U.S. service members attend 2012 NFL draft

Master Chief Special Warfare Operator Shawn Johnson (SEAL) announces the third round draft pick of the 2012 NFL Draft in New York. Sailors from Navy Recruiting Command and the Naval Special Warfare Command were invited to participate in the NFL draft at Radio City Music Hall April 27.

By Lt. David Lloyd, Naval Special Warfare Group 2 Public Affairs

NEW YORK – Navy SEALs from multiple commands and Navy Recruiting Command Sailors attended the 77th annual National Football League Draft (NFL), April 26-28 at Radio City Music Hall in New York City as part of a community outreach program.

The event, officially called the "NFL Player Selection Meeting", is sponsored by the NFL, which invited service members to attend and announce draft picks.

"This is a unique opportunity, and it gives credibility to the Naval Special Warfare community as a force made up of athletic members of the military," said Capt. (SEAL) Duncan Smith, director, Naval Special Warfare Recruiting Directorate. "It gives the coaches, athletes and families an opportunity to meet and talk to some of the active duty SEALs here tonight that would have never otherwise had the chance."

SEALs and Sailors from around the Fleet are attending NFL-sponsored events to inform and educate these athletes about potential career opportunities in Navy special programs such as SEALs, Diver, EOD, and others.

Master Chief Special Warfare Operator (SEAL) Shawn Johnson, a 23-year veteran who participated in several of the previous NFL scout combines this year, made the live announcement on national television.

"With the 85th pick in NFL 2012 draft, the Detroit Lions select Dwight Bentley, Corner Back, of Louisiana Lafayette," announced Johnson.

The 2012 NFL Draft pick announcement demonstrates the strong, ongoing partnership the Navy, particularly the Naval Special Warfare community, has with professional organizations such as the National Football League.

"It was an honor and great opportunity to have had the chance to make the draft pick announcement," said Johnson. "This is one of those rare, once-in-a-life-time moments. All of these athletes possess many of the same qualities necessary to be successful as a Navy SEAL. They're obviously physically fit, but they're also mentally tough and self-disciplined."

The Sailors from Navy Recruiting Command and eight SEALs marched on stage to an enthusiastic, standing ovation from the fans and guests in attendance at the Radio City Music Hall.

Members of the NFL organization were equally appreciative and offered the Sailors a personal tour of NFL Headquarters during the three-day NFL Draft Pick.

"Having two sons currently attending the U.S. Naval Academy, I'm obviously a little biased, but this is very special for the NFL too, and were fortunate and excited to be able to have such professional and dedicated athletes as the SEALs here tonight," said Ron Hill, vice president of Football Operations for the National Football League.