

2006 NFL Draft

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Changing agents just felt right

By Matt Leinart Special to
ESPN.com

Editor's note: Former USC QB Matt Leinart will offer ESPN.com an exclusive look into his life in the days and weeks leading up to the NFL draft (April 29-30).

My relationship with my former agent Leigh Steinberg wasn't bad by any means. But it just didn't feel right. As hard as it was, I felt like the best thing to do was part ways. My family, the people close to me, and I want what's best for me, my career, and everything that has to do with it. The relationship with Leigh wasn't going that way.

It was nothing against Leigh, but it was something that had been on my mind for a little while. I decided if I'm going to do something like this, it is best to do it at this time. Things will be better because of it. It just didn't feel right.

My other agent, Chuck Price, is my right hand man. Everything goes through him. He's my day-to-day guy. I talk to him about everything. People obviously don't know that. They're just thinking that he's just some family friend. He's extremely smart. He's extremely good at what he does. A lot of agents are just business guys and want to make money. He's completely opposite. He's obviously going to make money because it's his job, but he wants what's best for the player. He loves to establish a relationship. The fact that we had a great relationship in the first place makes it that much easier on me.

Chuck and Leigh had completely different roles. Leigh was brought in to handle the contract because Chuck doesn't have experience with that. It's something that he'll openly admit. He doesn't have experience handling a contract for a top pick. It's something that I realized also.

I surround myself with the best possible people. They are people that I trust. It relieves a lot of pressure and stress off of me. I have a lot of great people working their butt off for me while I am working my butt off on the football field.

Tom Condon will take over for Leigh. I love Tom. He was one of my first choices when I was picking an agent, but I was unsure about the whole situation with IMG. I think Tom is a great agent. He's got a great reputation. He's a great guy. I feel a better connection there. The fact that he's with Creative Artists Agency now and they are all under one agency makes it easier as well.

CAA is the type of agency that can handle my marketing and endorsements for the long term. After I get established as a player, they can help me off of the field. People need to understand that my number one priority is to get established as a football player. CAA will maximize my opportunities off the field.

The most important thing for me to focus on right now is the next week and a half.

I wanted to try to relax this past weekend.

I went to my Aunt's house on Sunday for Easter. We had an Easter egg hunt. My family usually splits up \$50 between the eggs. They didn't tell us, but this time they stuck \$100 in one of the eggs. I found that egg. I gave my brother Ryan \$5 out of generosity. That's courtesy right there. He showed a lot of effort in his Easter egg hunt, but he just couldn't cut it.

MATT LEINART

Matt Leinart starred for three seasons at USC, leading the Trojans to two national championships and a 37-2 record in games that he started. In his three season as a starter, Leinart completed 807 of 1,245 passes

(64.8 percent) for 10,693 yards, 99 TDs and just 23 INTs.



I had to learn the Jets' playbook this past weekend since I worked out and met with them on Monday and Tuesday. I studied it a lot because I wanted to prepare myself. I look at it as if it's a job interview. You want the hard work you put in to come across.

I went out to Staples and bought a little grease board so I could visually test myself with the Jets' plays. I was able to learn the Jets playbook in a few days. Then, I was able to process it in my mind and draw it up on the board for the coaches. It's just something that has come easy to me especially in a football sense. My brother thinks I have a photographic memory. I guess maybe it is photographic -- I do have a pretty good memory. I've learned to process things quickly and retain the information.

Monday night, I went to dinner with the Jets. Coach [Eric] Mangini, coach [Brian] Schottenheimer, GM Mike Tannenbaum, and I were at the dinner.

Following dinner, all of us went to the meeting rooms and just talked football. I was up on the board for like two-and-a-half hours. They were grilling me with questions. Even though they were grilling me, it was real comfortable because there were a lot of jokes. They wanted to get to know me as a person, see how smart I am as a football player, and if I took the time to look at the stuff they gave me or if I just blew it off. We even talked about me getting Punk'd on MTV in March (it hasn't come out yet). They are all younger guys so it was pretty easy to relate. We met until 11:30 p.m Monday night.

Tuesday, I picked up the coaches. They were staying at a hotel right next to my apartment. I drove over to USC and met with them for another hour and-a-half talking football again. I then walked on the field and worked out. We were making jokes and I told them I could throw right-handed, so I rolled out and did it. It was a little wobbly, but looked alright.

I love learning football and new things. I think I impressed them and did a good job.

I left for New Orleans early Wednesday morning to meet with the Saints.

Thursday, I will meet with them a little more and then I have a flight out to Oakland in the afternoon. I finish the meetings with the Raiders on Friday and then come home. I'm off for a few days and then I go to New York.

I can't wait for the draft to come.

We've set up a mailbag and you can [send Matt questions or comments](#).