

## Openly gay player may have to wait

Sam's hopes of joining NFL team could come down to free agency

By REUTERS in New York

University of Missouri standout Michael Sam, who appeared to be poised to become the NFL's first openly gay player, may face an uphill climb to fulfill his dream as NFL analysts say he may not be drafted this week.

The pass-rushing defensive lineman, who publicly disclosed in February he is gay, was the Southeastern Conference's Defensive Player of the Year after leading it in sacks and was projected to be a middle-round selection in the NFL Draft.

But after a pedestrian showing at the NFL Scouting Combine, where players are run through physical drills and measurements of their strength, speed and athleticism, Sam's stock fell in the eyes of talent evaluators.

"It's probably going to be a frustrating week for Michael Sam," NFL Network broadcaster and draft analyst Mike Mayock said on Wednesday. "I'm rooting for the kid and I hope he gets drafted. I'm not sure he is going to get drafted."

Sam, 6-foot-2 (1.88 m) and 260 pounds (118 kg), ran the 40-yard dash at the combine in a sluggish 4.91 sec and bench-pressed 17 reps at 225 pounds for another low score among players at his position.

Gil Brandt, a vice-president in charge of player personnel for the Dallas Cowboys for nearly three decades and now an analyst for NFL Network, was more blunt about Sam's chances.

"Because of the depth of the draft this year, (some) people are not going to be drafted, whether they're Michael Sam or anybody with those kind of numbers," Brandt said at Wednesday's NFL event promoting youth football activities.

"He picked an unfortunate year. If it had been last year it would have been a different situation. But because of the depth of the draft, I doubt he will be selected."

The first round of the draft will be held on



L. G. PATTERSON / AP

Missouri's All-American defensive end Michael Sam claps during the Cotton Bowl trophy presentation at halftime of an NCAA college game between Missouri and Tennessee in Columbia, Missouri, on Feb. 15. Sam has been selected the winner of the Arthur Ashe Courage Award. The defensive end could be drafted by an NFL team this weekend.

Thursday at Radio City Music Hall in New York City followed by two more on Friday, but Sam will likely have to wait until Saturday, when the final four rounds are held, to find out his fate.

Players not drafted by one of the NFL's 32 teams are then able to sign a free-agent contract with a team to compete for a job over the summer.

### Best thing

Mayock, a former NFL player, said Sam was a "tweener", a player who lacked size when evaluated as a defensive end, and who was not quick enough to thrive in space as a linebacker and profiled as a situational pass

rusher and special teams player.

"Typically when you're a tweener you've got to have an outstanding physical trait somewhere, and his measurables... in a subset of players that are similar to him were by far the poorest," Mayock said.

But according to Mayock, not getting drafted could be the best thing for Sam in terms of finding the right place to launch an NFL career.

"Once it gets into the sixth round, you're often better off not being drafted because then you can pick your team, you can pick your situation, you can pick a coach that particularly likes you and has an interest in you making the team," he said.

Mayock and Brandt agreed Sam would get a chance to prove himself as a free agent in the event he went undrafted.

Sam is determined to pursue his dream of an NFL career.

"Where I'll go, it doesn't matter, as long as I get to play and put a jersey on my back," Sam said in an interview on ABC TV's *Good Morning America* after he was named the recipient of ESPN's Arthur Ashe Courage Award.

Brandt scoffed at those who wondered if teams might shy away from Sam because of all the attention sure to follow him, or over concerns about how his teammates would react.

## Jordan says he was racist in new book

By REUTERS

Basketball Hall of Famer Michael Jordan says in a new book that he considered himself a racist growing up.

In a new book entitled *Michael Jordan: The Life*, by author Roland Lazenby, the five-time National Basketball Association most valuable player and current owner of the Charlotte Bobcats, says that as a teenager he was "against all white people."

Excerpts of the book published on Wednesday by the New York Post include Jordan describing how growing up in North Carolina during the 1970s, where he said the Klu Klux Klan thrived, helped shaped his views on racism. In one instance, Jordan recalls a schoolgirl calling him the n-word.

"So I threw a soda at her," Jordan says in the book. "I was really rebelling. I considered myself a racist at the time. Basically, I was against all white people."

It was after that incident that Jordan's mother convinced him he could not go through life consumed by racial hatred.

Jordan, who went on to win six NBA titles with the Chicago Bulls, recently spoke out against racist remarks by Los Angeles Clippers owner Donald Sterling, who has since been banned for life by the NBA and could be forced to sell the team.

"As an owner, I'm obviously disgusted that a fellow team owner could hold such sickening and offensive views," Jordan said in a statement last month. "As a former player, I'm completely outraged."

"I am appalled that this type of ignorance still exists within our country and at the highest levels of our sport. In a league where the majority of players are African-American, we cannot and must not tolerate discrimination at any level."

chengduspecial

## Visa-free policy more fuel for soaring Chengdu

By ZHANG ZHAO  
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As international investors increase in Chengdu, the 72-hour visa-free policy that started last September has received a hearty welcome from businessmen who need to conveniently tend to their interests.

Chengdu is the fourth city in China, and the first in the western region, to offer visa-free stays following Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou.

The policy allows citizens of 51 countries who have a flight tickets to a third country to spend three days in the city.

Even amid a stagnant global economy and slowing domestic growth, Chengdu's GDP grew from 390 billion yuan (\$62.7 billion) in 2009 to more than 900 billion yuan last year, some 8 percent of the total in the entire West China region.

By the end of last year, 252 Fortune 500 companies had offices in Chengdu.

Andy Serwer, managing editor of the *Fortune* magazine, said the city is "a dynamic magnet for multinational companies."

Xue Lian, CEO of the American Chamber of Commerce in Southwest China certainly agrees.

"The fast growth rate, the good investment climate and strong market demand make Chengdu a rising 'tier-one' city," said Xue.

She told China Daily that the number of the chamber's members has increased 10-fold



SONG CHENG / CHINA DAILY

to more than 300 in less than 10 years with businesses represented expanding from manufacturing into a range of sectors including IT, finance and consultation.

She said that the AmCham Southwest is now the largest and most influential overseas chamber of commerce in the region, with the largest share of foreign companies in Chengdu from the United States.

According to the latest China Business Report from the American Chamber of Commerce in Shanghai — the largest US chamber of commerce in the Asia-Pacific region — Chengdu is the now the most preferred Chinese city for investment by US companies.

Syed Mohamad Fairus Shaik

Ismail, director of the Malaysia External Trade Development Corp's Chengdu office, is also "optimistic about the current investment environment in the city."

He said the city is upgrading its "hardware" and "software" in infrastructure, transportation, services and talent pool.

One of the major Malaysian investments in Chengdu is Hong Leong Bank, which has a 20 percent equity share in the Bank of Chengdu, he noted. Last year the Chengdu bank remained a key contributor to the Hong Leong Bank's profit, with its contribution growing by 21.7 percent.

"Hong Leong Bank has increased its investment in Bank of Chengdu in recent



The fast growth rate, the good investment climate and strong market demand make Chengdu a rising 'tier-one' city."

XUE LIAN  
CEO, AMERICAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE IN SOUTHWEST CHINA

years to support growth in new businesses as well as new markets," said Syed.

The 72-hour visa-free policy will promote both business and tourism, said Xue Lian. "As many US companies, especially smaller ones, are considering establishing their regional headquarters in Chengdu, the new policy will bring great convenience to foreign businesspeople."

Although the policy does not include passengers from Malaysia, Syed said he believes more international passengers will prefer Chengdu to be their transit city when planning a long-haul journey.

"International passengers who transit via (Chengdu's) Shuangliu International Airport will take this opportunity to better experience the city's development and the warm hospitality of local people," he said.

In 2013, 155 million tourists visited the city, an increase of 27.7 percent from the previous year. Tourism revenue reached 133 billion yuan.

This year, the government of Chengdu projects tourism revenue will reach 166.3 billion yuan as 186 million tourists visit the city, said local officials.



XIE MINGGANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Siemens Electronic Works Chengdu started operating in September in the capital of Sichuan province, the company's first overseas digital factory.



WANG XIWEI / FOR CHINA DAILY

Dell announced the opening of its new global operations base in Chengdu on June 6, 2013 as the Fortune Global Forum was held in the city.