

SPORTS



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Mullens, as 24th pick, still has more to learn



NBA draft

► **Clippers stay true to form and take Blake Griffin with No. 1 pick | C7**

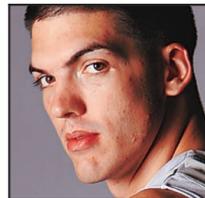
By **Bob Baptist**
THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

B.J. Mullens acknowledged after a recent pre-draft workout that a lot of people don't think he's ready for the NBA and that he'll have to prove them wrong. Last night gave Mullens more people to prove wrong, including talent scouts from a number of NBA teams.

Falling more than a half-dozen spots from where he was projected to be taken, the 7-foot freshman from Ohio State lasted until the 24th pick of the first round before the Dallas Mavericks selected him. The Mavericks then traded him to Oklahoma City for French point guard Rodrigue Beaubois, whom the Thunder picked 25th, and a future

second-round pick. "If this was the plan, I'm very excited for B.J. and his family," Ohio State coach Thad Matta said. "I think his goal was to go to the NBA and now he's got it. As I told B.J., it's now a job and it's time to go to work." Mullens did not respond to requests for an interview through his agent and an adviser.

Mullens, 20 and a Columbus native, is the fifth player in the past three years to leave Ohio State after one season and be drafted in the first round. Greg Oden went first, Mike Conley Jr. fourth and Daequan Cook 21st in 2007, and Kosta Koufos 23rd last year. The streak could extend to



B.J. Mullens
Oklahoma City Thunder

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37-YEAR-OLD ALL-STAR CENTER

O'Neal bolsters Cavs' title hopes

By **Brian Windhorst** | THE PLAIN DEALER

CLEVELAND — Shaquille O'Neal became reality for the Cavaliers yesterday, but the team had been considering the possibility for months.

How the future Hall-of-Fame center would fit into the team's offense, defense and locker room chemistry have been the subject of many meetings and private conversations. LeBron James and several other players weighed in. Team owner and check writer Dan Gilbert weighed in. There were film sessions, reams of statistical analysis and even a dossier of background research.

So yes, there was plenty of sizzle.

"Shaq is an incredible ballplayer and a four-time NBA champion," James said yesterday. "I have a lot of respect for him and his game. It will be a real honor to play with Shaq as my teammates and I look forward to another great season with the Cavs."

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ASSOCIATED PRESS PHOTOS



COMMENTARY

A trade to bring Shaq to Cleveland? It's a no-brainer for Cavs GM Ferry



MICHAEL ARACE

Shaquille O'Neal was acquired by the Cavaliers yesterday. Immediately, tremors reverberated through the NBA. Clevelanders rejoiced over the biggest trade in franchise history. Here is a 350-pound bag of gold for LeBron James, whose contract expires one year hence. Surely, LeBron will be appeased and stay home. Shaq actually can guard Dwight Howard, can't he? NBA commissioner David Stern sipped a second martini. He toasted a Cavs-Lakers game on Christmas Day, a LeBron-Kobe match in The Finals, soaring television ratings, a final boost for his 401(k).

The legions of hoops pundits eagerly diverted from blather about a middling draft to instant analysis of the blockbuster. A 37-year-old Diesel can't handle Orlando's high pick-and-roll any better than Zydrunas Ilgauskas, can he? Shaq's black-hole, low-post game will hinder the Cavs' offense rather than help it, no? Can Daddy coexist on the same floor with Bron-Bron? Mentioned, but rarely highlight-

ed, was the essential fact of the deal: It was a no-brainer. Cavs general manager Danny Ferry gave up Sasha Pavlovic, Ben Wallace, a second-round pick and \$500,000 in cash to acquire O'Neal from Phoenix. The Suns wanted to dump O'Neal's salary; he has one year, worth \$21 million, remaining on his contract. The Suns likely will buy out Pavlovic and Wallace, and treble their savings. Leave aside questions about O'Neal's age. Do not quibble about what he has left in his tank, or whether he even can jump

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HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL

OSU freshmen relish playing against world

By **Zach Swartz**
THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

For most incoming freshmen on major-college football teams, the summer routine is usually the same — high school graduation, campus move-in, workout sessions, maybe a local all-star game. But for two Ohio State newcomers, the summer of 2009 has been a little different. Linebacker Storm Klein and offensive lineman Jack Mewhort aren't spending their early summer days in the Woody Hayes Athletic Center weight room but on a synthetic field in North Canton.

Klein and Mewhort are among the 45 soon-to-be Division I athletes on the United States national team, one of eight from around the world competing in the first Junior World Championship beginning this weekend in Canton. Team USA has been practicing for the past two weeks at Walsh University and will play its opener Saturday at Fawcett Stadium, next door to the Pro Football Hall of Fame. And they are more than happy to be there. "I don't know when I'm going to

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NHL

Draft rumors fly, Jackets wait



NHL draft

AT THE BELL CENTRE
First round
7 tonight
TV: Versus
Rounds 2-7
10 a.m. Saturday

► **Hitchcock will be working with a rival | C3**

The fate of stars and draft's big names hinges on deals

By **Aaron Portzline**
THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

MONTREAL — As the NHL rumor mill kicks around some of the biggest names in hockey — Jay Bouwmeester, Dany Heatley and Tomas Kaberle — the Blue Jackets exist in a sea of relative calm heading into tonight's entry draft in Bell Centre. General manager Scott Howson has had trade talks with at least four clubs, he said, but only trades that would involve draft picks. The Blue

Jackets hold the No. 16 overall selection in tonight's first round, but might be looking to move. "We're not talking about a big move in either direction," Howson said. "Just a couple of spots, depending on how this plays out." "We aren't willing to part with the assets it would take to move way up in the order." The Blue Jackets held final interviews yesterday with five prospects — one center, one winger and three defensemen — whom they hope or expect to be on the board at No. 16. This draft for the Blue Jackets figures to be nothing like last year's. See **DRAFT** Page **C3**