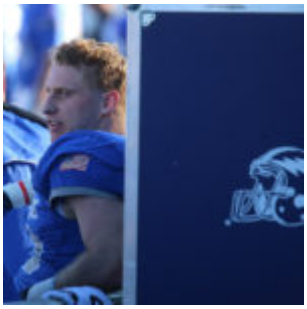
Griffin hopes NFL dream becomes reality



Air Force senior, and Louisburg High School graduate, Garrett Griffin has a big weekend ahead of him as he hopes to be selected in the NFL Draft or possibly sign on with a team via free agency.

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. – Hundreds of college football players will be sitting in front of the television this weekend, with their phone within reach, watching the National Football League draft.

It is a weekend where dreams come true for several athletes across the country.

Garrett Griffin hopes to be one of those players.

However, as the final round of the draft gets underway Saturday morning, the Air Force Academy senior won't be in front of a television. Nor will he have a phone to get updates about what is going on.

Nope, Griffin will be out in the wilderness with no way to know if his dream is about to become a reality.

"I will be out in the woods on military exercise till like 6 or so," Griffin said. "So I could get drafted and I won't even know anything until I get back. It is kind of weird, but that is what I signed up for.

“I have people calling and asking if they can come out and be with me while the draft is going on. I have to tell them ‘Guys, thanks but I am kind of busy.’”

Still, Griffin, a Louisburg High School graduate, is hoping for good news when he returns.

It sounds like it could be the case as a lot more teams have taken interest in the Air Force tight end. He is projected as a late-round pick or will perhaps sign with a team as an unrestricted free agent.

Although Griffin had his highlights throughout the season, it was his pro day at the Air Force in early March where things started to heat up for him.

Air Force tight end Garrett Griffin reportedly has several NFL teams interested in drafting or signing him as a free agent.

Griffin, who is listed at 6-feet, 4 inches and 240 pounds, ran a 40-yard dash in 4.75 seconds and had a vertical jump of 36 inches. He also had a broad jump of 9 feet, 9 inches and 15 bench reps at 225 pounds.

Those numbers seemed to please the scouts in attendance and

word of his workout made its way to other teams across the league.

“I had a pretty good pro day,” Griffin said. “Teams just wanted to see if I was athletic enough to play and that is one of my strengths. I am pretty light compared to other tight ends in the NFL who are about 255 or 260 pounds, so I still have to get stronger. I thought I ran well in the 40 and a lot of the jumping drills went well too.”

Scouts from the Detroit Lions and New Orleans Saints were on hand for the Air Force pro day and have stayed in touch with Griffin and told him they liked what they saw.

Since then, Griffin’s phone has been ringing more and more. He estimates he has talked with representatives from 15 to 20 teams and it became so hectic that he needed some help.

After what Griffin did on his pro day, Air Force head coach Troy Calhoun, who was also an offensive coordinator in the NFL, gave him some advice.

“He told me I needed to get an agent,” Griffin said. “So I went out and started looking. It took me a while to find the right person, but I eventually found him and he has done a great job. I was getting calls all the time from general managers and other people asking me to send them film or asking other questions and it was getting a little overwhelming.

“The whole process is weird because I don’t know if I ever saw myself hiring an agent and had no idea what that was going to be like. It was actually a pretty surreal moment, but it was exciting at the same time because it is looking more like playing in the NFL could happen.”

Following that hire, reports started to emerge at the different teams interested in Griffin. Along with the Saints and Lions, the Denver Broncos, San Francisco 49ers, San Diego

Chargers – and yes – the Kansas City Chiefs were also reported to have interest in him.

Griffin's name took a while to get out there as he didn't have the stats that would catch a team's eye during his senior campaign. After missing part of the season with an injury, Griffin finished the year with 12 catches for 208 yards and three touchdowns.

He was a part of a run-first Air Force option offense where Griffin's main responsibility was to block – but he did it well and was a big part of their attack.

When he came back from his injury, Air Force won five out of its next six games and the Falcons won the Mountain West Mountain Division title.

"I knew when I came to Air Force that I wasn't going to get a lot of targets and I was fine with that," Griffin said. "I knew I wasn't going to have big numbers, but I just wanted to do whatever I could to help the team win and that is what I did."

What seems to have a lot of teams interested in Griffin is his ability to play multiple positions. He has shown he can block from the tight end spot, he can also line up as a receiver and he can even do a little long snapping.

"Some of the scouts that saw me asked me to do some long snapping and I think that went pretty well," Griffin said. "The fact that I can do multiple things can only help me. I can play tight end, I can lineup as a wide receiver and I can even play a little fullback. I was actually the backup long snapper at Air Force so I have worked at that as well."

However, the one thing that could work against Griffin is the fact he plays for Air Force. Griffin is required to serve in the academy for two years following his 60-day leave after graduation – and therefore cannot be on an NFL roster until

that two years is up.

That fact could prevent him from getting drafted, but teams could still sign him as a free agent following the draft.

“A lot of people have come up to me and said that it stinks and that they should allow you to play,” Griffin said. “At the same time, I knew what I signed up for when I got here. Playing in the NFL has always been my goal, but not very many people have the chance and I needed a good backup plan and the Air Force has given me that. I think the lifespan of an average player in the NFL is like 2 to 3 years and players are always moving in and out of the league.

“If I do sign on with a team, I can go to their minicamp, OTA’s and part of training camp and find out what I need to work on before I have to report. Then I can use that two years to get bigger and stronger and hopefully be ready when that time is up.”

Still, with his future up in the air, Griffin is trying to not think about football on what could the most critical time in his life.

“I am just trying to prepare myself for everything,” he said. “I’ve thought about what is going to happen if I get drafted, or if I end up signing as a free agent or if I am done playing football altogether. I have mentally prepared for all three options and I am good with whatever happens. I am in a good place.

“Right now, I am just focused on graduating and staying in the best shape I can. I am trying not to think about football, but it is hard not to think about something that has been a life-long dream.”

A dream that he hopes comes true this weekend.