

## Panthers Select Newton With First Pick

Written by Mike Kelly  
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The Carolina Panthers, hoping to turn their fortunes around, made quarterback Cam Newton of Auburn their No.1 pick and the top selection in the National Football League draft on Thursday.

Newton, who guided Auburn to a national title, stands in at 6-foot-6 and weighs 247 pounds. He is considered a raw talent by NFL scouts, and a prospect the Panthers must have patience with as he develops his skills at the professional level. But Newton, who won the Heisman Trophy, is considered a natural leader, despite some questions concerning his character and work ethic. He led his junior college team (Blinn College in Texas) to a national championship in 2009. And he accounted for 50 touchdowns last fall playing for Auburn. The Panthers had 17 over a 16-game season in 2010. Newton is a great athlete and he does possess an NFL-caliber arm with linebacker-like strength.

The Panthers, who last took a quarterback in the first round when they selected Kerry Collins fifth overall in their inaugural season in 1995, have been vocal in their need for a major upgrade at the quarterback position. They did extensive background checks on Newton and are confident he can develop into a mobile, dual threat QB such as Ben Roethlisberger or Michael Vick.

"He has special qualities," general manager Marty Hurney said. "We've had a strong feeling for some time that he was the person who we felt could come in and have the most impact on our football team."

The Panthers were 2-14 last season, the worst record in the NFL.

There were three quarterbacks taken in the first round of the draft. That hasn't happened since 1999. Blaine Gabbert of Missouri goes to Jacksonville with the 10th pick; Christian Ponder of Florida State goes to Minnesota with the 12th choice. Defensive tackle of Marcell Dareus of Alabama goes to Buffalo with the third pick; wide receiver A.J. Green of Georgia was taken by Cincinnati with the fourth pick and cornerback Patrick Peterson of LSU was taken by Arizona with the fifth selection.

Peterson, Dareus and Green were also considered as possible No.1 picks by the Panthers. The NFL draft resumes on Friday with rounds 2-3.