

2006 NFL Draft

Message Board Updated: May 11, 2006, 12:09 PM ET



Leinart feels image is blown out of proportion

By Matt Leinart
Special to ESPN.com

Editor's note: Former USC QB Matt Leinart gave ESPN.com an exclusive look into his life leading up to and following the NFL draft.

My draft party in Las Vegas last week was great. I had been looking forward to it since I was in New York City for the NFL draft. It wasn't meant to be a spectacle. It was meant to be a place where I could get away and enjoy myself one last time with my close family and friends. That's all it was. I had a great time. My family had a nice dinner. It was an intimate setting. It was a celebration.

People can make whatever they want about it. It amazes me what went on in the media in regard to Paris Hilton following my party.

There are people in the media who just want to see what they want to see and write what they want to write. "Oh he's linked with so and so." No, I'm hanging out with someone who's a friend.

It's all this media attention. I guess you could say it's my fault, but at the same time, I'm just being a normal dude. It's hard because people who are close to me know who I am and how I act. I'm hanging out and having a good time with friends. I have my circle of friends who I've known since I was younger and trust. Then there are people who I've built relationships with in the L.A. world. There are guys in my situation that would've been a hundred million times worse than me. I didn't take advantage of anything. I haven't done anything other than be a normal person.

Celebrities have no privacy. When I was growing up, I used to look at them differently because of their fame. They're always in the tabloids. When something is said about them and you don't know if it's true, you just choose to believe it's true because it's written. It's entertainment. They're stories. My life has almost become a part of that for whatever reason.

Celebrities are really just normal people. They're just as normal as any other human being. The media portrays them in a certain way. It constantly involves their private life and it sucks. It really does. I've gotten a taste of that. It's always: Who am I dating? I'm not dating anyone. I'm really not. There's no time for me to date anybody. I hang out with people. I have a good time. I turned 23 years old today. What people don't even realize is that I was in a relationship for a year that just ended a few months back. It's a joke.

Everywhere I go and everybody I talk to gets out in the media. It makes me look a certain way when in reality I'm just a normal guy. I'm having a good time. I realize I have to make good choices and I've done all the right things. It just sucks. I'm not going to sit in my house every night, play with my thumbs and not go out.

Some of these people in the media are just a joke. I realize people are doing their jobs, but there are some people who aren't doing a good job of it. They like getting involved in people's business. They like making people miserable and bending the truth just to make their stories look good. That's all the gossip magazines are. That's what the draft became. I was really disappointed in the process because it takes away from the football. It gets to all the other little technical stuff. I realize that's part of it, but what does me being too "Hollywood" or being from L.A. have to do with me playing football? It doesn't make sense. These people have nothing else to say. I had a great three years. There's really nothing bad to say, so of course they want to say something bad. They just want to find the negatives.

My No. 1 priority is football. It always has been football. Look at my résumé.

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.

- [Draft diary: No. 10](#)
- [Draft diary: No. 9](#)
- [Draft diary: No. 8](#)
- [Draft diary: No. 7](#)
- [Draft diary: No. 6](#)
- [Draft diary: No. 5](#)
- [Draft diary: No. 4](#)
- [Draft diary: No. 3](#)
- [Draft diary: No. 2](#)
- [Draft diary: No. 1](#)

Look at the last three years. I still had to deal with all the media and "Hollywood" stuff that's going on. It didn't affect my play. I can guarantee you there were thousands of football players out there doing worse things than me. No one even gave a crap about what they were doing. It's dumb, if you ask me.

I put all my time and effort into being a football player. I want to be the best quarterback I can possibly be. I want to win the Super Bowl. I want to be in the Pro Bowl. I have goals and expectations.

When my teammates in Arizona get to know me, they're going to see I'm just a normal dude that came from L.A., loves football, and is going to be a leader.

I'm not going to let the media and all these other people control my life. I'm better than that.

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