Zach Miller ([00:02](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=yqxS4QL7pbgvAW5MPT2boHq2QGOOyuDSNJ6RicL28zovfEyN7n4SGcWRNDdM8MUW5EvlolB5XxGGVjjUMOZ4X5CqNxY&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2.2)):

Welcome back to the NFL Players Podcast. I'm Zach Miller. This week I want to talk about and dive into a question I get commonly asked and it's from underclassmen in college that have NFL aspirations. They've done well in college. They've performed well. They've done everything they've been asked to do, and they're just trying to make one of the toughest decisions you can make as a 19, 20, 21 year old. It's whether to stay another year in college or to leave and go the NFL and fulfill that dream that so many young players have since they were a little kid.

I just want to kind of run through my decision-making process when I left ASU early to go in the NFL. I was lucky enough to get drafted in the second round. There's a lot of things to kind of analyze and go into on what goes into that decision. It's someone you want to bring in, some of your closest helpers, the people that you go to for advice, you want to bring them in on that decision help you be able to vet those tough choices you have to make. And if you do end up making that decision, you have to enter the whole agent world and the draft training and all those things.

When I was an underclassman at ASU, I got a chance to play as a true freshman, had real good success as a freshman, good success sophomore and then in the junior year. The biggest thing in my thought process was to just gather as much information as possible. I sought out advice from family, friends, guys that had played at ASU before me. I think that's your first thing is just kind of get advice on whether you're ready to go to the next level, and eventually you'll start talking to agents. And agents, they do have a vested interest in you going to the NFL because they want to represent you.

They want to see you drafted. They want to see you perform well in the NFL because it benefits them. You really have to use those agent contacts to kind of help you make that decision. The other part of it is family. You want to bring them in to help you be able to vet some of the people that might be hired as advisors. When an agent is pitching you, you want to know what general managers they're talking to, who they are, what guys have come before you at that position, and then what they've done for that player in the NFL.

It comes down to a financial decision, but it's not just a financial decision. There are other aspects to this choice, whether it's staying another year in college, enjoying your time before you really reach the professional level where it's so intense, it's so much at a different level. There's multiple aspects in that decision there. I think you should always look at the data and the statistics of what happens to guys that leave early, and it's pretty good. The underclassmen that leave early, most of them end up making an NFL team.

Now, whether they're drafted early or not, that's a different story. About one out of seven guys don't make an NFL roster after leaving school early, so that's something that you don't want to have happened. The earlier you're drafted, the better chance you have of making it on an NFL team. You really want to evaluate whether you should leave early. It turns out that the FBS schools, if you play at one of those big time colleges, you have a better chance of making a roster than you do if you're at a smaller school. That's just what the stats and the data says.

All this you want to collect, make a rational decision on whether it makes sense to forego a senior year. Another aspect of it that you definitely want to evaluate is what can I prove in a senior year or one more extra year that I wasn't able to prove in my first two to three years. I'll go back to my decision-making process, and I had had three years of game tape out there for the scouts and the general managers to see. If you have something left to prove that you can put on film, because that's essentially how you're going to get drafted.

As much as the emphasis is put on the combine and moving your draft stock around, so much of it is just the game tape you've put on in college, freshmen, sophomore, junior year. If you don't have that game tape, that is one check in the box to maybe think about staying for another year to be able to prove that you're NFL ready, because so much of the decision comes down to, "Even if this guy is super athletic, is he mature enough? Is he mentally ready to enter the NFL? Not to mention, physically ready with another year in college.

You're so young. You're still developing. You're still getting stronger. You're still building out your frame." I noticed just coming in at ASU, I was so much lighter than when I left ASU and being able to put on that kind of weight because you have to last through a 16 game season and soon to be 17 game season in the NFL. Those are all part of the process. There's no right decision, I'm not going to say, because in my circumstance it worked out well that I was drafted as a second round draft pick, that you should do that.

You have to really evaluate it on a situation by situation basis and make the best available choice at that time. On the other side of the coin, if you do stay, you have not just injury risks, but you have poor performance risks if you put another year of game tape out there and you don't play well or you're injured. I go back to the story of I was drafted in Oakland and the same draft class, Michael Bush was a running back at Louisville. He was a fourth round pick and he had petitioned the NFL to see what his draft grade was the year before.

They gave him not a first round grade, which was what he was looking for. Michael Bush, he decided to stay for his senior year. The very first play or the very first game of the next season, he breaks his femur. He falls to the fourth round the following year. And then if you look at the other side, there's other guys that have stayed a senior year, put up even amazing game tape, improved their draft stock and were either first or second round picks all because they came back, had a great season, and were able to show scouts and GMs how good of a player they were and just shot up the draft board.

So really when it comes down to it and something you should always look at, if you are going to stay for that senior year, you need to get disability insurance on that last year. Because if something like that does happen, you need to be able to secure some of that financial risk you're taking by staying in your senior year. And then when you're evaluating agents, your agents need to take into account the financial aspect of foregoing one extra year of NFL money, because one more year in the NFL allows you to get to free agency that much quicker.

Your our body only has so many plays in it, so you have to really evaluate how much more can my body take if I stay another senior... If I stay a senior year in college, then I'm not going to have another year to play in the NFL possibly, because those hits they add up in college as well as they do in the NFL. And I think that pretty much sums it up. The decision is not an easy one. It worked out in my case, but hundreds of guys each year leave early for the NFL. You see so many that may either go undrafted and some that get drafted very early.

You got to bring in the smartest people, really evaluate your agents to make sure they're taking into account the fact that there's a time value to money, which means money earned sooner is worth more than money earned later. And they need to provide that analysis. It's not a bad idea to even get a perspective of a financial person that understands those type of things. I think that pretty much wraps it up. I'd love to have any feedback.

If you were an NFL guy that left early or is going to leave early, any feedback or comments on your situation and anything else to do with the podcast, feel free to email me, text me, whatever it takes. I love getting the feedback from people that are watching. Until next time, thank you for listening. See you next time.