By BILL CATE
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Just what does it mean if you are the nation's leading collegiate passer? Just what does it mean if you are the nation's total offense leader? If you are Don Strock, last season's record-breaking quarterback at Virginia Tech, it means you are a fifth round NFL draft choice of the Miami Dolphins.

That is the situation Strock faces now. Drafted Tuesday as the ninth quarterback, the 10th player taken by the pros, Strock is with the winningest team in pro football. He is also behind one of pro football's better quarterbacks, Bob Griese.

Strock was picked behind such obscure names as Ron Jaworski of Youngstown State and Randolph Mattingly of Evansville.

"We were surprised to see Strock around that long," said Bobby Beathard, the Dolphins' director of player personnel. "We knew he'd be gone before the fifth round, but when he wasn't we felt we had to take him."

"I talked to Coach (Don) Shula," Strock said. "He said he couldn't believe I was available. Frankly, I couldn't believe it either. I thought I would be drafted higher, but I'm happy to be going with Miami."

Why? Bob Griese is in front of you. And Earl Morrall. How about Jim Del Gaizo, the third stringer?"

"Coach Shula told me he thought Morrall would retire," Strock said. "And there is some talk of Del Gaizo being traded."

"Strock is a thin guy," said Beathard. "We need to get him on a strength program for his durability. He has a good arm and he is a smart player."

"We think we have a good quarterback for the future or a backup. There are really not many things wrong with him except he is thin. He takes a beating sometimes, but comes right back. He is a tough guy."

"I saw Coach Shula at the Columbus (Ohio) sports banquet," Strock said. "We talked a lot of football. I kind of thought he was interested in me. Is there any explanation why Strock was picked so low?"

"I don't know," Strock says. "I'm disappointed because I never thought I would have been picked that late. I don't think I have any trouble with any type of pass. Some people said I couldn't throw the long pass but I have proven that I can."

Come August, Strock will have the opportunity to prove it all. This time, however, the stakes will be much higher. Like for his future.