Roger Goodell, left, poses with Michigan tackle Jake Long, who was selected first overall by the Miami Dolphins in the draft.

As expected, Long is No. 1

C. Long 2nd, Ryan 3rd

By BARRY WILNER
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK — Forget the intrigue at the top of the draft. The NFL invited a half-dozen players to the draft Saturday, and they went in the first six picks.

Then things went a bit crazy. From Michigan tackle Jake Long, who already had signed with the Miami Dolphins, to defensive end/linebacker Vernon Gholston going sixth to the New York Jets, there was an air of predictability to the proceedings. Unlike last year, when Notre Dame's Brady Quinn had to wait hours to be chosen, the players on-hand hit the Radio City Music Hall stage quickly.

"It's great to see the green room empty," said Virginia defensive end

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