



# INSIDE NFL

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#### AROUND THE LEAGUE

The Rams selected Sam Bradford with the first overall selection in the draft, but that doesn't mean he will be handed the starting job.

Prior to the selection of Bradford, the Rams signed A.J. Feeley, who has experience with the system being coached by offensive coordinator Pat Shurmur. They were in Philadelphia together for six seasons. A few weeks before the draft, the Rams released quarterback Marc Bulger, setting the stage for Feeley to be a mentor for Bradford, and perhaps the starter when the 2010 season begins.

Not surprisingly, as the Rams opened OTAs this week, Feeley was under center with the first team. When asked if there is a No. 1 quarterback right now, coach Steve Spagnuolo said, "If we played a game today, A.J. would be the guy."

For his part, Feeley understands what will eventually happen. But he also relishes this opportunity to play, for however long that is.

He said, "You understand that side of it. It's inevitable that this is going to be Sam's team. When that time comes, who knows right now? I have goals. I have ambitions. I want to win games and play. When you're a guy in this league, all you want is the opportunity to compete. It's a chance to play again and hopefully get out there and play until I'm told not to."

Spagnuolo likes what he sees, especially from the "command" Feeley shows. Said Spagnuolo, "I can see that just when I stand there, and we're doing a walk-thru or a jog-thru. "I had seen him before in the huddle and operate in game situations, so myself and (Shurmur) were real comfortable with that, and I think he's giving us that."

Running back Steven Jackson said, "With A.J., you can see the leadership, and you can see he has the offense down pat. He knows what he is doing, and he is going to be good for us."

Of Bradford, Feeley said, "He's a bright guy. He's big. He's strong. He plays that way too. He can throw the football. He's accurate with it, and you can tell he wants to learn and he wants to play, and he enjoys playing the game."

As for that learning, Feeley was asked about the irony of helping a guy take eventually his job.

"I have no qualms," Feeley said. "I'm going to try to work with him every day. I'm going to try to help him out as much as I possibly can. The quarterbacks, you're all there to help each other. With me, I know what it's like to be in that position. The more I can help him out, the better our team's going to be."

#### ARIZONA CARDINALS

##### HOT TOPIC

Nose tackle Gabe Watson is on notice, and he knows it. Entering his fifth season, Watson has yet to secure a starting job, and the Cardinals viewed the position as one of their greatest needs this offseason.

That's why they drafted Dan Williams in the first round. A fourth-round pick in 2006, Watson has struggled with injuries and weight gain throughout his career. It's telling that veteran Bryan Robinson started over him the last two seasons.

Watson gained weight during the latter part of 2009, ballooning up to at least 360 pounds. That's about 40 pounds more than coaches wanted him to be.

Watson seems to have gotten the message. He's lost about 30 pounds this offseason and would like to get down to 315 pounds, about five less than the target weight the Cardinals have set for him.

"There were no excuses," Watson said of last season. "Toward the end of the season, I just didn't take of business the way I was supposed to."

Watson said he realized his position months before the Cardinals drafted Williams.

"It's not a challenge with another guy; it's just me challenging myself," Watson said.

Coach Ken Whisenhunt is careful about calling players out through media, but he made his feelings about Watson clear.

"It is a critical year for him," Whisenhunt said. "Anytime you're facing a numbers situation like we are, where we have good players at that position, it forces you to work harder."

Robinson, the starter the past two seasons, has re-signed for another year. His job is to mentor Williams, the likely starter. That leaves Watson in a precarious position because it's doubtful the Cardinals would keep three nose tackles, especially when the third one, Watson, is due to make \$1.759 million.

If Watson is in shape, he's an effective player. He's quick and powerful and can hold his position at the point of attack. Those attributes are why the Cardinals gave him a second-round qualifying tender.

But Watson won't make that unless he makes the team. And he knows that won't happen if he can't keep the weight off.

#### PLAYER/PERSONNEL NOTES

--Defensive end Darnell Dockett's decision to take a shower for the Internet world to see prompted a counseling session from Ken Whisenhunt and GM Rod Graves. In short, they told him he had to make better decisions.

"It's a learning experience for me," Dockett said. "I've never been in trouble, I've never been in the news or on gossip sites or things like that. I apologize to all the kids, everybody in the community who looks up to me. I apologize to my team. I walked by each player individually and apologized. I got to do better things than that."

"Y'all will never see me on no news or media, anything like that again, unless it's for me trying to take somebody's head off."

--It appears right guard Deuce Lutui doesn't plan to sign his qualifying offer until shortly before the June 15 deadline.

Lutui, a four-year starter, apparently wants a long-term deal and has been absent from all offseason activity.

His agent, Max Hannemann, has not commented on the strategy. Neither has Lutui.

Cardinals coach Ken Whisenhunt and General Manager Rod Graves don't understand Lutui's motives.

It's clear the team isn't going to give him a long-term deal at this point. There are plenty of players ahead of Lutui in that line, including defensive end Darnell Dockett.

Meanwhile, Lutui might have lost his starting job. The signing of Alan Faneca added to the team's depth at the position.

Faneca moved into the starting lineup at left guard with Reggie Wells moving to the right side, replacing Lutui. Rex Hadnot, signed from Cleveland in the off-season, is in the mix and was signed to compete with Wells and Lutui.

The Cardinals have all the leverage in dealing with Lutui. Sources said Lutui has been working out with a trainer, but the Cardinals are curious about that.

Lutui has struggled with his weight during his career, and the Cardinals wonder what kind of shape he will be in when he signs.

Lutui is expected to sign the \$1.759 million offer before June 15. After that, the team can replace the offer with one that gives him a 10 percent raise over last year. That's about \$588,000.

--Coach Ken Whisenhunt called Suns coach Alvin Gentry before the start of the Western Conference Finals.

"It was a great conversation," Whisenhunt said. "I just told him how much we admired what he had done with that team. What I respect the most is getting those guys to play together as a team, the chemistry."

--CB Greg Toler has replaced Mike Adams at right cornerback in voluntary practices. Adams ran with the starting unit at minicamp in early May, but Toler replaced him at the start of organized team activities. Toler has great athletic skills but he is still making the transition from playing at tiny Saint Paul's College to the NFL.

--ILB Gerald Hayes continues to suffer from lower back trouble, the result of a bulging disc. Coach Ken Whisenhunt said he is not concerned about the injury at this time because the season is months away. But Hayes has suffered from back problems since the end of the season, so it has to be troubling that he still has problems.

?? QUOTE TO NOTE: "The thing we have to emphasize with our team is that it's not a private conversation; it's a public forum. Anything you say or do in that forum can be instantaneously in the media." -- Coach Ken Whisenhunt.

**STRATEGY AND PERSONNEL**

The Cardinals have filled most of their needs, nearly all of which were on defense. Some young players will have to come through, however. NT Dan Williams, the first-round pick, will contend for a starting job with veteran Bryan Robinson and backup Gabe Watson. LB Daryl Washington, the second-round pick, will be given every chance to start at one of the inside positions.

Needs remain, however, at cornerback and fullback. There isn't much depth at corner, and team doesn't have an established fullback. The Cardinals will look to fill those jobs through the summer.

?? MEDICAL WATCH: CB Dominique Rodgers-Cromartie is rehabilitating after surgery to repair an MCL and chipped bone near a knee. He wasn't at full speed in minicamp but he participated in all drills.

FRANCHISE PLAYER: None.

TRANSITION PLAYER: None.

UNRESTRICTED FREE AGENTS

--CB Ralph Brown, entering his 11th season, is smart and a great locker room influence. He probably will sign a short-term deal.

--OT Mike Gandy played steady as the left tackle but likely will want something close to the \$5 million he made last year. He likely won't get that.

--FB Dan Kreider is an excellent blocker. The team would like him back. Injuries are a concern, however.

--LB Chike Okeafor is getting up in age and never was a great fit as an outside linebacker. He probably won't return.

--QB Brian St. Pierre is liked by the team, but had had back problems throughout 2009. He needs to prove he's healthy before the club re-signs him.

UNRESTRICTED FREE AGENTS (not tendered offers)

--DE Jason Banks (not tendered as ERFA).

--FB Justin Green (not tendered as RFA).

RESTRICTED FREE AGENTS (\*indicates restricted because of uncapped year)

--\*G Deuce Lutui (tendered at \$1.759M with second-round pick as compensation) was a starter at right guard. He showed improvement in 2009.

EXCLUSIVE RIGHTS FREE AGENTS: None.

PLAYERS RE-SIGNED

--S Hamza Abdullah: Not tendered as RFA; terms unknown.

--CB Michael Adams: ERFA; terms unknown.

--TE Anthony Becht: UFA; \$950,000/1 yr, \$50,000 SB.

--LB Monty Beisel: UFA; terms unknown.

--WR Steve Breaston: RFA; (tendered at \$2.396M with first-round pick as compensation); \$2.396M/1 yr.

--T/G Jeremy Bridges: UFA; 3 yrs, terms unknown.

--FB Nehemiah Broughton: ERFA; 1 yr, terms unknown.

--DT Jeremy Clark: ERFA; terms unknown.

--C/G Ben Claxton: Not tendered as RFA; 1 yr, terms unknown.

--TE Ben Patrick: RFA; (tendered at \$1.684M with second-round pick as compensation); \$1.684M/1 yr.

--DT Bryan Robinson: UFA; terms unknown.

--C Lyle Sendlein: RFA; (tendered at \$1.684M with second-round pick as compensation); \$1.684M/1 yr.

--TE Stephen Spach: Not tendered as RFA; 1 yr, terms unknown.

--S Matt Ware: UFA; 1 yr, terms unknown.

--\*NT Gabe Watson: RFA; (tendered at \$1.759M with second-round pick as compensation); \$1.684M/1 yr.

PLAYERS ACQUIRED

--QB Derek Anderson: FA Browns; terms unknown.

--LB Steve Baggs: CFL FA; terms unknown.

--TE Dominique Byrd: FA; terms unknown.

--OG Alan Faneca: FA Jets; \$2.5M/1 yr.

--PK Jay Feely: UFA Jets; \$3.5M/2 yrs, \$500,000 SB.

--G Rex Hadnot: UFA Browns; \$9M/3 yrs.

--LB Paris Lenon: UFA Rams; 3 yrs, terms unknown.

--CB/KR Justin Miller: FA; terms unknown.

--LB Joey Porter: FA Dolphins; \$17.5M/3 yrs.

--S Kerry Rhodes (trade Jets).

PLAYERS LOST

--DE Bertrand Berry: UFA; retired.

--WR Anquan Boldin (traded Ravens).  
--LB Karlos Dansby: UFA Dolphins; \$43M/5 yrs, \$11.6M SB/\$22M guaranteed.  
--CB Bryant McFadden (traded Steelers).  
--WR Sean Morey: UFA Seahawks; terms unknown.  
--K Neil Rackers: UFA Texans; \$4.1M/2 yrs, \$350,000 SB.  
--S Antrel Rolle (released).  
--\*WR Jerheme Urban: Not tendered as RFA/Chiefs; \$630,000/1 yr.  
--QB Kurt Warner (retired).

## ATLANTA FALCONS

### HOT TOPIC

Eric Ward passed for almost 9,000 yards as a four-year starter at Richmond but never heard his name mentioned during the pre-draft ramp up.

So it was no surprise that he went undrafted despite all of his success in guiding the Spiders, a Football Championship Subdivision (formerly I-AA) power out of the Colonial Athletic Conference.

But he is from Southwest DeKalb High in suburban Atlanta and was eligible to attend the Falcons' "locals" day.

The Falcons were impressed with the 6-foot-2, 210-pounder and invited him back for a tryout during their mandatory minicamp. After functioning well through five practices, he was signed as an undrafted college free agent.

"He's got very good size," Falcons coach Mike Smith said. "He's got athleticism. He was very impressive with what he was able to pick up in the meeting rooms. We felt like he was a guy that we needed to take a deeper look at."

Ward took the field as the only quarterback at the team's rookie minicamp.

"Now, I'm just coming out here and trying to make the most of it," said Ward.

Ward knows he has a big mountain to climb. The Falcons have four other quarterbacks on the roster in Matt Ryan, Chris Redman, John Parker Wilson and D.J. Shockley. Under Smith, the Falcons have carried three quarterbacks during the regular season.

But for now, he's just trying to get the most out of the rookie minicamp.

"Coming out here this week, it's just me and (quarterbacks) coach (Bill Musgrave) hitting the film room," Ward said. "We're going over stuff as many times as we need to for me to get it. I think this is going to help me out."

### PLAYER/PERSONNEL NOTES

--The Falcons have paid a great deal of attention this offseason to improving their wide receiver corps.

They drafted Kerry Meier in the fifth round. They signed promising undrafted free agents in Ryan Wolfe from UNLV and Brandyn Harvey from Villanova.

However, they haven't considered bringing in former Buffalo Bills wide receiver Terrell Owens, a proven veteran.

Some don't think Michael Jenkins is a worthy No. 2 alongside Roddy White, and the Falcons can't be 100 percent sure that Harry Douglas will make it back from his knee injury.

Last season, the Falcons got by with Marty Booker, Brian Finneran and Eric Weems splitting up the third receiver responsibilities. Booker was not re-signed.

Each time Owens has been on the market the Falcons have turned their nose up at the one-time Decatur resident.

In 1996, the Falcons selected defensive tackle Shannon Brown with the 84th pick in the third round and passed on Owens. He went five picks later to San Francisco. Brown never played a down in the league. (Tedy Bruschi was selected just two picks after Brown. He, of course, went on to help New England stack some Super Bowl rings.)

When Owens' time was up in Philadelphia, the Falcons weren't interested.

When Owens' time was up in Dallas, the Falcons weren't interested.

And now, they don't appear interested.

--Defensive end Kroy Biermann finished tied for first place in the Dancing Stars of Atlanta contest May 16, which raised funds for the Georgia Chapter of the Alzheimer's Association at The Foundry at Puritan Mill.

Biermann had a final score of 28 out of 30 to tie Georgia Tech assistant baseball coach Tom Kinkelaar for first place.

Biermann and his partner, Amber Reich of the Daza Dance Academy and Academy Ballroom, danced "The Jive" to the Robert Palmer song "Bad Case of Loving You."

Biermann, who brought his own pair of black professional dance pants for the event, helped raise more than \$145,000.

Falcons' president Rich McKay and wife Terrin McKay were there to support the event along with Falcons Board of Advisor member Ambassador Andrew Young (honorary chair) and his wife, Carolyn, who was also one of the dancers.

--In addition to the seven draft picks and 18 college free agents, five players who were on the practice squad last season are also taking part in the rookie minicamp.

Running back Antone Smith, wide receiver Andy Strickland and offensive linemen Rob Bruggeman, Blake Schlueter and Jose Valdez are participating in practice.

"The guys that were eligible to come out that were on our roster last year, it's a big opportunity for them," Smith said.

--Rookie wide receiver Kerry Meier, the team's fifth-round draft pick who suffered a hamstring injury during mandatory minicamp, participated in the workouts, but was not at full speed.

QUOTE TO NOTE: "I thought Corey (Peters) did a nice job. He's a very intelligent football player. We love his FBI (Football Intelligence). He's got the skill set to come in here and compete." -- Falcons coach Mike Smith on third round pick Corey Peters.

#### STRATEGY AND PERSONNEL

The Falcons drafted Corey Peters in the third round of the NFL draft. He lined up at nose guard with the second team during minicamp and got some extra attention during the team's rookie minicamp.

It's important for Peters to come along quickly, because Peria Jerry, who was drafted to play the position last season, is battling back from a knee injury and may not be available until late in training camp.

Peters will get a shot to beat out Thomas Johnson, who took over for Jerry, but Falcons defensive line coach Ray Hamilton expects the competition to be fierce.

FRANCHISE PLAYER: None.

TRANSITION PLAYER: None.

UNRESTRICTED FREE AGENTS

--WR Marty Booker provided depth to the wide receiving group; he's not expected to be re-signed.

--LB Tony Gilbert is a valuable backup and special teamer.

--RB Verron Haynes is a valuable special-teams player and reserve running back. He's a quality reserve and a pass-catching threat out of the backfield.

--RB Aaron Stecker provided depth when the backfield was hit with a rash of injuries; not expected to be re-signed.

UNRESTRICTED FREE AGENTS (not tendered offers)

--FS Jamaal Fudge (not tendered as RFA) joined the team after an injury, but then suffered his own injury.

--FS Antoine Harris (not tendered as RFA) is a valuable special-teams player.

RESTRICTED FREE AGENTS (\*indicates restricted because of uncapped year): None.

EXCLUSIVE RIGHTS FREE AGENTS: None.

PLAYERS RE-SIGNED

--\*OT Tyson Clabo: RFA; (tendered at \$2.521M with first-round pick as compensation); \$2.521M/1 yr.

--\*OG Harvey Dahl: RFA; (tendered at \$2.521M with first-round pick as compensation); \$2.521M/1 yr.

--WR Brian Finneran: Potential UFA; 1 yr, terms unknown.

--CB Brent Grimes: ERFA; terms unknown.

--\*P Michael Koenen: RFA; (tendered at \$2.731M with second-round pick as compensation); \$2.731M/1 yr.

--\*RB Jerious Norwood: RFA; (tendered at \$1.759M with second-round pick as compensation); \$1.759M/1 yr.

--\*OT Quinn Ojinnaka: RFA; (tendered at \$1.176M with fifth-round pick as compensation); \$1.176M/1 yr.

--QB Chris Redman: Potential UFA; \$5M/2 yrs, terms unknown.

--RB Jason Snelling: RFA; (tendered at \$1.684M with second-round pick as compensation); \$1.684M/1 yr.

--CB Brian Williams: UFA; terms unknown.

--LS Joe Zelenka: UFA; terms unknown.

PLAYERS ACQUIRED

--S Matt Giordano: FA Packers; terms unknown.

--FB Dan Klecko: FA; terms unknown.

--CB Dunta Robinson: UFA Texans; \$57M/6 yrs, \$22.5M guaranteed/\$7M SB.

PLAYERS LOST

--S Eric Brock (released).

--CB Tye Hill (released).

--CB Chris Houston (traded Lions).  
--\*FS Charlie Peprah: Not tendered as RFA/Packers; terms unknown.  
--TE Jason Rader (retired).  
--LS Mike Schneck: UFA; released.

## BALTIMORE RAVENS

### HOT TOPIC

In participating in his first full offseason in three years, the Ravens' Terrell Suggs hasn't forgotten about 2009.

Last season was perhaps the most frustrating one for the three-time Pro Bowl linebacker, who finished with a career-low 4 sacks and 59 tackles, his fewest since his rookie season.

Now, Suggs is determined to reclaim his spot among the NFL's top pass rushers.

"Hey, it's not expected for me to have a season like that," Suggs recently told reporters. "Rest assured, it will never happen again."

Suggs, 27, skipped all of the offseason camps in 2008 and 2009 because the Ravens used the franchise tag on him.

He signed a six-year, \$62.5 million contract in July that included \$38.1 million guaranteed. But he reported to training camp looking more like a defensive end than a linebacker, weighing close to 280 pounds.

Then, during the regular season, he sprained a knee ligament on an illegal block by quarterback Brady Quinn during the regular season, which forced him to miss the first games of his NFL career.

"I think last season is kind of where it belongs," Suggs said. "I'm not really thinking about it anymore. Last season is last season. The only thing I'm focused on right now is this season."

Suggs has split his time working out at the Ravens' conditioning program and a mixed martial arts studio in Tempe, Ariz.

His goal is to trim down to 260 pounds and about seven to 11 percent body fat.

"Terrell Suggs has worked hard and he's been here most of the days," Ravens coach John Harbaugh said. "The days he's been here, I think he's worked exceptionally hard. He's committed to getting into great shape."

His teammates have noticed a change in Suggs' mentality, too.

"I think I just see a little more relaxing," middle linebacker Ray Lewis said. "Anytime you relax playing this game, I think you are going to have your best. Whatever last year was for him, a lot of pressure from whatever side, the bottom line is right now he's very loose and he's back to being Terrell."

"The first thing I said to him was, 'Just go be Sizzle, and we've got you. Don't worry about all that other stuff. Just go play football.'"

In another move designed to rejuvenate Suggs' game, the Ravens hired Ted Monachino as an outside linebackers coach.

When Suggs collaborated at Arizona State with Monachino as his position coach, he set the NCAA single-season record with 24 sacks. He wound up winning the Bronko Nagurski award, Lombardi Trophy, Hendricks award and was named the Pac-10 Defensive Player of the Year.

"It just brings back old memories," Suggs said. "Not to say our last coach wasn't good, I think I relate better to coach Monachino. So, I think it's definitely a step up having him around."

So, has Suggs returned to his old form?

"Not yet, we'll see Monday night," Suggs said. "Right now, I'm just trying to set back into that rare form and be the best player I can be for my team."

### PLAYER/PERSONNEL NOTES

--Offensive tackle Jared Gaither has bruising on the bottom of his foot, an injury that coach John Harbaugh called "nothing major."

"He should be back here quickly," Harbaugh said.

Gaither missed his fourth day of practice after being moved from left to right tackle earlier this month. Michael Oher, the team's first-round pick from last season, has taken Gaither's job at left tackle.

According to Harbaugh, Gaither saw Dr. Robert Anderson, a renowned orthopedist from Charlotte, N.C., last week and was recently testing out orthotic insoles.

"They worked on some orthotics (Monday), and he wasn't comfortable with them," Harbaugh said.

The one player who is taking advantage of Gaither's absence is Oniel Cousins. He showed some promise last season, when he started five games when Gaither was injured.

Once considered a project, Cousins could give the Ravens a return on their investment sooner than expected.

"He's got left tackle feet. He's got right tackle temperament," offensive coordinator Cam Cameron said. "In his lifetime, he just hasn't played a ton of football. But he is developing quickly because he works at it hard."

A native of Jamaica, Cousins didn't suit up for football until his sophomore year of high school. He primarily played soccer before arriving in the United State at age 15.

Cousins' experience on the offensive side of the ball was limited because he came to UTEP as a defensive tackle. He only played two seasons at offensive tackle before the Ravens used a third-round pick on him in 2008.

"I think I've come a long way and I continue to move forward," Cousins said. "If I'm called upon, I'll be ready to go."

Cousins was solid in his first two starts last season, which came against Detroit and Chicago. And other than three plays, Cousins "played really good against Pittsburgh," according to Cameron.

He allowed back-to-back sacks to LaMarr Woodley on the Ravens' final possession, which allowed the Steelers to squeeze out a 23-20 victory.

"Woodley has done a lot of things to a lot of right tackles," Cameron said.

As a rookie, Cousins made a strong first impression, getting into a couple of fights early in training camp. These days, he remains just as competitive but he is focusing his energy on improving as a blocker.

Cousins has added 15 to 20 pounds of muscle this offseason, and he works hard at refining his technique.

"I have expectations of myself, and they are real high," Cousins said. "I want to be the best at what I do."

Dependability and toughness are two of the top qualities that the Ravens coaching staff want in an offensive lineman.

"We all know offensive line play is really the unit, not the individual talent," Cameron said after the first minicamp. "We're going with five guys that give us the best continuity that can grow together."

--Ravens cornerback Lardarius Webb is "ahead of schedule significantly" in his rehab from a torn ACL, coach John Harbaugh said.

Webb tore the ligament in his knee on Dec. 20 against Chicago and was placed on injured reserve.

During Tuesday's practice, he was working off to the side, cutting and backpedaling to test the knee.

"Lardarius has been here every single day -- holidays, weekends," Harbaugh said. "He's been really doing beyond what you would expect him to do. He's doing really well."

Harbaugh also noted that Fabian Washington (knee) is also ahead of schedule.

--Backup quarterback Troy Smith will be out for a couple of weeks after having his tonsils removed in Cleveland.

That left the Ravens with two quarterbacks, Joe Flacco and John Beck. There is a chance that the Ravens could add another arm to fill Smith's void.

--Backup defensive tackle Lamar Divens has been cleared to practice after undergoing two hip surgeries over the past year.

Signed as an undrafted rookie by San Diego, Divens joined the Ravens in 2008. He played three games for them that season before being placed on injured reserve on Dec. 10, 2008 with a shoulder injury.

Divens, 24, was placed on injured reserve last season on Aug. 15.

Making the Ravens this season will be a challenge for Divens after the team bolstered its depth on the interior defensive line. The Ravens drafted nose tackle Terrence Cody in the second round and defensive tackle Art Jones in the fifth.

--Here were the players who were absent from Tuesday's voluntary passing camp: linebackers Ray Lewis and Terrell Suggs, wide receiver Derrick Mason, running back Willis McGahee, defensive end Trevor Pryce and defensive end Paul Kruger (excused absence).

QUOTE TO NOTE: "I think he's a pretty even-keeled sort of guy, but there's an intensity that has to come in a game, as well. I think I can help him to stay steady. I know I'm going to help him in some of the areas of mobility, of changing directions, of being sudden. I guess playing sudden in some of these situations because these defensive teams, the ones that we face in this division, are very fast and you have to make not only quick decisions. But you have to make quick movements as well. So, there's just a lot of things that we'll be working on as we go along here." -- Quarterbacks coach Jim Zorn on how he can help Joe Flacco.

#### STRATEGY AND PERSONNEL

The Ravens signed veteran cornerback Travis Fisher and rookie safety Brad Jones after their tryouts in the team's first minicamp.

Fisher, 30, has made nine interceptions and broken up 32 passes in his eight-year career. Drafted by St. Louis in the second round in 2002, he played five years for the Rams before bouncing around to Detroit and Seattle. He is 5 feet 10, 189 pounds.

Jones frequently played with the Ravens' second-team defense during his tryout. A one-year starter at Cincinnati, he wasn't invited to the NFL combine and wasn't signed by the Cleveland Browns after a tryout. He is 6 feet, 192 pounds.

Earlier in free agency, the Ravens made wide receiver their priority, turning that position from a weakness to a strength.

Their first three moves offseason have focused on the wide receiver position: trading for Anquan Boldin, re-signing Derrick Mason and adding Donte Stallworth.

On defense, the Ravens signed former Seattle Seahawk defensive end Cory Redding to a two-year, \$6 million deal. He fills the only void in the starting lineup. Dwan Edwards, last year's starter, signed with the Buffalo Bills.

In the draft, the Ravens used their first two picks on defense, selecting Texas outside linebacker Sergio Kindle and Alabama nose tackle Terrence Cody in the second round. The Ravens then drafted tight ends in the third (Oregon's Ed Dickson) and fourth rounds (BYU's Dennis Pitta).

**MEDICAL WATCH:** Cornerback Lardarius Webb (knee) is ahead of schedule, according to coach John Harbaugh. He could be ready to come back sometime during training camp.

The players who were sidelined by injury at the Ravens' passing camp were: quarterback Troy Smith (tonsils), safety Ed Reed (hip), cornerback Fabian Washington (knee), linebacker Brendon Ayanbadejo (quadriceps), offensive tackles Jared Gaither (foot) and Ramon Harewood (knee), wide receiver Mark Clayton (shoulder), defensive tackles Haloti Ngata (chest) and Terrence Cody (undisclosed) and nose tackles Kelly Gregg (shoulder) and Brandon McKinney (disc).

FRANCHISE PLAYER: None.

TRANSITION PLAYER: None.

UNRESTRICTED FREE AGENTS

--CB Corey Ivy was a late addition when injuries took a toll on the Ravens' cornerbacks. Ivy's roster spot will likely be filled by a draft pick.

--TE L.J. Smith failed to get rid of his injury-prone label. The Ravens won't re-sign their biggest free-agent bust of last season.

--WR David Tyree was a solid veteran presence on the Ravens' special teams. He could be retained if Ravens don't want to go younger on coverage teams.

--CB Frank Walker is a tough defender, but lacks speed to keep up with most wide receivers. Baltimore likely won't keep Walker because it needs to get younger at cornerback.

--WR Kelley Washington was one of the biggest surprises of last season, Washington worked himself into the No. 3 spot. He said he will try to see if another team will offer him more playing time, but the Ravens will try to retain him.

UNRESTRICTED FREE AGENTS (not tendered offers)

--S Keith Fitzhugh (ERFA tender withdrawn).

--C Greg Ryan (not tendered as ERFA).

--OT Lou Saucedo (not tendered as ERFA).

RESTRICTED FREE AGENTS (\*indicates restricted because of uncapped year)

--\*WR Mark Clayton (tendered at \$1.809M with second-round pick as compensation) is a former first-round pick who has never lived up to expectations. He disappears too often in games.

--OT Jared Gaither (tendered at \$2.396M with first-round pick as compensation) is the starting left tackle and has the skill level to become a Pro-Bowl player, but he doesn't have the work ethic.

--\*P Sam Koch (tendered at \$1.759M with second-round pick as compensation) couldn't match his outstanding numbers in 2008, but he is still one of the top young punters in the game.

--\*SS Dawan Landry (tendered at \$1.759M with second-round pick as compensation) bounced back from a slow start to become solid contributor. He missed the last 14 games of 2008 with a spinal-cord concussion.

--FB Le'Ron McClain (tendered at \$2.396M with first-round pick as compensation) has been a primary ball-carrier in 2008 and a lead blocker in 2009.

--\*CB Fabian Washington (tendered at \$1.809MM with second-round pick as compensation) was a two-year starter for the Ravens before tearing his ACL.

EXCLUSIVE RIGHTS FREE AGENTS: None.

PLAYERS RE-SIGNED

--LB Antwan Barnes: RFA; (tendered at \$1.101M with fourth-round pick as compensation); \$1.101M/1 yr.

--QB John Beck: RFA; (tendered at \$1.101M with third-round pick as compensation); \$1.101M/1 yr.

--LB Prescott Burgess: RFA; (tendered at \$1.101M with sixth-round pick as compensation); \$1.101M/1 yr.  
 --\*G Chris Chester: RFA; (tendered at \$1.176M with third-round pick as compensation); \$1.176M/1 yr.  
 --\*K Billy Cundiff: RFA; (tendered at \$1.226M with no compensation); \$1.226M/1 yr.  
 --NT Lamar Divens: ERFA; terms unknown.  
 --LB Dannell Ellerbe: ERFA; terms unknown.  
 --S K.J. Gerard: ERFA; terms unknown.  
 --WR Justin Harper: ERFA; terms unknown.  
 --TE Edgar Jones: Not tendered as RFA; \$545,000/1 yr.  
 --RB Matt Lawrence: ERFA; terms unknown.  
 --WR Derrick Mason: UFA; \$8M/2 yrs.  
 --\*OT Tony Moll: RFA; (tendered at \$1.176M with fifth-round pick as compensation); \$1.176M/1 yr.  
 --RB Jalen Parmele: ERFA; terms unknown.  
 --DB Marcus Paschal: ERFA; terms unknown.  
 --QB Troy Smith: RFA; (tendered at \$1.101M with fifth-round pick as compensation); \$1.101M/1 yr.  
 --NT Kelly Talavou: ERFA; terms unknown.  
 --CB Cary Williams: ERFA; terms unknown.  
 --\*WR Demetrius Williams: RFA; (tendered at \$1.176M with fourth-round pick as compensation); \$1.176M/1 yr.  
 --OG Marshal Yanda: RFA; (tendered at \$1.684M with second-round pick as compensation); \$1.684M/1 yr.  
 PLAYERS ACQUIRED  
 --WR Anquan Boldin (trade Cardinals).  
 --CB Travis Fisher: FA; terms unknown.  
 --DL Cory Redding: UFA Seahawks; \$6M/2 yrs.  
 --WR Donte' Stallworth: FA; \$900,000/1 yr.  
 PLAYERS LOST  
 --DT Justin Bannan: UFA Broncos; \$22M/5 yrs, \$6.3M guaranteed.  
 --DE Dwan Edwards: UFA Bills; \$18M/4 yrs.  
 --CB Samari Rolle (released).  
 --TE Quinn Sypniewski (released/failed physical).  
 --\*OT Adam Terry: Not tendered as RFA/Colts; 1 yr, terms unknown.

## BUFFALO BILLS

### HOT TOPIC

Wide receiver has become a mystery position for the Bills and nobody is a bigger mystery than rookie Marcus Easley.

The team's fourth-round pick out of Connecticut was anonymous in his own locker room until a breakout senior season in which he caught 44 passes for 853 yards and eight touchdowns. The previous two seasons he caught a total of five passes.

That has fans and media wondering if Easley was a one-year college wonder or someone possessing true upside as a pro.

"The first game I watched was the Pitt game and he just dominated that game and every game after that," Bills scout Tom Roth said. "I wondered to myself if he was a one-year wonder player. But then I talked to the coaches and watched more film and the film doesn't lie. You have to trust your eyes and what you see on film and like I said, everything's going to come around for him. He's an impressive player."

Easley, 6-3, 210 pounds, was a walk-on at UConn. But after two seasons of barely being a blip on scouts' radar screens, he became someone to check out on a weekly basis last fall.

His big games came like a flood -- two catches for 100 yards including a 79-yard TD vs. Pitt; six catches for 108 yards with a TD vs. Louisville; five catches for 157 yards and an 88-yard score vs. West Virginia; six catches for 105 yards and two TDs vs. Syracuse; eight catches for 122 yards and a TD vs. USF.

Where did this guy come from?

"After high school I wasn't highly recruited so I went to UConn just based on academics," Easley said.

The football bug never left him and he went out for the team his sophomore year. In 2008, he started four games. Last season he earned six starts, making the most of every opportunity to show his skills.

"It just goes to show you what can come of hard work," Easley said. "Walking on you just got to climb the ladder. You start off at the bottom and you just have to do everything you can to work your way up the depth chart and on to the playing field."

That experience should serve Easley well with the Bills, who are looking to replace their No. 2 and 3 receivers (Terrell Owens and Josh Reed). Lee Evans is the only proven commodity coming back.

Nine players dot the depth chart behind Evans: young veterans James Hardy, Steve Johnson, Roscoe Parrish, Felton Huggins and Chad Jackson, Easley, and rookie free agents Donald Jones, Davie Nelson and Naaman Roosevelt.

New coach Chan Gailey likes his outside receivers to be as big as he can find. Hardy (6-5), Nelson (6-5), Jackson (6-2) and Easley (6-3) are in that mold.

"I wouldn't call him the niftiest guy in the world when he's got the ball in his hands, but he's hard to tackle," Gailey said of Easley. "You see people bounce off him. That was an impressive trait for us as we looked for big, fast receivers. Buddy (GM Nix) and I both believe in having on the outside the biggest guys you can get out there. That doesn't happen every time ... but if you've got a choice, take the bigger one over the little one."

#### PLAYER/PERSONNEL NOTES

--In an effort to improve his durability and his chances of winning the team's starting quarterback job, Brian Brohm has added 10 pounds to his 6-foot-3 frame.

"Actually last year in Green Bay they had me at 220 to 222," Brohm said. "I've put on a little bit more weight. I'm around 230 right now. We've been doing a lot more strength work in this weight program. I'm lifting much heavier weights and building a lot more muscle."

--Former Bills QB J.P. Losman has a new home. The Seattle Seahawks signed the 2004 first-round pick to a one-year deal worth \$630,000. Now 29, Losman threw one pass for Oakland last season after spending five seasons with the Bills and a season in the new United Football League. He'll back up Matt Hasselbeck and Charlie Whitehurst in Seattle.

--Buffalo's voluntary minicamp for veterans is scheduled for June 4-6. Voluntary organized team activities take place June 1-3, June 8-10, June 15-17 and June 21-22 before a mandatory camp for all players set for June 23-25.

--Rookie running backs C.J. Spiller of Clemson and Joique Bell of Wayne State hit it off in rookie camp. The two were paired as roommates, bringing together two of the greatest all-purpose running backs in NCAA history. Combined, Spiller and Bell gained 14,286 yards in their collegiate careers.

"Spiller is a great guy," Bell told the South Bend Tribune of Buffalo's top draft pick. "We were close during minicamp and me and him were up all night and got up early in the morning to learn the playbook. Even on the bus (going to practice) we were looking over the plays. We're both pushing each other to make the team better."

--Former Bills great Jim Kelly, who first proposed a new stadium be built in Niagara Falls to capitalize on the Ontario, Canada market, still thinks it's a good idea but is toning down his campaign out of respect for 91-year-old Bills owner Ralph Wilson. "He's the guy that has kept this team in this city, and I thank God for him every day," Kelly told the Niagara Gazette newspaper after giving the commencement address at a local community college. "Of course, Niagara Falls would definitely be a (possible future) site because they have so many things there. They have the seventh wonder of the world, the casino, the hotels and the land. It's closer to drawing people from Toronto. But that's far off. Right now, I'm focused on the Buffalo Bills getting better, because I don't want fans to get too frustrated. I was out there watching the other day and I think this team might surprise people."

--Booker Edgeron, the Bills' 2010 Wall of Fame inductee, never dreamed of a career in professional football. A star at Western Illinois, he came to the Bills of the old AFL in 1962 at the request of coach Lou Saban. He would help Buffalo win consecutive AFL championships in '64 and '65. "I am proud that I went to Western Illinois University and played under Lou Saban and Joe Collier," he said of the former Bills coaches. "They were the catalyst of me being here. If it had not been for them I would not have been here or any place else because professional football was the farthest thing from my mind. I never even thought about playing professional football. It never entered my mind until Lou Saban asked me would I like to play professional football."

--Bills Wall of Fame nose tackle Fred Smerlas, who lives in Massachusetts, will not be accepting the Republican nomination to run against Democratic incumbent Louise Slaughter to represent New York's 28th District in Congress. Smerlas turned down the invitation citing family reasons related to moving to western New York; he has teen-aged children and would prefer to keep their lives stable at this time. He didn't rule out running in the future. Smerlas espouses conservative and oftentimes controversial views on a weekly radio show in Rochester, N.Y.

QUOTE TO NOTE: "Excellent. Our guys have worked very hard. On the whole they have done a great job. Obviously guys have things they have to take care of in the offseason and I certainly understand that. So you just try to deal with those misses and let them make them up when they

can. We feel like we're getting a lot out of these guys this year." -- Coach Chan Gailey assessing veteran participation in the team's offseason conditioning program.

#### STRATEGY AND PERSONNEL

In order to make a successful conversion from a 4-3 defense predicated on small, quick players to a 3-4 scheme, Buffalo's new coaching staff has been busy adding players with size. The team's second- and third-round draft picks were 314-pound nose tackle Torell Troup and 285-pound defense end Alex Carrington. Two linebackers added in the sixth round were Arthur Moats at 246 pounds and Danny Batten at 254. Free agent veteran LB Andra Davis is 250 and defensive end Dwan Edwards goes 290.

"It's important," said GM Buddy Nix of finding players suited for the 3-4. "We try not to be dictated completely by need but obviously you want to take guys that fit, too. Tom (VP of scouting Tom Modrak) and I but talked about it and if you're going to get big, you just about have to get big within the first three picks."

MEDICAL WATCH: OLB Nic Harris, who suffered a knee injury late last season, was unable to take part in the team's recent rookie camp. "He's getting there. He's not 100 percent," coach Chan Gailey said. Gailey said he does expect Harris to be on the field for organized team activities in June but could not give an exact timetable on the player's recovery.

FRANCHISE PLAYER: None.

TRANSITION PLAYER: None.

UNRESTRICTED FREE AGENTS

--DE Ryan Denney, a capable backup pass rusher, was told by the team he was free to shop his services.

--DB Todd Johnson appeared in eight games before going on injured reserve. Not a priority to be retained.

--OG Seth McKinney, an eight-year vet with 46 starts, was brought in for depth but couldn't stay healthy. Has been told he won't be brought back but things could change depending on status of Eric Wood, who is recovering from a badly broken leg.

--WR Terrell Owens, the future NFL Hall of Famer, was thanked by the club of his one-year of headline making and told he wouldn't be retained. He's 36 but should still draw some interest on the market.

--WR Josh Reed, who had 311 career catches in eight seasons, was informed he would not be offered a new contract and is free to shop his services.

--OG Kendall Simmons, a former standout for Pittsburgh, has been plagued by injuries for two seasons. Has been told to shop his services.

--LB Josh Stamer rejoined the team late in the season. Tough player who excels on special teams but team likely to explore more affordable options than paying a six-year minimum.

UNRESTRICTED FREE AGENTS (not tendered offers)

--LB Marcus Buggs (not tendered as ERFA) will be coming back from major knee surgery and could be brought back as a depth player.

--RB Justise Hairston (not tendered as ERFA) spent the entire year on injured reserve.

RESTRICTED FREE AGENTS: None.

EXCLUSIVE RIGHTS FREE AGENTS: None.

PLAYERS RE-SIGNED

--LB Jon Corto: ERFA; \$470,000/1 yr.

--\*LB Keith Ellison: RFA; (tendered at \$1.176M million with sixth-round pick as compensation); \$1.176M/1 yr.

--OT Christian Gaddis: ERFA; terms unknown.

--CB Cary Harris: ERFA; \$395,000/1 yr.

--TE Joe Klopfenstein: Not tendered as RFA; terms unknown.

--TE Derek Schouman: RFA; (tendered at \$1.684M with second-round pick as compensation); \$1.684M/1 yr.

--SS Bryan Scott: Potential UFA; \$3M/2 yrs, SB unknown.

--TE Jonathan Stupar: ERFA; terms unknown.

--\*S George Wilson: RFA; (tendered at \$1.759M with second-round pick as compensation); \$1.759M/1 yr.

--\*CB Ashton Youboty: RFA; (tendered at \$1.176M with third-round pick as compensation); \$1.176M/1 yr.

PLAYERS ACQUIRED

--LB Andra Davis: FA Browns; \$4.4M/2 yrs.

--DE Dwan Edwards: UFA Ravens; \$18M/4 yrs.

--RT Cornell Green: UFA Raiders; \$9M/3 yrs.

--WR Chad Jackson: FA; 1 yr, terms unknown.

--TE Martin Matthews (waivers Lions).

--RB Chad Simpson: FA Colts; terms unknown.

PLAYERS LOST

--OT Brad Butler (retired).  
--LB Chris Draft: UFA Redskins; terms unknown.  
--TE Derek Fine (released).  
--\*QB Gibran Hamdan: Not tendered as RFA/Toronto-CFL).  
--\*OG Richie Incognito: Not tendered as RFA/Dolphins; \$725,000/1 yr, \$250,000 guaranteed.  
--WR Justin Jenkins (released/failed physical).  
--DE Jermaine McGhee (released/failed physical).  
--LB Ashlee Palmer (released).  
--C Marvin Philip (released/failed physical).  
--OT Jonathan Scott: Not tendered as RFA/Steelers; \$545,000/1 yr.  
--DE Marcus Smith (released/failed physical).  
--S John Wendling (released/failed physical).

## CAROLINA PANTHERS

### HOT TOPIC

Rookie quarterback Jimmy Clausen came to Carolina with a reputation -- warranted or not -- for being a tad arrogant and not particularly a team player.

But he's doing his best to debunk that notion.

After being drafted by the Panthers in the second round, Clausen has gone out of his way to establish relationships with his new teammates. He exchanged text messages with a number of veteran players just days after getting drafted, including Smith and left tackle Jordan Gross.

"I just wanted to introduce myself," he said simply.

Clausen also ran an errand for veteran receiver Steve Smith prior to boarding a plane in California and heading to Charlotte, picking up a 12-pack of Cactus Cooler.

And when Clausen met the media earlier this month at minicamp, he talked about being "just be one of the guys" and his desire to "get to know my teammates on a personal level."

On the field, he seemed able to make all of the necessary throws needed of an NFL quarterback.

And while the 6-foot-2 Clausen looks noticeably shorter than the other quarterbacks in camp -- fellow rookie Tony Pike is 6-foot-6 and Matt Moore and Hunter Cantwell are 6-foot-4 - he does appear to have a strong and accurate arm.

"I have a lot of learning to do but all of the quarterbacks are helping me out," Clausen said.

He clearly doesn't seem intimidated by making the step to the next level.

In fact, he downplayed it.

"It's football," Clausen said. "It's a little faster and the guys are a little bigger. But at the end of the day it's just football and you go out and there and have a good time and execute the plays."

Although Moore is expected to open the season as the starter, Clausen should be better prepared than most rookies to challenge for the No. 1 job because he played three seasons in this offense at Notre Dame. In fact, he was delighted to see a lot of similarities when he opened offensive coordinator Jeff Davidson's playbook for the first time.

"As soon as I saw the playbook it was a lot of similar terms but a little different wording," said Clausen, who lists Dan Marino and Joe Montana as his favorite quarterbacks.

"I think he's a sharp guy, picked up things really fast," coach John Fox said. "He's sharp in football and I think that's key in the quarterback position. He's swimming right now. ... I thought he handled it well."

Moore had never met Clausen before this week.

Of his interactions with him on Friday, Moore said, "Great. No complaints."

Although he said after the draft his goal was to come in and be the starter from Day 1, Clausen didn't seem to have a problem lining up as the third quarterback behind Moore and Cantwell at his first NFL practice. After all, this day was all about everyone getting their feet wet.

"I'm going to do what the coaches ask me to do," Clausen said.

In other words, just try to fit in.

### PLAYER/PERSONNEL NOTES

--The Panthers entered the NFL draft needing a No. 2 receiver to complement Steve Smith.

They hope they've found an answer in third-round draft pick Brandon LaFell from LSU.

LaFell will battle fellow third-round pick Armanti Edwards, a converted college quarterback, and disappointing fourth-year pro Dwayne Jarrett for the vacant No. 2 receiver spot that came available when the team opted not to re-sign 37-year-old veteran Muhsin Muhammad.

LaFell is coming off two solid seasons at LSU but will need to work on his consistency at the next level.

"I followed LSU quite a bit because I'm an alum of LSU so I know their situation over there," said Panthers receivers coach Tyke Tolbert. "Brandon can work on a lot of things, but a lot of things weren't his fault either. There are some inconsistencies as far as what he was being taught at LSU as opposed to what I'm going to teach him here with the Carolina Panthers. I think he will adapt well to how we do things and I think he will be a better player because of it."

Tolbert said part of LaFell's problem was related to inconsistency at the quarterback situation.

Over the past two years the Tigers started six different quarterbacks.

"There's no question it did (affect him)," Tolbert said.

"It was a tough. One week you're working with this guy and then he was playing bad and you're working with another guy," LaFell said. "It was tough, but at the end of the day it kind of helps you out. In the NFL, you never know what can happen. The same thing that happened in college can happen in the NFL. "

The Panthers really like LaFell's ability to block downfield, something that's required given how much coach John Fox likes to run the ball with DeAngelo Williams and Jonathan Stewart.

It was an area Muhammad excelled at.

After being drafted by Carolina, LaFell talked about it being a strength.

"It's rare to hear (wide receivers) talk about it," Tolbert said. "There's a lot of people that do it but it's rare people talk about it. On this level you have to block. We have two great backs -- actually we have more than two great backs -- but we had two backs last year that rushed for over 1,100 yards so they know running is a big part of our game. They know already that run-blocking technique is emphasized every day.

"But to hear him talk about it, it doesn't surprise me because I watched him at LSU go in and crack on safeties. That's one of the things that was a plus in our mind when we drafted him."

--WR Dwayne Jarrett's three-year career in Carolina has largely been a disappointment, but new wide receivers coach Tyke Tolbert said the former second-round pick out of Southern Cal will get another chance.

"I told him when I got here, listen, your slate is clean with me," Tolbert said. "What you are going to be looked upon in my eyes is henceforth. He's done everything I asked him to do. He works out hard every day and has lost a lot of weight since last year.

"He's doing all the right things and he's not the only one who's been inconsistent. There are a lot of inconsistencies with a lot of people. He has to worry about doing all of the little things, having a sense of urgency about himself. He made a great catch (in minicamp) I got excited about. He's going to be OK, I think."

--Receivers coach Tyke Tolbert has coached two pretty good rookie receivers in the past -- Anquan Boldin in Arizona and Lee Evans in Buffalo.

He'll now be asked to do the same with Brandon LaFell and Armanti Edwards.

"I've had some good rookie receivers but those guys came in and were eager to learn," Tolbert said. "But I teach (veterans and rookies) the same way. They all kind of adapt. I think my way works and it was proven that it works so I just keep doing it that way."

--Former University of Cincinnati star quarterback and current Panther Tony Pike threw out the ceremonial first pitch prior to Monday night's Major League baseball game between the Milwaukee Brewers and Cincinnati Reds at the Great American Ballpark in Cincinnati.

Pike and the rest of his new Panthers teammates will take the field next week for the start of OTAs here in Charlotte.

QUOTE TO NOTE: "Yeah, he's a great kid. He's worked very hard rehabbing this offseason. It's unfortunate he was injured last year because I thought he was having his best season. But he's battled back real hard and we'll lean on him for leadership as well as his playing ability." -- Panthers coach John Fox on the return of WLB Thomas Davis, who tore his ACL last season.

#### STRATEGY AND PERSONNEL

FRANCHISE PLAYER: None.

TRANSITION PLAYER: None.

UNRESTRICTED FREE AGENTS

--QB Josh McCown appears to be Carolina's fall-back option if they can't find another veteran after the draft. The plan appears to be to draft a quarterback and then add another free agent after the draft. Matt Moore is the only viable quarterback on the roster.

--WR Muhsin Muhammad turns 37 in May and while he had a decent season (53 catches, 581 yards, one touchdown) the Panthers need to upgrade at the No. 2 wide receiver position to help reduce double coverage on Steve Smith. It appears very unlikely the team re-signs Muhammad.

--DT Hollis Thomas was a quality one-year fill-in who helped solidify a nose tackle position devastated by injuries. But Thomas turned 36 last month, and the Panthers just went through a big purge of 30-something year-old players.

--OG Keydrick Vincent has been a quality starter for the Panthers in the past two seasons. As much as they'd hate to break up their starting five, the reality is they've been grooming Mackenzy Bernadeau and Duke Robinson as eventual replacements.

RESTRICTED FREE AGENTS (\*indicates restricted because of uncapped year)

--\*LB Thomas Davis (tendered at \$3.2686M with first- and third-round picks as compensation) should be fine after tearing ligaments in his knee last year. He is expected to participate in all offseason workouts.

--\*CB Richard Marshall (tendered at \$1.759M with second-round pick as compensation) appears upset at that tender. Will probably accept any offer sheet right now, but so far there doesn't appear to be any offers.

EXCLUSIVE RIGHTS FREE AGENTS: None.

PLAYERS RE-SIGNED

--\*LB James Anderson: RFA; (tendered at \$1.176M with third-round pick as compensation); \$1.176M/1 yr.

--DE Tyler Brayton: UFA; 3 yrs, terms unknown.

--DT Nick Hayden: ERFA; \$395,000/1 yr.

--\*TE Jeff King: RFA; (tendered at \$1.759M with second-round pick as compensation); \$1.759M/1 yr.

--DT Louis Leonard: RFA; (tendered at \$1.684M with second-round pick as compensation); \$1.684M/1 yr.

--WR Charly Martin: ERFA; \$470,000/1 yr.

--WR Kenneth Moore: ERFA; \$470,000/1 yr.

--QB Matt Moore: RFA; (tendered at \$3.043M with first-round pick as compensation); \$3.043M/1 yr.

--\*OT Rob Petitti: Not tendered as RFA; \$630,000/1 yr.

--LB Jordan Senn: ERFA; \$470,000/1 yr.

--DT Tank Tyler: RFA; (tendered at \$1.101M with third-round pick as compensation); \$1.101M/1 yr.

--CB C.J. Wilson: RFA; (tendered at \$1.101M with seventh-round pick as compensation); \$1.101M/1 yr.

PLAYERS ACQUIRED

--S Aaron Francisco: Not tendered as RFA by Colts; \$630,000/1 yr.

--\*CB Marcus Hudson: Not tendered as RFA by 49ers; \$630,000/1 yr.

--DT Ed Johnson: FA; terms unknown.

--CB Brian Witherspoon (waivers Lions).

--WR Wallace Wright: Not tendered as RFA by Jets; \$2M/2 yrs.

--LB Jamar Williams (trade Bears).

PLAYERS LOST

--QB Jake Delhomme (released).

--LB Na'il Diggs (released).

--QB A.J. Feeley: UFA Rams; \$6M/2 yrs, \$2.25M RB 2010/\$500,000 RB 2011.

--S Chris Harris (traded Bears).

--FB Brad Hoover (released).

--DT Maake Kemoatu (released).

--DT Damione Lewis (released).

--K Rhys Lloyd: Not tendered as RFA/Vikings; 2 yrs, terms unknown.

--DE Julius Peppers: UFA Bears; \$79.8M/6 yrs, \$42M guaranteed.

--S Quinton Teal: Not tendered as RFA/Seahawks; terms unknown.

--CB Dante Wesley: UFA Lions; \$1.54M/2 yrs, \$20,000 SB.

## CHICAGO BEARS

### HOT TOPIC

Fifth-round draft pick Josh Moore, a 5-foot-11, 188-pound cornerback agreed to a four-year contract on Tuesday.

At this weekend's full-team minicamp, which begins Friday, Moore will be competing for a backup spot behind starters Charles Tillman and Zackary Bowman, along with returning corners Corey Graham, Woodny Turenne and D.J. Moore plus street free agent Tim Jennings, a former starter with the Colts. Turenne was an undrafted free agent last year, while Moore was a fourth-round pick in 2009.

Moore is considered a good cover corner, but red flags were raised when he bench-pressed 225 pounds just two times at the Scouting Combine.

"He's willing, but he needs to be a more physical tackler," Bears defensive backs coach Jon Hoke said. "He's very aware of that situation, what he needs to do in that area. This is a man's league. You're going against 28- and 29-year olds; you're going against men, so you better be strong. He knows that and he can get better. Does he have to be the strongest guy on the team? No, but he's got to be stronger for his position."

In his three years at Kansas State, Moore played in all 37 games and started each of the final 24 over his last two seasons. He had career totals of 175 tackles, six interceptions, 34 passes defended, two sacks, one forced fumble and one fumble recovery. Last season he was honorable mention All-Big 12 when he defended 13 passes and was second on the team with 64 tackles.

Moore realizes his lack of strength is a weakness that has to be corrected if he's to approach the same kind of success in the NFL.

"Right after the draft, I came in knowing my strength was one of the biggest problems I had," he said at rookie minicamp. "I feel that I have the athletic ability and I have the size. So strength was one of the biggest question marks on me. Since I did those two reps at the combine, I put that behind me, and I'll be moving forward from here. Hopefully this summer I can work on getting stronger with the Bears staff and they'll make me a better football player."

#### PLAYER/PERSONNEL NOTES

--The Bears made it three draft-pick signings in four days when fourth-round defensive end Corey Wootton agreed to a four-year contract Wednesday that is expected to be worth \$2.3 million, including a \$500,000 signing bonus.

Wootton, the 109th overall selection, is expected to contribute in a rotation at defensive end that will have Julius Peppers starting at one end and Mark Anderson and Israel Idonije competing for the starting job at the other end. Wootton started 49 of 53 games at Northwestern, with 156 tackles, 19.5 sacks, 38 tackles for losses, four interceptions, three forced fumbles and three fumble recoveries.

In 2008, he was first-team All-Big Ten when he had 10 sacks before suffering torn knee ligaments in the Alamo Bowl. He rushed his rehab to get back on the field last season but was never at 100 percent, although he is expected to be at full speed well before the start of training camp on July 30.

Wootton is the third of the Bears' five draft picks who have agreed to terms. Offensive tackle J'Marcus Webb (seventh round) signed on Sunday, and cornerback Joshua Moore (fifth round) signed Monday. Only third-round safety Major Wright and sixth-round quarterback Dan LeFevour remain unsigned among the Bears' 2010 draft picks.

--Restricted free agent safety Danieal Manning signed his one-year tender offer of \$1.176 million Wednesday.

Manning, the last of the Bears' unrestricted free agents to agree to terms, was unhappy that he was tendered at the "original-round" level, and he skipped the first three weeks of voluntary team workouts in protest.

He has started 40 games in four years with the Bears, including 37 at free safety, but he will be competing for a starting job this season at a crowded position. In 2008, he led the NFL with a 29.7-yard kickoff-return average. Manning's 11 kickoff returns of 40-plus yards over the last two seasons (2008-09) are tops in the NFL.

--Backup quarterback Brett Basanez was waived Wednesday. The native of Northwest Suburban Arlington Heights spent the first 16 weeks of last season on the on the practice squad and was elevated to the active roster for the final contest but did not play.

Basanez originally entered the NFL with the Carolina Panthers as an undrafted free agent out of Northwestern in 2006. But he became dispensable when the Bears drafted Central Michigan quarterback Dan LeFevour in the sixth round. LeFevour also played his prep football in the Chicago suburbs.

QUOTE TO NOTE: "They're both pretty bright guys. You do see some differences though, between juniors and seniors when you go to work guys out. It's the maturity level, that type of thing. But, from a be-able-to-learn standpoint, you don't notice it. They both do a nice job in the classroom so far." -- Defensive backs coach Jon Hoke on third-round safety Major Wright and fifth-round cornerback Josh Moore, who left school with a year of eligibility remaining.

#### STRATEGY AND PERSONNEL

Protecting quarterback Jay Cutler will always be a priority, and the left guard spot is open since last year's starter, Frank Omiyale, has been moved to right tackle. Josh Beekman is the favorite to start but veteran tackle Kevin Shaffer could get a cursory look. Lance Louis, a seventh-round pick in 2009, could also figure in the equation sometime down the road, but he is, at present, still considered a bit of a project.

FRANCHISE PLAYER: None.

TRANSITION PLAYER: None.

UNRESTRICTED FREE AGENTS:

--LB Darrell McClover is a good special-teams player who isn't a factor on defense and probably won't be back.

--DE Adewale Ogunleye is a solid two-way player who no longer has double-digit sack potential and will be 33 before the start of the 2010 season. He's expected to be back only if he tests the market and finds no buyers.

--RB Adrian Peterson has been a reliable role player for several years as a backup and third-down option who also excels as a coverage guy on special teams. He doesn't expect to return.  
UNRESTRICTED FREE AGENT (not tendered offer)

--NT Dusty Dvoracek (not tendered as RFA) wound up on injured reserve before the season started in two of his first four seasons (2006 and '09) in the league and played just one game in '07 before a torn knee ligament landed him on injured reserve. He started the first 12 games in '08 but wound up on injured reserve with a torn biceps.

RESTRICTED FREE AGENTS (\*indicates restricted because of uncapped year)

--\*S Danieal Manning (tendered at \$1.176M with third-round pick as compensation) has played safety, cornerback and nickel back but has not played well enough at any of those positions to keep a starting job, although he is an excellent kickoff-return option.  
EXCLUSIVE RIGHTS FREE AGENTS: None.

DRAFT CHOICES SIGNED

--CB Joshua Moore (5/141): 4 yrs, terms unknown.

--QB Dan LeFevour (6/181): 4 yrs, terms unknown.

--OT J'Marcus Webb (7/218): 4 yrs, terms unknown.

PLAYERS RE-SIGNED

--\*DE Mark Anderson: RFA; (tendered at \$1.759M with second-round pick as compensation); \$1.759M/1 yr.

--RB Kahlil Bell: ERFA; 1 yr, terms unknown.

--\*S Josh Bullocks: RFA; (tendered at \$1.2675M with third-round pick as compensation); \$1.2675M/1 yr.

--LB Nick Roach: RFA; (tendered at \$1.684M with second-round pick as compensation); \$1.684M/1 yr.

--LB Tim Shaw: ERFA; 1 yr, terms unknown.

--OLB Pisa Tinoisamoa: UFA; \$875,000/1 yr.

--DT Matt Toeaina: ERFA; 1 yr, terms unknown.

--\*LB Jamar Williams: RFA; (tendered at \$1.176M with fourth-round pick as compensation); \$1.176M/1 yr.

PLAYERS ACQUIRED

--TE Richard Angulo: FA; terms unknown.

--S Chris Harris (trade Panthers).

--\*CB Tim Jennings: Not tendered as RFA by Colts; \$2.6M/2 yrs, \$250,000 RB.

--TE Brandon Manumaleuna: UFA Chargers; \$15M/5 yrs, \$\$2M SB/\$3M RB.

--DE Julius Peppers: UFA Panthers; \$79.8M/6 yrs, \$42M guaranteed.

--RB Chester Taylor: UFA Vikings; \$12.5M/4 yrs, \$2M SB/\$4M RB.

--FB Eddie Williams: FA Redskins; 1 yr, terms unknown.

PLAYERS LOST

--DE Alex Brown (released).

--RB Kevin Jones (released).

--FB Jason McKie (released).

--TE Fontel Mines (released).

--OT Orlando Pace (released).

--OG Tyler Reed (released).

--CB Nathan Vasher (released).

--LB Jamar Williams (traded Bears).

## CINCINNATI BENGALS

### HOT TOPIC

Through two weeks of OTAs, Cincinnati Bengals defensive coordinator Mike Zimmer has already seen many of the qualities that made Adam "Pacman" Jones a top 10 pick in the 2005 draft. But even more important to Zimmer is what Jones is displaying in the huddle and meeting rooms.

"In what I've watched him do, he's making progress," Zimmer said. "I'm more concerned about that he's listening, trying hard and that he's doing things the way we want him to do it. He's trying to understand the coverages and the techniques and how we want to play. To me that is much more important than anything else right now."

Zimmer even noted that Jones is sitting in the front row during meetings.

Said Jones about Zimmer: "I respect someone who respects me. I like to be coached, period. Whatever way he wants to coach me, I'm willing to listen and learn, because I want to get back to where I was."

After giving only a brief statement to reporters when OTAs began, Jones spoke to local reporters for 15 minutes on Wednesday where he talked about being out of the league for 16 months along with what he has to do to make the 53-man roster in Cincinnati. The one advantage he has here over Dallas is that Jones is taking part in OTAs and the June 15-17 minicamp.

In 39 games with Tennessee and Dallas, Jones has four interceptions with 33 passes defended along with five touchdowns (four via kick and punt returns).

"The mechanics are there. You still have to knock off the rust," Jones said. "I'm looking in the backfield too long. Certain plays I'm lining up seven yards when I should be six yards. So right now, it's just the clicking. I feel a lot better than I was in Dallas -- shape-wise, mentally, physically."

Another person who has noticed Jones' during practices is quarterback Carson Palmer. He compared Jones' quickness to former Southern Cal teammate and Steelers safety Troy Polamalu.

"He can be in a backpedal, break on the ball and be at full speed in two or three steps. You can't be late to his side or he will make a play on the ball," Palmer said. "I have been a couple times on his side and he's made plays on the ball. Receivers have had the ball in their hands and he's found a way to punch it out. That closing speed is very rare."

When the Bengals do get to training camp, it figures to be a four-way battle between Jones, David Jones, Morgan Trent and third-round pick Brandon Ghee for the third corner spot. Jones will also vie with Jordan Shipley and Quan Cosby at punt returner and Bernard Scott and Andre Caldwell at kick returner.

#### PLAYER/PERSONNEL NOTES

--Even though the Bengals selected tight end Jermaine Gresham in the first round, Reggie Kelly is not ready to relinquish his starting spot of six years just yet.

After missing last year due to an Achilles injury, Kelly says that he is refreshed and almost "feels like a rookie all over again but with an edge of 12 years on the guys."

Kelly met Gresham for the first time in the weight room at Paul Brown Stadium on Tuesday. They quickly got to work as Kelly worked with Gresham on a couple passes following the OTA session. While he is not trying to give Gresham too much of an overload of information at the moment, Kelly is pretty excited about what the first-round pick could accomplish.

"Looking at his body type and how physical he is, he's going to be an every down tight end. I have to make sure I nurture him and bring him up the right way," Kelly said. "I just made sure to tell him that he doesn't have to be like every tight end in the league. He doesn't have to be one-dimensional. He has the opportunity to be able to both catch and block. When you have those capabilities maximize them and be the best you can be and that can set you apart."

Whoever starts at tight end for the Sept. 12 opener at New England, the one thing for certain is that the position should be a more integral part of the passing game. Kelly's career high in catches is 31 in 2008.

Another person happy to see Kelly back is quarterback Carson Palmer, who started out by saying he couldn't put into words what it was like but then went into pretty good detail by describing him as a leader and sounding board for guys off and on the field.

Palmer also sees Kelly having an impact on Gresham the same way that Jon Kitna rubbed off on Palmer.

"He (Kitna) taught me how to study, how to prepare and how to take care of my body besides how to play football," Palmer said. "Reggie will rub off on all those things. He's played more years than anyone would expect him to play. It's not all athletic ability and God given talent. It's the things he does away from the game and how he prepares himself. The respect he shows to coaches, teammates and opponents too. Those are all little things Jermaine will pick up on. He's a sponge and wants to learn. Combining him and Reggie it's going to be great."

--With Chad Ochocinco eliminated from Dancing With The Stars, quarterback Carson Palmer thought that the receiver did well but that now it's time to focus on returning to football.

"I heard it didn't go his way with everything but he was competing against professionals and he's in the wrong sport," Palmer said. "He's a football player not a dancer, and he's competing against dancers so it makes it difficult. I'm glad he'll be here now. Hopefully."

Ochocinco did take part in OTAs last year, but not until the next to last week in early June. These sessions are optional, meaning Ochocinco does not really have to be here until the June 15-17 minicamp.

"I'd love him to be here working with us but he'll be here when he gets here. He's come in in great shape the last couple years so we expect him to come in great shape this year," Palmer said.

--With defensive linemen taking part in OTAs this week for the first time, the one thing Mike Zimmer has been stressing is turning up the pressure on the pass rush.

Zimmer said during the offseason that the defense might have been playing the run too much late in the year, which is why the sack numbers fell off a little. Second-round pick Carlos Dunlap made an early impression when he could have had three straight sacks.

"We're playing the pass first and the run second. We want to get as many sacks as we can this year," defensive tackle Domata Peko said.

--With the re-signing of Reggie Kelly and some other recent additions, the roster stands at 88 with 79 signed. It must be at 80 signed when training camp opens. Last year during OTAs, the roster peaked at 85.

--How well Adam Jones does in Cincinnati will draw comparisons to how his former West Virginia teammate Chris Henry did. Henry was out of football for four months in 2008 following his fifth arrest before being re-signed by the Bengals. It was at last year's OTAs that Henry, who would've turned 27 on Monday, showed that he had turned things around.

Jones did get a little emotional when talking about Henry.

"I've got all my T's crossed and my I's dotted. I know what it takes. I know what I have to do," Jones said. "But you live and you learn, and sometimes you have to put that to the back and just keep a smiling face and keep walking. All I'm doing is getting better every day. This is not going to happen overnight. I can't convince you guys overnight, but the only thing I can do is do my job and keep working on Adam."

QUOTE OF NOTE: "Low profile for Adam Jones, is not in America. Maybe in Puerto Rico or something or not even there. Where you want to say? The UK? I know there's an eye on me for all times." -- Adam Jones when asked if signing in Cincinnati gave him a lower profile than Dallas.

#### STRATEGY AND PERSONNEL

FRANCHISE PLAYER: None.

TRANSITION PLAYER: None.

UNRESTRICTED FREE AGENTS

--K Shayne Graham received the franchise tag last year, but that is unlikely to happen again this year with the tag for kickers and punters being \$2.814 million. He also has a penchant for not making pressure kicks.

--FB Jeremi Johnson was the starter for the entire season, but the Bengals also signed Fui Vakapuna during the year. If he can continue to keep his weight down, Johnson might be back.

UNRESTRICTED FREE AGENTS (not tendered offers)

--TE J.P. Foschi (not tendered as RFA) moved into the starting lineup midway through the season and had two touchdown catches.

--TE Matt Sherry (not tendered as ERFA) spent last season on injured reserve.

RESTRICTED FREE AGENTS (\*indicates restricted because of uncapped year): None.

EXCLUSIVE RIGHTS FREE AGENTS: None.

PLAYERS RE-SIGNED

--TE Dan Coats: Not tendered as RFA; terms unknown.

--C Kyle Cook: ERFA; \$470,000/1 yr.

--S Kyries Hebert: ERFA; \$470,000/1 yr.

--\*LB Abdul Hodge: RFA; (tendered at \$1.176M with third-round pick as compensation); \$1.176M/1 yr.

--\*LB Rashad Jeanty: RFA; (tendered at \$1.176M with no compensation); \$1.176M/1 yr.

--\*LB Brandon Johnson: RFA; (tendered at \$1.759M with second-round pick as compensation); \$1.759M/1 yr.

--DT Tank Johnson: UFA; \$11.3M/4 yrs.

--CB David Jones: RFA; (tendered at \$1.101M with fifth-round pick as compensation); \$1.101M/1 yr.

--TE Reggie Kelly: UFA; terms unknown.

--OG Nate Livings: ERFA; \$470,000/1 yr.

--\*OG Evan Mathis: RFA; (tendered at \$1.226M with third-round pick as compensation); \$1.226M/1 yr.

--QB Jordan Palmer: ERFA; \$470,000/1 yr.

--OT Dennis Roland: ERFA; \$470,000/1 yr.

--\*DE/DT Frostee Rucker: RFA; (tendered at \$1.176M with third-round pick as compensation); \$1.176M/1 yr.

--OG Bobbie Williams: UFA; \$3.8M/2 yrs.

--S Roy Williams: UFA; \$2.8M/2 yrs.

PLAYERS ACQUIRED

--WR Antonio Bryant: UFA Buccaneers; \$28M/4 yrs.

--WR Matt Jones: FA; \$700,000/1 yr.

--CB Pacman Jones: FA; 2 yrs, terms unknown.

--PK Mike Nugent: FA; 2 yrs, terms unknown.

--RB Cedric Peerman (waivers Lions).

--PK Dave Rayner: FA; 2 yrs, terms unknown.

--S Gibril Wilson: FA Dolphins; terms unknown.

PLAYERS LOST

--WR Laveranues Coles (released).

--RB Larry Johnson: UFA Redskins; \$3.5M/3 yrs.

--\*DT Shaun Smith: Not tendered as RFA/Chiefs; \$630,000/1 yr.

## CLEVELAND BROWNS

### HOT TOPIC

All eyes will be on Jake Delhomme now through the end of August to learn whether he can turn back the clock and prove his disastrous 2009 season with the Carolina Panthers was a fluke.

Coach Eric Mangini and team president Mike Holmgren are convinced the Delhomme that threw eight touchdown passes and 18 interceptions last season is not the same guy they are paying \$7 million in 2010 to play for the Browns.

Holmgren and Mangini say Delhomme and Seneca Wallace will battle to be the starter, but on Wednesday, the first day OTAs were open to the media, Delhomme got the bulk of the work followed by Wallace and then rookie Colt McCoy and Brett Ratliff.

Delhomme looked in command while calling plays and throwing the ball.

"He's got great energy," Mangini said. "I don't like making comparisons. But I will. He reminds me a little bit of (Brett) Favre in terms of enjoying practice and being around the guys. He's able to be serious and still keep things light. He has good rapport with the offensive guys and defensive guys. You see it in the weight room and all the different areas."

Spring practice is a far cry from what real football is like because players are not in pads and Delhomme wasn't dealing with snarling pass rushers, but his throws were on the money. Three passes in particular stood out; one was a lob in the deep right corner of the end zone to Brian Robiskie. Cornerback Eric Wright had tight coverage on Chansi Stuckey on another play, so Delhomme threw the ball so that Stuckey had to extend his arms. He threw the ball perfectly, where only Stuckey could catch it. He made a similar throw intentionally low to the ground to Robiskie with Sheldon Brown all over the second-year receiver. Robiskie caught the ball for a touchdown.

"When you change to a new team you do get a fresh start," Delhomme said. "To be here is very refreshing. It's like you get new life injected into you.

"It could have been very easy to walk away and go home or go hold a clipboard some other place, but I wanted a chance to compete. That's all I ask."

Delhomme and the Panthers played for the NFC championship after the 2008 season. Delhomme threw five interceptions against Arizona in that championship game. On Wednesday he said he put so much pressure on himself the next season to atone for letting down his team and Panther fans he never got back into the groove.

Delhomme was 4-7 as a starter in 2009 before a hand injury ended his season. Prior to 2009 he was 50-31 as a starter with the Panthers. He was 10-5 as a starter in 2003 when Carolina was in the Super Bowl. He was 11-5 in 2005 and 12-4 in 2008.

Delhomme played only three games in 2007 before an elbow injury ended his season. He had Tommy John surgery to repair it and bounced back to complete 246 of 414 passes for 3,288 yards, 15 touchdowns and 12 interceptions in 2008.

### PLAYER/PERSONNEL NOTES

--WR Brian Robiskie, last year's second-round draft pick from Ohio State is looking like a different player from a year ago when he caught only seven passes.

Robiskie has been smooth and comfortable running routes in OTAs. He is catching the ball consistently. Coach Eric Mangini is hopeful Robiskie will make a big jump in his second year.

--LB Matt Roth is one of five restricted free agents sitting out the voluntary OTAs. The others are linebacker D'Qwell Jackson, running back Jerome Harrison, fullback Lawrence Vickers and safety Abe Elam.

Elam and Jackson want multi-year contracts. Roth wants to be traded. General Manager Tom Heckert said Roth will not be dealt.

"It's like that with everybody," Heckert said. "Normally when guys are unhappy with their contacts, the first thing out of their mouth is give me a new deal or trade me. It isn't the first time we've heard that and it won't be the last."

Roth played six games and recorded four sacks for the Browns after being picked up on waivers from the Dolphins late in the season.

Heckert said he is reluctant to give long-term deals to the players holding out because neither he nor team president Mike Holmgren saw them play last season.

--Josh Cribbs was at the Akron Browns Backers banquet Monday night to receive the Player of the Year award from the Cleveland Chapter of the Pro Football Writers of America.

Before entering the banquet hall the Browns' special teams star and Wildcat quarterback was cornered by reporters covering the Browns. He was a regular at Cavaliers playoff games and was asked about Cavs star LeBron James possibly playing elsewhere next season.

"I watched him every game," Cribbs said. "It won't be the same without him. He's The King here. LeBron James is King being in this city and growing up in Akron.

"If he goes anywhere else he'll just be a phenomenal, extraordinary athlete, but he will not be The King in any other city but Cleveland."

--Scott Fujita, who played the last four seasons with the Saints, knows Browns new quarterback Jake Delhomme as well as anybody.

"I've known Jake for a long time and have nothing but respect for him," Fujita said after an OTA practice. "I think I've played him eight or nine times and lost to him almost every time.

"I like having him on my side. I've played with some great quarterbacks (including Drew Brees in New Orleans), but Jake is a great guy, great in the locker room and a heckuva competitor. He's had some injuries the last couple years, but watching him come back and work the way he has this offseason, he looked sharp. I know he's in great shape because I've been running with him almost every day."

QUOTE TO NOTE: "Feels like a rookie. You put in a lot of different terminology, a lot different from the terminology I had in Philadelphia. I'm in the playbook a lot and it's tough. It's tough." -- Cornerback Sheldon Brown, on being traded from the Eagles to the Browns.

#### STRATEGY AND PERSONNEL

Contrary to many reports the Browns are not changing over to a West Coast offense.

It was assumed they would become a West Coast team because team president Mike Holmgren coached the West Coast in Green Bay and Seattle a total of 17 years. Then he traded for Seneca Wallace, who played in a West Coast offense under Holmgren in Seattle. Jake Delhomme has also played in the West Coast.

But the Browns aren't using it, Wallace says.

"The offense seems good," Wallace said. "It's different. Obviously, it's not the West Coast offense and I have to get used to the terminology and the things we do offensively, so it's a learning process. Every time we get on the field, that's what we'll do."

Wallace wants to play quarterback, but at the very least he will be involved in some plays with Josh Cribbs in Wildcat formations. One could line up as a quarterback and the other as a wide receiver.

MEDICAL WATCH: Nose tackle Shaun Rogers (broken leg in 2009), defensive end C.J. Mosley (ankle), linebacker Eric Barton (neck) and running back James Davis (shoulder) worked with trainers and on the exercise bikes Wednesday. None of them practiced. Punter Dave Zastudil (knee surgery in 2009) did not practice.

FRANCHISE PLAYER: None

TRANSITION PLAYER: None

UNRESTRICTED FREE AGENTS

--WR/DB Mike Furrey was valuable because he could play both sides of the ball, but the Browns won't break the bank to re-sign him.

--CB Hank Poteat is a player opposing quarterbacks picked on constantly. His pass-interference penalty with no time left caused the Browns to lose in Detroit. He will not be back.

RESTRICTED FREE AGENTS (\*indicates restricted because of uncapped year)

--\*S Abe Elam (tendered at \$1.759M with second-round pick as compensation) led the Browns in tackles, but he wasn't the game-changer they hoped he would be. The Browns are very thin at safety, though, so they are not likely to let him go.

--\*RB Jerome Harrison (tendered at \$1.759M with second-round pick as compensation) could end up as the Browns' starter in 2010 after rushing for 561 yards in the last three games if they are willing to pay him enough.

--\*LB D'Qwell Jackson (tendered at \$1.759M with second-round pick as compensation) led the NFL in tackles in 2008. A pectoral tear in the sixth game ended his 2009 season.

--\*LB Matt Roth (tendered at \$1.809M with second-round pick as compensation) was claimed on waivers from the Dolphins on Nov. 25. He started all six games he played for the Browns and was a boost to their pass rush.

--\*FB Lawrence Vickers (tendered at \$1.759M with second-round pick as compensation) was the lead blocker for Harrison's fantastic finish in 2009. If the Browns want to be a running team they have to re-sign Vickers.

EXCLUSIVE RIGHTS FREE AGENTS: None.

PLAYERS RE-SIGNED

--LB Marcus Benard: ERFA; terms unknown.

--LB Blake Costanzo: ERFA; terms unknown.

--TE Greg Estandia: Not tendered as RFA; terms unknown.

--RB Chris Jennings: ERFA; terms unknown.

--LB Jason Trusnik: RFA (tendered at \$1.684M with second-round pick as compensation); \$1.684M/1 yr.

--FS Raymond Ventrone: Not tendered as RFA; \$2.2M/3 yrs.

--C/G Billy Yates: UFA; terms unknown.

## PLAYERS ACQUIRED

--CB Sheldon Brown (trade Eagles).  
--QB Jake Delhomme: FA Panthers; 2 yrs, terms unknown.  
--LB Scott Fujita: UFA Saints; \$14M/3 yrs, \$8M guaranteed.  
--\*C Eric Ghiaciuc: Not tendered as RFA by Chargers; terms unknown.  
--LB Chris Gocong (trade Eagles).  
--FB Peyton Hillis (trade Broncos).  
--QB Tyler Palko: FA; terms unknown.  
--OT Tony Pashos: UFA 49ers; \$10.3M/3 yrs, \$4.5M guaranteed.  
--\*TE Alex Smith: Not tendered as RFA by Eagles; 1 yr, terms unknown.  
--DB DeAngelo Smith (waivers Lions).  
--\*K Shaun Suisham: Not tendered as RFA by Cowboys; terms unknown.  
--QB Seneca Wallace (trade Seahawks).  
--TE Benjamin Watson: UFA Patriots; \$12M/3 yrs, \$6.25M guaranteed.

## PLAYERS LOST

--QB Derek Anderson (released).  
--C Hank Fraley (released).  
--TE Michael Gaines: UFA Texans; terms unknown.  
--G Rex Hadnot: UFA Cardinals; \$9M/3 yrs.  
--LB Alex Hall (traded Eagles).  
--TE Steve Heiden (released).  
--RB Jamal Lewis (released).  
--\*S Brodney Pool: Not tendered as RFA/Jets; \$1.3M/1 yr.  
--QB Brady Quinn (traded Broncos).  
--WR Donte' Stallworth (released).  
--OL Ryan Tucker: UFA; retired and will be on league suspension for first eight games of the 2010 season.  
--DE Corey Williams (traded Lions).  
--LB Kamerion Wimbley (traded Raiders).

## DALLAS COWBOYS

## HOT TOPIC

When Roy Williams was guaranteed a starting job in February by team owner Jerry Jones, it was assumed that Williams was getting a free pass and wasn't being held accountable.

At the time, Jones knew that Williams was getting beat up far and wide by fans and the media for a subpar season so he didn't need to beat him up anymore.

He was trying to support him.

Still, Jones rendered any questions of a free pass for Williams moot when he picked Dez Bryant in the first round of the NFL draft.

If there were any concerns about Williams being properly motivated to get his act together, there are none now.

Williams said he is ready for any and all challenges.

"I'm in it to win it. If somebody can pull in here and take my spot, they've got to be a baaaaad man," Williams said with emphasis. "It's mine to lose, I guess you can say. I'm not going to do that. The competition level is going to be high."

Williams backed up his words during the first week of OTAs. He is in great shape. He was making great coaches and showing an improved chemistry with quarterback Tony Romo.

"He is in good shape, he's running good routes, he's doing good things," Romo said.

Said cornerback Mike Jenkins: "Roy came out on fire. That's the best I've seen Roy since he got here. He looked like a No. 1 receiver."

Dropped passes and a lack of production were part of Williams disappointing 2009 season. He understands why the fans are down on him. He has resolved to change that.

"I promise you I won't lead the league in drops. I know that," Williams said. "People are off my bandwagon, which I don't mind. I'd be off my bandwagon, too."

Offensive coordinator Jason Garrett has certainly taken notice.

"His weight's really good, he looks quick and explosive, he's going to get the ball," Garrett said. "Like with everybody, it's a process that you're always trying to improve each and every day and it goes to your approach. And his approach has been outstanding."

**PLAYER/PERSONNEL NOTES**

--Cowboys' quarterback Tony Romo is a football player first and foremost. If you didn't know that before -- considering Romo's variety of interests in golf, basketball, soccer and partying with pop stars -- he'd like it known now.

Romo, who is a scratch golfer, declined a chance to qualify for the HP Byron Nelson Championship because it conflicted with the first day of Cowboys organized team activities. Other NFL players have recently participated in similar events. Not Romo. Not this year.

It was a voluntary practice.

But his team was there and Romo felt like he needed to be there with his teammates.

"It's enjoyable to play and compete (in golf), but football is the funnest thing I do by far," Romo said. "On a day like today, there's nothing else I'd rather do than be here at football competing, and that's what we get to do when we're out at practice. It's not like I missed out on something today. ... There was really no decision there. For me, it was just this is what I love to do. Why would you not choose that?"

That's team owner Jerry Jones' point of view.

From the team's perspective, it was ludicrous to think that Romo wouldn't be at practice.

"It's real obvious where his responsibility is," Jones said. "I'm not the least bit surprised or impressed that he is here."

--The Cowboys have announced their 2010 training camp plans, including splitting time between San Antonio and Oxnard, Calif.

Players will report to the Alamodome on July 23, with the team's first practice on July 24.

Practice will continue in the Alamodome through Aug. 6.

Emmitt Smith, the NFL's all-time leading rusher, will be inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame on Aug. 7, and the Cowboys will take on Cincinnati in the Hall of Fame Game on Aug. 8.

After returning to Dallas briefly and hosting the Oakland Raiders on Aug. 12, the Cowboys travel to Oxnard, where they'll remain until they break camp on Aug. 27.

"I think a change of pace is good for monotony," vice president Stephen Jones said. "I mean, you get into camp in one spot for a long period of time, there starts to be no light at the end of the tunnel.

"I think it should be a positive. I don't know of anyone who hasn't been for it."

--Roy Williams doesn't want Dez Bryant to take his starting job. But he is also committed to helping Bryant become a good receiver and says the competition is good for everybody.

"That's what's going to happen, the competition is good," Williams said. "It's not just going to help the receiver position but it's receivers versus defensive backs. We have taken it upon ourselves to take it up another notch. If we see somebody slacking or one of us slack, we are going to get on them because we want to be the best. That is what we saw today."

Bryant appreciates the tutoring from Williams and said everything else will work out.

"He made sure I got my right depths," Bryant said. "He told me if I need anything don't hesitate to ask. He'll help me. It made me happy. I know the Dallas Cowboys brought me in to help and I feel like I'm going to do my best to make a contribution to the team. The only thing I can say about is when I go out there and do it it's all God-given. I just feel like if I just keep doing that, I'll be very successful."

QUOTE TO NOTE: "I have said it all along he is the hardest worker I have seen he is here every day. He has the will to win and good things will follow." -- Tight end Jason Witten on quarterback Tony Romo.

**STRATEGY AND PERSONNEL**

The Cowboys made a couple of roster moves, releasing guard/center Cory Proctor and removing guard/center Duke Preston from the roster.

Proctor, a restricted free agent, was expected to make \$1.759 million in 2010, which is a little rich for backup player getting limited playing time.

Preston has not signed his restricted free agent tender and is expected to retire.

Cowboys coach Wade Phillips said starting left guard Kyle Kosier is being targeted as the backup center behind starter Andre Gurode. Kosier doesn't have any experience playing the position. He played every position on the line but center. But he is a veteran and considered capable of handling the move. Phillips said using Kosier as the backup center gives the Cowboys more line flexibility on game day.

If Kosier is forced into action at center, the Cowboys will play Montrae Holland at guard.

Travis Bright, another converted guard, is also in the mix at backup center.

FRANCHISE PLAYER: None.

TRANSITION PLAYER: None.

UNRESTRICTED FREE AGENTS: None.

RESTRICTED FREE AGENTS (\*indicates restricted because of uncapped year)

--\*WR Miles Austin (tendered at \$3.168M with first- and third-round picks as compensation) was big in leading the NFC with 1,320 yards and catching 11 touchdowns.

--\*SS Gerald Sensabaugh (tendered at \$1.809M with second-round pick as compensation) thought he would be able to cash in big after signing a one-year, \$1.75 million make-good contract in the offseason.

EXCLUSIVE RIGHTS FREE AGENTS: None.

PLAYERS RE-SIGNED

--CB Alan Ball: ERFA; \$545,000/1 yr.  
--\*DE Stephen Bowen: RFA; (tendered at \$1.759M with second-round pick as compensation); \$1.759M/1 yr.  
--CB Cletis Gordon: Not tendered as RFA; terms unknown.  
--DE Jason Hatcher: RFA; (tendered at \$1.759M with second-round pick as compensation); \$1.759M/1 yr.  
--G Montrae Holland: UFA; 2 yrs, terms unknown.  
--\*WR Sam Hurd: RFA; (tendered at \$1.759M with second-round pick as compensation); \$1.759M/1 yr.  
--OT Pat McQuistan: RFA; (tendered at \$1.176M with seventh-round pick as compensation); \$1.176M/1 yr.  
--LB Steve Octavien: ERFA; \$470,000/1 yr.  
--NT Junior Siavii: RFA; (tendered at \$1.101M with third-round pick as compensation); \$1.101M/1 yr.  
--\*DE Marcus Spears: RFA; (tendered at \$1.226M with first-round pick as compensation); \$1.226M/1 yr.  
--\*S Pat Watkins: RFA; (tendered at \$1.176M with fifth-round pick as compensation); \$1.176M/1 yr.

PLAYERS ACQUIRED

--OT Alex Barron (trade Rams).  
--WR Titus Ryan: CFL FA; terms unknown.

PLAYERS LOST

--OT Flozell Adams (released).  
--LB Bobby Carpenter (traded Rams).  
--S Ken Hamlin (released).  
--\*C Duke Preston (retired); had been tendered at \$1.226M with fourth-round pick as compensation/tender withdrawn May 17).  
--\*OG Cory Procter (released); had re-signed as RFA for \$1.759M/1 yr.  
--\*K Shaun Suisham: Not tendered as RFA/Browns; terms unknown.

## DENVER BRONCOS

### HOT TOPIC

If public stances and goodwill gestures mean much, Elvis Dumervil should have a long career as a Denver Bronco.

The outside linebacker, who led the NFL in sacks last year, hasn't been a participant in the team's offseason conditioning program, choosing to work out in Miami instead. But he did show up for the first offseason practice, a voluntary passing camp session.

He signed a waiver -- his free-agent tender remains unsigned -- but he hopes for a long-term extension from the team very soon.

"I know it's a work in progress," Dumervil said. "I know everything will take care of itself."

The Broncos were happy to see Dumervil show up to the voluntary camp. After shipping off malcontents like Jay Cutler and Brandon Marshall, the Broncos appear willing to show some commitment to Dumervil, whose professionalism has been lauded by the team.

There have been talks between the Broncos and Gary Wichard, Dumervil's agent. Both sides have been quiet about negotiations, but admitted there have been discussions.

"Nothing imminent, but we're working together on the thing to make sure he's a Bronco for a long time," Broncos coach Josh McDaniels said. "He deserves it."

That's good news for Broncos fans, who have seen other young stars leave since McDaniels took over as the team's head coach last year. Dumervil said he wanted to come out to the practices while the contract gets worked out to show his support for his teammates and learn the new wrinkles of the defense under new coordinator Don Martindale.

"It's the business side of football, we all know that," Dumervil said. "For the most part I'm just happy to be out here and be with the team. At the end of the day, I'm going to be a Bronco in 2010."

### PLAYER/PERSONNEL NOTES

--Brian Dawkins is the vocal leader of the Denver Broncos defense, and perhaps the entire team, and he endorsed the team's moves to get bigger on the defensive line this offseason.

"I love it. Love it. Love it," Dawkins said.

Denver signed ends Justin Bannan and Jarvis Green and nose tackle Jamal Williams. If all three of those players stay healthy, the Broncos should benefit against the run. They are big players who can control the line of scrimmage up front better than last year's group.

"With the beef that we brought in and the 'dog mentality' they play with up front, I think that's going to add a lot to what we do defensively," Dawkins said. "They play with an attitude. When I talk to them, you can hear the excitement in their voice. And I've been privy to see them play on the field, and you can tell they play with that attitude. That if the run gets past them, they get an attitude from that because they feel like they have to make those plays up front."

The age of the new linemen is a bit of concern, because all three are past 30 years old. But Bannan and Green have said this offseason they feel good. Williams is coming off a season-ending injury but said he also feels good and refreshed after missing most of last year.

The Broncos needed help on the line. The linemen last year played well at times but faltered near the end of the season. Oakland rushed for more than 200 yards in a win at Denver, and Kansas City passed 300 rushing yards in a season-ending win.

There is confidence within the organization that the upgrades on the defensive line will make a big difference.

"With the guys we have up front, it should be a stout group this year," Bannan said. "The defense as a whole should be a stout group, we should be able to fly around and make a lot of plays, and do the job we're supposed to do."

--The Broncos are still looking in free agency. They are a suitor for center Cory Proctor, recently cut by the Cowboys, and also running back Brian Westbrook. Broncos safety Brian Dawkins played with Westbrook for seven seasons and said Westbrook would help the team.

"He's just one of those guys that can do so many different things for a team, for an offense, that if that did happen, it would add a whole lot to this team," Dawkins said.

--The Broncos envision an expanded role for tight end Marquez Branson. He could be more of a fullback/H-back in the offense. He lined up in the backfield often during the team's recent passing camp.

The Broncos need Branson to be versatile because coach Josh McDaniels said the team could change its approach this year and use a fullback more often. The only true fullback on the roster is Spencer Larsen.

"In the running game we're going to use a little bit more two-back sets," McDaniels said. "You saw Larsen and Branson back there taking most of those reps at the fullback spot. We're still going to be spread out and do some of the things that we've done before and we go through an evaluation every spring and come up with some new things. We watch some other teams that have been successful doing other things and we've liked some things and feel like we've got some personnel that can do some of them."

--Guard Matt McChesney was put on the retired/reserve list after a freak accident involving a golf cart. He injured his ankle and decided to give up football.

QUOTE TO NOTE: "I didn't have to meet him to know that I had things in common with him. My faith and what he believes in, outspoken about it and not ashamed of it, and that's how I am." -- Broncos safety Brian Dawkins on rookie quarterback Tim Tebow.

#### STRATEGY AND PERSONNEL

The Broncos are going to continue to look into possibilities on the free-agent market to improve the roster. Denver has shown a willingness to be aggressive in the post-draft market and will do so this season.

The Broncos still have some post-draft needs that need to be filled. However, coach Josh McDaniels said he is happy with the team's depth and said there is good competition at many spots.

?? MEDICAL WATCH: WR Demaryius Thomas had foot surgery before the draft. He is improving and shouldn't be far from getting back on the practice field. ... WR Eric Decker suffered a Lisfranc injury to his foot last year and hasn't been practicing. He might not be ready to fully participate until training camp. ... G Russ Hochstein is recovering from knee surgery well, and the Broncos expect him to be ready for training camp. ... OT Ryan Clady had knee surgery for a partially torn patellar tendon. The team hopes he is ready for Week 1 of the regular season. ... LB Darrell Reid is recovering from knee surgery. His availability for training camp is still up in the air. ... OT Ryan Harris is rehabilitating from a toe injury. The team is hopeful he'll be ready for training camp.

FRANCHISE PLAYER: None

TRANSITION PLAYER: None.

UNRESTRICTED FREE AGENTS

--P Mitch Berger was a midseason signee who had an up-and-down year. With the late-season addition of Britton Colquitt, don't expect Berger back.

--S Vernon Fox added some depth on special teams late in the year. He could return for camp.

--OT Brandon Gorin gave the Broncos some experience at tackle but was not the primary backup at the position. Denver could look elsewhere.

--CB Ty Law played well after being picked up during the season but did deal with some injuries and is near the end of his career. If he is re-signed, it's a sign the Broncos don't have much faith in 2009 second-round pick Alphonso Smith.

RESTRICTED FREE AGENTS (\*indicates restricted because of uncapped year)

--\*OLB Elvis Dumervil (tendered at \$3.168M with first- and third-round picks as compensation) should be a high priority for the Broncos after leading the NFL in sacks.

EXCLUSIVE RIGHTS FREE AGENTS: None.

PLAYERS RE-SIGNED

--S Josh Barrett: ERFA; terms unknown.

--LB Nick Greisen: UFA; terms unknown.

--G Russ Hochstein: UFA; 2 yrs, terms unknown.

--\*G Chris Kuper: RFA; (tendered at \$2.521M with first-round pick as compensation); \$2.521M/1 yr.

--WR Brandon Lloyd: UFA; terms unknown.

--\*QB Kyle Orton: RFA; (tendered at \$2.621M with first-round pick as compensation); \$2.621M/1 yr.

--K Matt Prater: ERFA; terms unknown.

--\*TE Tony Scheffler: RFA; (tendered at \$1.176M with second-round pick as compensation); \$1.176M/1 yr.

--\*DE Le Kevin Smith: Not tendered as RFA; terms unknown.

PLAYERS ACQUIRED

--RB J.J. Arrington: FA; 1 yr, terms unknown.

--LB Akin Ayodele: FA Dolphins; terms unknown.

--DT Justin Bannan: UFA Ravens; \$22M/5 yrs, \$6.3M SB.

--DE Jarvis Green: UFA Patriots; \$20M/4 yrs.

--CB Nate Jones: UFA Dolphins; \$4.33M/4 yrs.

--QB Brady Quinn (trade Browns).

--NT Jamal Williams: FA Chargers; \$16M/3 yrs, \$7M guaranteed.

--G/T Maurice Williams: FA; terms unknown.

PLAYERS LOST

--LB Andra Davis (released).

--OG Mitch Erickson (released).

--OG Ben Hamilton: UFA Seahawks; terms unknown.

--FB Peyton Hillis (traded Browns).

--DE Vonnie Holliday: UFA Redskins; terms unknown.

--RB LaMont Jordan (released).

--WR Brandon Marshall (traded Dolphins).

--DL J'Vonne Parker (released).

--DE Kenny Peterson (released).

--TE Tony Scheffler (trade Lions).

--QB Chris Simms (released).

--C Casey Wiegmann (released).

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## DETROIT LIONS

### HOT TOPIC

When first-round picks Ndamukong Suh and Jahvid Best joined the Lions' veterans, they caught a little of the grief high-profile rookies always do. But not too much.

Not only does coach Jim Schwartz have a no-hazing policy, the Lions' vets know they need these guys to come in and contribute quickly if they have any chance of winning this fall.

"All the guys are good," said Suh, the No. 2 overall pick in the draft. "Obviously they're giving me a hard time and joking around about the hazing, but I know they're just messing with me and things of that sort.

"The thing that I guess surprised me the most, I thought it would be a little bit more tougher and the guys being ? bluntly, being (jerks) to me. But I mean, no, they're all good dudes."

Suh is expected to bolster the defensive line immediately. Suh said fellow tackle Corey Williams "just talks to me like I've been playing with him for, like, five, 10 years."

Defensive end Kyle Vanden Bosch, a fellow Nebraska product, sent Suh a text message the night before his first day with the vets.

"It was Sunday night, saying, '6:45 lift, so be there bright and early,'" Suh said. "I've been working out with him the last two days and continue to work out with him as long as he'll allow me to."

Best is expected to add explosiveness to the running game immediately. If anyone should be threatened by him and cold, it should be running back Kevin Smith, the incumbent starter who is recovering from a torn anterior cruciate ligament. But Smith broke the ice.

"I wasn't nervous at all because he just walked straight up to me and we sat down and talked for a little bit," Best said. "So he made it real comfortable for me."

"It was basically football. He was just saying: 'Don't be nervous. Just go out there and you know how to play the game. Don't be nervous. Don't think too much. Just play.'"

Asked if that was a load off, Best said: "Oh, yeah. Definitely, definitely."

Best said Smith was kind of like his big brother.

"He's just giving me pointers," Best said. "He's just staying on me, making sure I know what I'm doing when I'm out there."

Suh and Best know their place, though.

"Obviously, you're the rook, so you've got to take the helmets in and do those things, which I expected, I have no problem doing," Suh said. "It's just like going to college. You're a freshman again. You've got to work your way up to being that senior."

#### PLAYER/PERSONNEL NOTES

--The Lions plan to give quarterback Matthew Stafford more freedom at the line of scrimmage this fall. It's not because he couldn't handle it as a rookie and they feel he has picked up the playbook now. It's because they feel his supporting cast matches his abilities now.

"We sort of held Matt back last year," coach Jim Schwartz said. "Matt was a lot further along than we were offensively. There were things he could do that we didn't have other pieces around him to be able to do."

Stafford has new weapons like wide receiver Nate Burleson, tight end Tony Scheffler and running back Jahvid Best. He is past the knee and shoulder injuries he suffered last season, throwing the ball with full authority again. And he has been impressive during organized team activities.

Take one practice. Stafford pumped-faked to wide receiver Calvin Johnson, whom defenses smothered last season. The coverage shifted to Johnson. Stafford fired a rocket over the middle to Burleson, whom the Lions signed to make defenses pay for paying so much attention to Johnson. Offensive coordinator Scott Linehan had a huge smile on his face afterward.

"They were trying to zone us off, which creates small pockets," Burleson said. "Most defenses, they kind of bank on the fact that a lot of quarterbacks are scared to attack those small pockets. I'm probably thinking that Linehan was smiling because we have a quarterback that can fit anything into any small pocket."

Earlier that day, Stafford fired a pass through three defenders to tight end Will Heller, who dropped the ball apparently because he was surprised it got to him. Burleson said Stafford had noticed all the defenders' helmets were turned, and knowing they weren't looking at him, it was safe to take a shot.

"That's strength, confidence and also a little bit of moxie," Burleson said. "You've got to be cocky to make that throw, and I love it."

--Defensive tackle Ndamukong Suh, the No. 2 overall pick in the draft, struggled in his first practice against an NFL starting guard, going against Stephen Peterman. "Peterman's definitely a vet, and he knows what he's doing and really knows this offense," Suh said. "He definitely has quick feet, strong guy, and he's more schooled in being able to pick up on things. You can't give off little tips like you did in college. You have to really disguise your stuff, because they start to pick up on those things and those tendencies that you do. So things of that sort, they're a lot more schooled in that area. Strength-wise, do I feel I can push him around? Not necessarily push him around, but I feel I'm strong enough to beat him to the quarterback or I wouldn't be at this level. So I did it a little bit, but he's still a great player. He's going to recover quickly if I beat him, if I don't make sure I close and get back to the quarterback and make sure it's no doubt that I don't give him any leeway or no air."

--Some of the rookies, including rookie running back Jahvid Best, are still learning what NFL conditioning is all about. Suh seems to be an exception. "In my eyes, it's not very different," Suh said. "Not at all. The only thing that I notice that we do a little bit more here is we use kettle bells a little bit more. ? I think the kettle bell is the only big difference I see from my college strength and conditioning coach and this strength and conditioning coach. I think if we had the opportunity and the leeway to do that at Nebraska we would do it, but I think it's a little bit harder, too much of a broader group."

--Right tackle Gosder Cherilus returned to the field about a month after having arthroscopic surgery to remove debris from his right knee. Cherilus went through individual drills, but not team drills. "He's doing fine," coach Jim Schwartz said. "He didn't have something that was going

to be long-term. He's back in drills and things like that. He's still not back full, but he's making good progress."

--Linebacker Zack Follett sold a piece of his artwork for \$1,000 during a live auction at the Lions' charity bocce tournament. It was a Lions logo he had cut out of wood and painted gold, then mounted on a piece of canvas painted like a football field. In one end zone was the word "RESTORE." In the other were the words "THE ROAR." "Just because I think this year will be a better year for the Lions," Follett said. The bidding started slowly, but picked up. "At first, I was like, 'Man, this thing's going to go for, like, a hundred bucks,' " Follett said. "It should have started at one dollar."

--Coach Jim Schwartz sat down for a few minutes with Red Wings Hall of Famer Ted Lindsay at the bocce tourney. "Any time you have a chance to talk to a guy that's got 'HOF' next to his name, that brings some pretty good street cred," Schwartz said. "We were just talking sports in general. He follows not only the Red Wings but the Lions. We were just talking about the relationship that the guys on the teams used to have." Lindsay doesn't go to Lions games, but he roots for them. "They seem to be on the track of elevating themselves," Lindsay said, "and that's wonderful to see."

QUOTE TO NOTE: "Offensively, I think you can start to see those pieces start to come together. There's a lot of ground that needs to be covered ? but I think we have the potential to be there, for sure." -- Coach Jim Schwartz, asked if the Lions' offense should be worlds ahead of where it was last year.

#### STRATEGY AND PERSONNEL

MEDICAL WATCH: Right tackle Gosder Cherilus returned to individual drills about a month after having clean-up knee surgery to remove debris from his right knee. ? Tight end Will Heller and wide receiver Dennis Northcutt have sat out with unspecified injuries that appear minor. ? Tight end Tony Scheffler still has a boot on his right leg because of what coach Jim Schwartz has called an "irritated foot." ? Tight end Brandon Pettigrew, running back Kevin Smith and cornerback Jack Williams are going through individual drills after suffering torn ACLs the second half of last season. The Lions hope all three will be ready for the season opener. ? Cornerback Eric King is participating fully after recovering from a shoulder injury. ? Right guard Stephen Peterman is back from an ankle injury. ? Safety Daniel Bullocks is practicing after missing two of the last three seasons because of a knee problem. ? Safety Ko Simpson is still sidelined by a knee problem.

FRANCHISE PLAYER: None.

TRANSITION PLAYER: None.

UNRESTRICTED FREE AGENTS

--OL Damion Cook spent the season on injured reserve. If he comes back, it will be for depth.

--QB Daunte Culpepper appeared certain to be gone, but both sides haven't ruled out a reunion.

--CB Anthony Henry isn't the cover man he once was and spent most of the season in the doghouse.

--QB Patrick Ramsey signed only at the end of the season to dress as the third quarterback with Matthew Stafford injured. The Lions are looking for a veteran backup.

UNRESTRICTED FREE AGENTS (not tendered offers)

--\*LB Cody Spencer (not tendered as RFA) spent the season on injured reserve with knee injury.

RESTRICTED FREE AGENTS (\*indicates restricted because of uncapped year): None.

EXCLUSIVE RIGHTS FREE AGENTS: None.

PLAYERS RE-SIGNED

--DE Copeland Bryan: Not tendered as RFA; terms unknown.

--\*S Daniel Bullocks: RFA; (tendered at \$1.759M with second-round pick as compensation); \$1.759M/1 yr.

--LB Vinny Ciurciu: UFA; 1 yr, terms unknown.

--LB Zack Follett: ERFA; terms unknown.

--\*OG Dylan Gandy: RFA; (tendered at \$1.176M with fourth-round pick as compensation); \$1.176M/1 yr.

--TE Will Heller: UFA; \$3.95M/3 yrs.

--OT Corey Hilliard: ERFA; terms unknown.

--\*DE Jason Hunter: RFA; (tendered at \$1.759M with second-round pick as compensation); \$1.759M/1 yr.

--OT Jon Jansen: UFA; \$855,000/1 yr, \$50,000 SB.

--S Marquand Manuel: UFA; \$805,000/1 yr.

--TE Jake Nordin: ERFA; terms unknown.

--OG Manny Ramirez: RFA; (tendered at \$1.101M with fourth-round pick as compensation); terms unknown.

--\*S Ko Simpson: RFA; (tendered at \$1.176M with fourth-round pick as compensation); \$1.176M/1 yr.

## PLAYERS ACQUIRED

--\*S C.C. Brown: RFA tender withdrawn by Giants; terms unknown.  
--WR Nate Burleson: UFA Seahawks; \$25M/5 yrs, \$11M guaranteed.  
--OG Trevor Canfield (waivers Seahawks).  
--WR Brian Clark: Not tendered as RFA by Buccaneers; 1 yr, terms unknown.  
--RB DeDe Dorsey: FA; 2 yrs, terms unknown.  
--QB Shaun Hill (trade 49ers).  
--CB Chris Houston (trade Falcons).  
--LB Landon Johnson: FA Panthers; 1 yr, terms unknown.  
--WR Marko Mitchell (waivers Redskins).  
--LB Ashlee Palmer: Waivers Bills.  
--TE Tony Scheffler (trade Broncos).  
--OG Rob Sims (trade Seahawks).  
--DE Kyle Vanden Bosch: UFA Titans; \$26M/4 yrs.  
--CB Jonathan Wade: Not tendered as RFA by Rams; terms unknown.  
--CB Dante Wesley: UFA Panthers; \$1.54M/2 yrs, \$20,000 SB.  
--DE Corey Williams (trade Browns).

## PLAYERS LOST

--CB Phillip Buchanon (released).  
--TE Casey Fitzsimmons: UFA; retired.  
--LB Larry Foote: UFA Steelers; \$9.3M/3 yrs, \$1.8M SB.  
--DE Robert Henderson (traded Seahawks).  
--CB Kevin Hobbs (released; had been re-signed as RFA).  
--DT Grady Jackson (released).  
--CB Will James: UFA 49ers; 1 yr, terms unknown.  
--\*G/T Daniel Loper (released); had re-signed as RFA for \$1.226M/1 yr.  
--TE Michael Matthews (released).  
--S Calvin Pearson (released).  
--RB Cedric Peerman (released; had been re-signed as ERFA).  
--LB Ernie Sims (traded Eagles).  
--CB DeAngelo Smith (released; had been re-signed as ERFA).  
--DE Dewayne White (released).  
--CB Brian Witherspoon (released).

## GREEN BAY PACKERS

## HOT TOPIC

Content to still be a starter, Ryan Pickett has been singing different tunes this offseason about where he plays on the field.

Pickett, a long-tenured nose tackle, touted his lot with the Packers and the position when they re-signed the unrestricted free agent to a four-year, \$28 million deal in March after initially placing the franchise tag on him.

"I love the (team's) 3-4 (scheme). I love playing the nose," Pickett said. "This defense, I think I was built for it. I always wanted to do it, and I got my opportunity to do it. It's just a blessing that I've been able to do it."

Time will tell whether Pickett harbors similar sentiments about playing defensive end. After showing some reluctance last year when the change was first broached but never carried out, Pickett is accepting of the move to the outside, which came to light when organized team activities started May 17.

The Packers debuted a new-look defensive line with Pickett and incumbent right end Cullen Jenkins flanking nose tackle B.J. Raji, the team's top draft pick in 2009, who is back at his best position after playing mostly end last season.

"We're in Year 2 of our defense (with the 3-4)," head coach Mike McCarthy said. "We've had a chance to go back and evaluate our schemes and concepts that we used last year, how we can better utilize our players, moving some players around to give us some flexibility to make sure we have those options throughout the course of a 16-game season. And, that's definitely one of them, trying to get Ryan more on the field."

The notable switch for the 6-foot-2, 340-pound Pickett protects the Packers in the short term because incumbent starting left end Johnny Jolly faces a possible league suspension for violating its substance-abuse policy. Jolly, who remains unsigned as a restricted free agent, has a scheduled court date May 21 regarding a felony drug possession charge stemming from 2008.

"I think it just says a lot about him as a person and his flexibility as a player," McCarthy said of Pickett. "I think with Ryan being down in the trenches, sometimes people lose sight -- he

has exceptional foot quickness, and he definitely has the ability to get out there and play a five-technique."

The Packers also will be able to better utilize the athleticism and pass-rush skills of the 6-2, 337-pound Raji. The plan is to keep him on the field a lot, pairing him with Jenkins as the down linemen in the nickel package.

#### PLAYER/PERSONNEL NOTES

--Only one player has worn No. 42 in a game for the Packers since All-Pro Darren Sharper left the team as a free agent after the 2004 season.

Running back DeShawn Wynn has been an afterthought with that number the last three years, but Morgan Burnett, the new wearer of 42, just might make it popular again in Green Bay.

Burnett also happens to be a safety, like Sharper, and the similarities extend to the big-play attributes of both players.

"He's off to a good start," head coach Mike McCarthy said of Burnett. "There's no question you like the size and the athletic ability that he possesses."

General manager Ted Thompson thought highly enough of Burnett to make a rare trade up to take him in the third round of the draft (71st overall) in April.

In turn, the Packers are giving Burnett an opportunity from the get-go to train as a starter in offseason drills. He is holding down the job at strong safety with incumbent Atari Bigby out as an unsigned restricted free agent.

"He can play," said Nick Collins, the Packers' Pro Bowl free safety. "They drafted him, so he must have some playmaking ability for himself. That's why he's here. Hopefully, he can get on the same page with all of the veterans."

The accelerated introduction at the pro level should be to Burnett's benefit when a battle with Bigby is waged in training camp this summer.

Burnett is only 21 and came out of college as a junior, but he made the most of his three years as a starter at Georgia Tech with 14 interceptions.

The latter is a Sharper-like number. Now a member of the reigning Super Bowl champion New Orleans Saints, Sharper ranks among Green Bay's all-time leaders with 36 picks in his eight-year stay.

--Defensive end Justin Harrell likely is on a short leash to make it to a fourth season with the Packers after the team's 2007 first-round draft pick missed more games than he played the last three years because of an assortment of injuries.

Harrell, who was sidelined the entire 2009 season with chronic back trouble, has been an able participant with the team in offseason workouts and appears to be in the good graces of the coaches, who are waiting for him to finally contribute on a regular basis.

"Justin Harrell is definitely in our plans," head coach Mike McCarthy said. "Justin has gone through a number of medical hurdles that he's had to clear, and that will be no different as he goes through (the ongoing organized team activities), and hopefully, he stays healthy through that, and when he gets into training camp, that will be another hurdle.

"That's the one I'm sure Justin is looking forward to, and we all are, because you never really know with a lower back, particularly with defensive linemen, until he gets into the trench work and you get into the padded practices."

--A position battle has been declared in organized team activities, which started May 17, with defensive coordinator Dom Capers giving Brady Poppinga a chance to challenge Brad Jones for the starting job at left outside linebacker.

The vacancy was created when veteran Aaron Kampman bolted for the Jacksonville Jaguars in free agency.

Then-rookie Jones was an adequate starter for an injured Kampman late in the 2009 season.

Poppinga was a starter in the past but couldn't keep then-rookie Clay Matthews, a first-round draft pick, from taking over the spot at right outside linebacker early last season.

--Will Blackmon, another young prospect who's been derailed by injury, is completing his recovery from knee surgery early last season by learning a new position.

The Packers moved the fifth-year player from cornerback to safety early in the offseason.

Blackmon, who excels as a punt returner, expects to be ready for the start of training camp in late July.

--The grooming process is under way for rookie Bryan Bulaga at left tackle. The team's first-round draft pick is working for the first time with veteran starter Chad Clifton, whom Bulaga is projected to replace down the line, in the OTAs.

"Bryan Bulaga will play tackle in this league. I don't have any question about that," said McCarthy, reaffirming the team's decision to have the former Iowa standout work behind Clifton this year, rather than possibly contend for a starting spot at another position. "If we had any question about that, he probably wouldn't be here in Green Bay."

--The Packers added another Harrell to the roster with the signing of free-agent quarterback Graham Harrell (no relation to Justin) on May 19.

Graham Harrell, a former college standout at Texas Tech, had a workout with the team on the same day. At his request, Harrell was cut by the Canadian Football League's Saskatchewan Roughriders last month so he could try to latch on with an NFL team.

Harrell was on Saskatchewan's injured list last year after not being signed by the Cleveland Browns following a tryout as an undrafted rookie.

Green Bay reportedly released Chris Pizzotti with the signing of Harrell to maintain a quarterback depth chart of four players.

--Tight end Jermichael Finley plans to join Packers receiver Greg Jennings and several other skilled players in the league at Arizona Cardinals wideout Larry Fitzgerald's passing camp in Minneapolis this summer.

--In a change from previous years, McCarthy is giving players a week off from on-field work during the OTAs. They won't practice the week of May 23.

OTA practices will resume June 1 with three practices a week in a Tuesday-to-Thursday format for three straight weeks.

QUOTE TO NOTE: "I think the (chances) are excellent, not pretty good. I think he is an outstanding quarterback, and they're getting an even stronger team around him. I like his style, just everything about him. I think he executes the system, how they run their offense. I'm thrilled that they've gotten some offensive support around him. I think he's going to be a great quarterback." -- Hall of Fame quarterback Bart Starr on the outlook for Aaron Rodgers to become the next standout quarterback in Packers lore.

#### STRATEGY AND PERSONNEL

B.J. Raji, Pat Lee and rookie Morgan Burnett are benefiting greatly with the Packers still waiting on a trio of key players to re-sign as restricted free agents.

Incumbent starters Johnny Jolly and Atari Bigby as well as Tramon Williams, a part-time starter in the past, have yet to sign their tenders from the team and aren't participating in offseason workouts.

As the Packers opened organized team activities May 17, Raji, the club's top draft pick last year, jumped into the starting lineup at nose tackle, with Ryan Pickett moved outside to Jolly's spot at left end.

Burnett, a playmaker at Georgia Tech whom Green Bay selected in the third round, is holding down the starting job at strong safety in Bigby's absence.

Lee, who missed the entire 2009 season with a knee injury, is healthy this spring and getting valuable reps as the nickel back with Williams out.

MEDICAL WATCH: The Packers held a host of notable players out of the first week of organized team activities, which began May 17. They included cornerbacks Al Harris and Will Blackmon, who are recovering from major knee injuries sustained last season; linebacker Nick Barnett and offensive lineman Jason Spitz, who are on modified offseason schedules because of prior knee and back conditions, respectively; and offensive lineman T.J. Lang and safety Derrick Martin, who are on the mend from wrist and ankle surgeries, respectively, this spring.

FRANCHISE PLAYER: NT Ryan Pickett (tendered at \$7.003M; signed four-year contract March 12).

TRANSITION PLAYER: None.

#### UNRESTRICTED FREE AGENTS

--RB Ahman Green is a long shot to return to the club after it brought back its onetime workhorse at midseason and allowed him to become the team's all-time rushing leader. Green is 33, and his explosive running abilities are way behind him.

#### UNRESTRICTED FREE AGENTS (not tendered offers)

--P Jeremy Kapinos (not tendered as ERFA) had a league-worst net average of 34.1 yards, prompting the Packers to add someone right after the season ended with the signing of Tim Masthay.

--RB DeShawn Wynn (not tendered as RFA) landed on injured reserve before Halloween for the second time in his three years as a pro with a knee injury, shortening the leash even more for his future with the team.

#### RESTRICTED FREE AGENTS (\*indicates restricted because of uncapped year)

--\*S Atari Bigby (tendered at \$1.759M with second-round pick as compensation) has been a starter since 2007, but his last two seasons have been riddled by an assortment of injuries, which have diminished the impact he once made as a tenacious strong safety.

--\*DE Johnny Jolly (tendered at \$2.521M with first-round pick as compensation) still has a legal issue hanging over him stemming from his 2008 drug possession arrest, but he didn't allow that to be a distraction in a highly productive season (75 tackles, team-record 11 pass deflections) as the starter on the left side.

--CB Tramon Williams (tendered at \$3.043M with first- and third-round picks as compensation) held down the starting job with Al Harris out the last seven games, but Williams is better equipped in his customary nickel role.

EXCLUSIVE RIGHTS FREE AGENTS: one.

## PLAYERS RE-SIGNED

--\*CB Will Blackmon: RFA; (tendered at \$1.176M with fourth-round pick as compensation); \$1.176M/1 yr.  
--OT Chad Clifton: UFA; \$19.5M/3 yrs, \$7.5M guaranteed.  
--\*OG Daryn Colledge: RFA; (tendered at \$1.759M with second-round pick as compensation); \$1.759M/1 yr.  
--\*S Nick Collins: RFA (tendered at \$3.35M with first- and third-round picks as compensation); \$3.35M/1 yr/extension \$23.4M/3 yrs.  
--TE Spencer Havner: ERFA; \$470,000/1 yr.  
--\*FB John Kuhn: RFA; (tendered at \$1.176M with no compensation); \$1.176M/1 yr.  
--\*S Derrick Martin: Potential RFA; \$1.9M/2 yrs, \$355,000 SB.  
--NT Ryan Pickett: Franchise FA; \$24.925M/4 yrs, \$2M SB/\$6.4 RB.  
--\*C/G Jason Spitz: RFA; (tendered at \$1.759M with second-round pick as compensation); \$1.759M/1 yr.  
--OT Mark Tauscher: UFA; \$8.262M/2 yrs, \$2.081M RB 2010.

## PLAYERS ACQUIRED

--\*FS Charlie Peprah: Not tendered as RFA by Falcons; terms unknown.

## PLAYERS LOST

--S Matt Giordano (released).  
--LB Aaron Kampman: UFA Jaguars; \$24M/4 yrs, \$10M guaranteed.  
--DE Mike Montgomery (released).  
--LB Jeremy Thompson (released/failed physical).

## HOUSTON TEXANS

## HOT TOPIC

One week after they were bombarded with a nationwide controversy after outside linebacker Brian Cushing was suspended for four games for violating the NFL's policy against performance-enhancing drugs, the Texans received another scare.

Receiver Andre Johnson, their best player, missed the first three days of organized team activities because he was unhappy with his contract.

Johnson, who has been voted to the Pro Bowl three of the last four years, has five years remaining on the eight-year, \$60-million extension he signed in March of 2007. He will make a base salary of \$5.8 million this year after receiving almost \$27 million in the first three years of the extension.

The Texans have a policy of not talking contract with any player who isn't present. Johnson met with owner Bob McNair. Then the receiver showed up on Thursday, the fourth day of OTAs, and it was football business as usual.

"I've been catching hell from all my teammates since I've been back," Johnson said, laughing. "I didn't feel right being at home. I never miss OTAs, so I came in.

"I talked to everybody upstairs (front office), and there are no grudges, and I have no grudges against them, so we're just going to move on from it."

Johnson wants a new contract, but the team doesn't want to set a precedent by redoing one with five years remaining. That's a bad precedent for the team and for the league.

However, general manager Rick Smith said he's willing to talk. Perhaps they can find a way to guarantee the years Johnson has left or eliminate the last couple of years and give him that money in the form of a bonus.

"It's very difficult because it's something that's not customary," Smith said about being asked to redo a deal with five years left. "We've got a relationship with him, and he knows that we're willing to sit down and talk to him.

"I'm not real worried about that because we re-did him with two years left on his original deal, and that was three years ago. Over the first three years of that deal, I think if you even ask him, he's been well-compensated."

After participating in his first OTA, Johnson said he wouldn't miss anything else.

"I don't think you can really win against an organization," Johnson said. "When you're under contract, they can hold you to that, and it's up to them to re-do it or give you an extension or whatever they want to do. They really don't have to do anything.

"They can hold me to that contract, and if you choose to sit out and take fines, that's what happens. But I'm past that. I'm over that. I'm here working, and I'm going to continue to work, and, hopefully, we can achieve our goal of getting to the playoffs and winning the Super Bowl."

## PLAYER/PERSONNEL NOTES

--After a tumultuous nine days, outside linebacker Brian Cushing was happy to be back on the football field for OTAs.

Cushing has been suspended for the first four games for testing positive for hCG, which is banned by the NFL because it can be used as a masking agent for steroids. He was one of the first players on the practice field before the first OTA.

"This is what I do," he said. "This is what I'm going to be doing for a long time, so just to be out here and running around with the guys, there's nothing better than doing this.

"Everyone's happy. Everyone understands the situation, so they're all behind me and this doesn't change anything. Just continue to go toward the Super Bowl."

Cushing was roasted locally and around the country after he retained his NFL Defensive Rookie of the Year Award in a re-vote by The Associated Press and after his news conference in which he insisted he didn't know how the hCG got into his body.

"I really didn't pay too much attention to the reaction," he said about his news conference. "I felt that I got everything off my chest that I needed to and pretty much explained myself in every full detail, so I think that people can think what they want, but I think the truth is out there."

Cushing's Denver-based attorney, Harvey Steinberg, based his appeal on Cushing producing the hCG naturally because of a problem with an enlarged pituitary gland. They lost the appeal.

Cushing can practice and play in preseason games, but he must leave the facility when the suspension begins the week before the opener against Indianapolis. He returns before the fifth game against the New York Giants at Reliant Stadium.

"It's not about re-proving; it's about doing what I've been doing for the last 23 years, and nothing's going to change," Cushing said. "This is the best that I've felt in a while, so I'm going to be better than ever."

Danny Clark, who played with the Texans in 2007 and started 26 games for the Giants the last two seasons, was signed to back up Cushing. Xavier Adibi, a third-year linebacker who plays the weak side, is getting a chance to learn the strong side.

--MLB DeMeco Ryans sat out the early OTAs because of a hamstring injury. He signed a new contract in April. His teammates gave him a hard time about getting injured because his wallet was too heavy. Kevin Bentley, who backs up Ryans, moved onto the first team. Xavier Adibi, entering his third year, has been getting practice time in the middle and on the strong side.

--RB Ben Tate, the second-round pick from Auburn, showed up for his first OTA with a pulled hamstring. He's going to be out a while, according to the coaches. The other backs -- Steve Slaton, Arian Foster, Ryan Moats, Chris Henry and Jeremiah Johnson -- are healthy. Slaton, who is recovering from neck surgery, wears a red jersey so no defensive player hits him.

--CB Fred Bennett, who started eight games as a rookie and showed a lot of ability and potential, spent much of his third season on the bench. Four corners have been selected in the last two drafts. Bennett's fourth season could be a make-or-break situation.

"He's got to get in the mix," coach Gary Kubiak said. "He's got plenty of opportunities to battle for a starting job. I know last year didn't go the way Fred wanted it to, but we're wide open now. He's going to have to get himself back into the hunt from the standpoint of how he does his job. He's had a good offseason, but he's got to get himself into position to compete for a job at minicamp."

--CB Kareem Jackson, the first-round pick from Alabama, was put with the first team during the first OTA. Glover Quin, who started the last 13 games of his rookie year, is the other starter.

"He's been very impressive," Kubiak said. "He jumps in there like he belongs. He has good size, strength and is very well-coached. He acts like he belongs. The program he came from, how he was coached, and the games he played in, you see players come out of schools like that, they're usually not overwhelmed. That's the type of guys they've been covering all of the time."

--WR Trindon Holliday, a sixth-round pick from LSU, is 5-5, 166. He'll be used on returns and as a receiver who'll be moved around. WR David Anderson, 5-10, towers over Holliday.

"Everyone has always given me all the small jokes, and now they have someone else to make fun of," Anderson said. "But I don't go there, because I know how it is. He's as quick as they come. I think he understands exactly what he needs to do to make this team, and the little dude's doing good so far."

QUOTE TO NOTE: "We have a group of young, hungry players in the secondary. There's no tenured player back there, no one who's referred to as 'the guy.' They're all battling their tails off, and it's very competitive. There are some young kids back there with tremendous opportunities to get playing time." -- Coach Gary Kubiak, when asked about a secondary that has been bolstered by drafting four cornerbacks and safety the last two years.

#### STRATEGY AND PERSONNEL

FRANCHISE PLAYER: None

TRANSITION PLAYER: None.

UNRESTRICTED FREE AGENTS

--RB Chris Brown rushed for 267 yards and three touchdowns and was never comfortable in his role as a big back. He's won't be back.

--LB Khary Campbell was signed because of injuries at linebacker. He won't be back.

--S Nick Ferguson, a leader on defense, played both positions. He became a backup. It's doubtful he'll be back, but watch him end up in the personnel department.

--LS Bryan Pittman was signed to snap and help K Kris Brown snap out of a slump. Pittman was the team's snapper for six years before getting suspended for violating the league's substance abuse policy. He's not expected back.

--G Chester Pitts, an original Texan, started every game until he blew out a knee early last season and underwent surgery. He says he'll be 100 percent between May 1 and June 1. He said four teams have shown interest, including the Texans.

--G Tutan Reyes was signed to provide veteran depth. He didn't play and isn't expected back.

--S Brian Russell was signed to provide veteran depth when free and strong safety lost starters because of injuries. He's not expected back.

--OT Ephraim Salaam returned to the Texans late in the season because of injuries at his position. He didn't play and won't be back.

--LB Chaun Thompson was a backup inside and outside. He got hurt and isn't expected back.

--DT Jeff Zgonina, 39, was the oldest defensive player in the league until Junior Seau came out of retirement again. Zgonina was part of their rotation at defensive tackle. He wants to play again, but it seems unlikely unless an injury or two opens the door for him.

#### UNRESTRICTED FREE AGENTS (not tendered offers)

--S John Busing (not tendered as RFA) started at both safety spots and was mediocre. He was best on special teams.

#### RESTRICTED FREE AGENTS (\*indicates restricted because of uncapped year)

--\*TE Owen Daniels (tendered at \$3.168M with first- and third-round picks as compensation)

suffered a season-ending knee injury in the eighth game. He's one of their best players.

EXCLUSIVE RIGHTS FREE AGENTS: None.

#### DRAFT CHOICES SIGNED

--WR/KR Trindon Holliday (6/197); \$1.886M/4 yrs.

#### PLAYERS RE-SIGNED

--G Mike Brisiel: ERFA; \$470,000/1 yr.

--DE Tim Bulman: RFA; (tendered at \$1.101M with no compensation); terms unknown.

--OT Rashad Butler: RFA; (tendered at \$1.176M with third-round pick as compensation); \$1.176M/1 yr.

--\*RB Ryan Moats: RFA; (tendered at \$1.226M with third-round pick as compensation); \$1.226M/1 yr.

--\*S Bernard Pollard: RFA; (tendered at \$2.521M with first-round pick as compensation); \$2.521M/1 yr.

--DT Deljuan Robinson: ERFA; \$470,000/1 yr..

--\*LB DeMeco Ryans: RFA; (tendered at 3.168M with first- and third-round picks as compensation); \$48M/6 yrs, \$7.5M SB/\$21.75M guaranteed.

--P Matt Turk: UFA; \$1.85M/1 yr.

--WR Kevin Walter: UFA; \$21.5M/5 yrs.

--\*G Chris White: RFA; (tendered at \$1.226M with no compensation); \$1.226M/1 yr.

#### PLAYERS ACQUIRED

--QB John David Booty: FA; terms unknown.

--LB Danny Clark: UFA Giants; terms unknown.

--TE Michael Gaines: UFA Browns; terms unknown.

--K Neil Rackers: UFA Cardinals; \$4.1M/2 yrs, \$350,000 SB.

--G/C Wade Smith: UFA Chiefs; \$12M/4 yrs, \$6.25M guaranteed.

#### PLAYERS LOST

--QB Rex Grossman: UFA Redskins; 1 yr, terms unknown.

--CB Dunta Robinson: UFA Falcons; \$57M/6 yrs, \$22.5M guaranteed/\$7M SB.

## INDIANAPOLIS COLTS

### HOT TOPIC

This might prove to be a big year for the Indianapolis Colts.

It's because of what could happen off the field, though, rather than what occurs during the upcoming season that will be important. As many as twenty players, including four-time league Most Valuable Player Peyton Manning, have contracts that are due to expire at the end of the 2010 season.

In addition to Manning, the list includes running back Joseph Addai, kicker Adam Vinatieri, safeties Antoine Bethea, Melvin Bullitt and Jamie Silva, linebacker Clint Session, offensive tackles Charlie Johnson, Tony Ugoh and Adam Terry, defensive tackles Dan Muir, Antonio Johnson and Eric Foster, defensive ends Keyunta Dawson and Ervin Baldwin, tight end Gijon Robinson, guards Andy Alleman and Kyle DeVan, and wide receiver Sam Giguere.

If a new collective bargaining agreement is reached and players once again are unrestricted after four years in the league -- it took six years this offseason because of 2010 being a year without a salary cap -- 13 of the players, many of them front-line players, would be unrestricted.

Some tough decisions loom ahead for the Colts' front office.

"In this game, you never know. Sometimes things come full circle and guys are able to come back. A part of the game is that our team we had last year will never be the same team," linebacker Gary Brackett said recently.

"Guys are going to move on, guys are going to go different places, guys are not going to make the roster next season."

Team owner Jim Irsay knows that re-doing the contract of Manning is a given. What happens after that remains to be seen.

"We have to be wise in that we don't corner ourselves and make sure we have room to keep some of the key guys," Irsay said. "It's a myth to say you can just have Peyton and you're automatically 12-4."

"Peyton gives you such an edge. But we need the supporting cast if we want to do what we really want to do, and that's win another world championship."

#### PLAYER/PERSONNEL NOTES

--Colts defensive line coach John Teerlinck will introduce former Minnesota Vikings defensive tackle John Randle during his Pro Football Hall of Fame induction later this summer. Teerlinck was the Vikings' defensive line coach at the beginning of Randle's NFL career.

--Indianapolis signed three players in time for the beginning of their organized team activities. Added to the roster were WR Jordan Sisco, CB Pete Ittersagen and DT Marlon Favorite.

Sisco had 149 receptions, 2,212 yards and nine touchdowns during a four-year career at the University of Regina in Saskatchewan, Canada. He was given a tryout at the Colts' recent rookie minicamp.

Ittersagen is a 5-10, 191-pounder out of Wheaton (Ill.) College who spent time with Jacksonville in 2009.

Favorite is a 6-1, 317-pounder who played at LSU and spent time with five teams last year.

--Clyde Christensen will be calling plays for the Indianapolis Colts offense in 2010.

Former Colts offensive coordinator Tom Moore is now the team's senior offensive assistant and will be helping in a variety of roles, such as working with the team's younger quarterbacks.

But the keys to the Colts' high-powered offense now belong to Christensen, who has been with the team since the start of the 2002 season. He has been the team's receivers coach and was promoted to assistant head coach last year.

The offensive coordinator at Tampa Bay for one season (2001) ran the Colts' offense last spring and summer while Moore briefly retired.

"I think I've changed seats," Christensen said recently. "I've been in the Ferrari for a while. I've taken some turns driving. I've taken some turns riding. I've been in the back seat. I've been in the front seat."

His promotion to offensive coordinator, and the new designation for Moore, is one of several changes made by head coach Jim Caldwell during the offseason. Former assistant offensive line coach Pete Metzelaars was moved up to offensive line coach after the retirement of Howard Mudd.

Also, ex-Chicago Bears offensive coordinator Ron Turner is now coaching the receivers and former Kansas State head coach Ron Prince has taken over Metzelaars' previous job as assistant offensive line coach.

"You may change color in a couple of rooms or move some furniture around or pick up a new piece of furniture, but for the most part, the structure of this thing is intact," Christensen explained. "We're not trying to change a system or bring in a new scheme or anything like that."

He added that having Moore remain with the Colts was crucial.

"Tom's role will evolve and it's important for him to be around here," Christensen said. "I think he's going to be a huge help to me. We had great success working together and the last three or four years have been a great partnership doing what he needed me to do and taking more responsibility."

--The Colts have yet to make a final decision on where they will have training camp this summer. Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology in nearby Terre Haute (Ind.) has been the site of the workouts since 1999.

--Indianapolis will have nine OTAs spread over the next month. The Colts will hold their mandatory minicamp June 4-6.

The June 5 session is scheduled for Lucas Oil Stadium and will be open to the public free of charge.

QUOTE TO NOTE: "You have to be careful with all of your signings to make sure you have enough money to spread around to all of the players. You look at guys like (receivers) Austin Collie and Pierre Garcon. These are guys you're going to want to keep down the road. You've got to make sure you're able to do that." -- Colts owner Jim Irsay pointing out that he is always mindful of the

importance of having enough money left over for the rest of the roster while negotiating a new contract for reigning NFL MVP Peyton Manning.

#### STRATEGY AND PERSONNEL

Undrafted rookie quarterback Tim Hiller is just happy to be a part of the Colts organization.

Hiller is one of four quarterbacks currently on the team's offseason roster, along with starter Peyton Manning and a pair of second-year signal callers -- Curtis Painter and Drew Willey.

"I'm excited for this opportunity and I'm grateful for this opportunity that Coach (Jim) Caldwell and (Colts President Bill) Polian and the staff have given me. I'm very grateful," the former Western Michigan quarterback said recently.

"Obviously, when you don't get drafted there's a little disappointment. You can only let that last for a couple of minutes and move on, make the most of what you're dealt. I'm just trying to do the best I can with what I've got and where I am. (And) that's here."

MEDICAL WATCH: With the start of the team's organized team activities, the news has been good for several Colts players were suffered injuries last season.

S Bob Sanders (torn bicep), WR Anthony Gonzalez (knee) and placekicker Adam Vinatieri (hip/knee) have all been able to participate in drills. QB Peyton Manning, who had neck surgery after the 2009 season concluded, also has shown no ill effects and has been able to practice.

Rookie CB Kevin Thomas (knee) has not undergone surgery as of yet. Thomas was hurt on the final day of the Colts' rookie mini-camp earlier this month. DE Dwight Freeney continues to rehab the right ankle injury that he incurred in the 2009 AFC Championship game. The injury slowed his effectiveness in Super Bowl XLIV.

FRANCHISE PLAYER: None.

TRANSITION PLAYER: None.

#### UNRESTRICTED FREE AGENTS

--PK Matt Stover is not expected back. Stover may retire if he cannot work out a deal with another team that will be in the Super Bowl hunt for the 2010 season.

#### UNRESTRICTED FREE AGENTS (not tendered offers)

--G/T Daniel Federkeil (not tendered as RFA) could be back for the 2010 season. A former college defensive end, Federkeil has made a nice transition to NFL offensive lineman in recent years.

--\*LB Tyjuan Hagler (not tendered as RFA) wants to come back, but injuries have really slowed his career. He has played well when healthy but just can't stay on the field. He was a free agent last year and then was brought back with a one-year contract after being on the market for awhile.

--\*CB/PR T.J. Rushing (not tendered as RFA) has proved to be a pretty good punt returner who can also fill in at cornerback if needed. Rushing is not a game-breaking or game-changing type of punt returner, but he has been pretty solid in handling kicks. The Colts, though, may decide to tweak their return game in the offseason.

--OT Michael Toudouze (not tendered as ERFA) can play either offensive tackle spot, although he is probably best suited to right offensive tackle. Toudouze has bounced between the team's practice squad and regular-season active roster since being selected in the fifth round of the 2006 NFL draft.

#### RESTRICTED FREE AGENTS

--\*S Antoine Bethea (tendered at \$2.521M with first-round pick as compensation) should be back in 2010. He's a valuable member of the Colts' secondary who earned another Pro Bowl selection in 2009.

#### EXCLUSIVE RIGHTS FREE AGENTS

##### PLAYERS RE-SIGNED

--LB Gary Brackett: UFA; \$33M/5 yrs, \$12M guaranteed.

--S Melvin Bullitt: RFA; (tendered at \$1.684M with second-round pick as compensation); \$1.684M/1 yr.

--DT Antonio Johnson: RFA; (tendered at \$1.684M with second-round pick as compensation); \$1.684M/1 yr.

--\*OT Charlie Johnson: RFA; (tendered at \$1.759M with second-round pick as compensation); \$1.759M/1 yr.

--DT Daniel Muir: RFA; (tendered at \$1.684M with second-round pick as compensation); \$1.684M/1 yr.

##### PLAYERS ACQUIRED

--OG Andy Alleman: Not tendered as RFA by Chiefs; 1 yr. terms unknown.

--DT J.D. Skolnitsky (waivers Redskins).

--\*OT Adam Terry: Not tendered as RFA by Ravens; 1 yr, terms unknown.

##### PLAYERS LOST

--\*WR Hank Baskett: Not tendered as RFA/Eagles; 1 yrs, terms unknown.

--DE Raheem Brock (released).  
--S Aaron Francisco: Not tendered as RFA/Panthers; \$630,000/1 yr.  
--\*CB Marlin Jackson: Not tendered as RFA/Eagles; \$6M/2 yrs.  
--\*CB Tim Jennings: Not tendered as RFA/Bears; \$2.6M/2 yrs, \$250,000 RB.  
--\*LB Freddy Keiaho: Not tendered as RFA/Jaguars; \$630,000/1 yr.  
--OG Ryan Lilja (released (failed physical)).  
--RB Chad Simpson (released).  
--QB Jim Sorgi (released).

## JACKSONVILLE JAGUARS

### HOT TOPIC

Jack Del Rio's most crucial year as head coach of the Jacksonville Jaguars is not off to the type of start that he had envisioned. When the Jaguars began the first of their 14 organized team activities on Monday, veteran cornerback Rashean Mathis was a no-show.

Granted the OTAs are voluntary team sessions. Players can't be fined or suspended for missing these practices. And few players report to camp each year in better shape than Mathis, a hometown hero who has been a mainstay of the defense for the past seven seasons. He's started every game he's played in and has been a team leader, on and off the field.

But Mathis wants to be compensated like the top 10 cornerbacks in the league, whether he belongs in that group or not. At one time, he probably was in the elite status among the league's top pass defenders. But he's only played in one Pro Bowl (2006), has finished the last two years on injured reserve missing 10 games the last two seasons and has been burned for long scores on a number of occasions in recent years.

Neither Mathis nor his agent, Mike Sullivan, has spoken publicly about Mathis' contract demands. But the veteran cornerback, who will be 30 when the 2010 season opens, told Del Rio by phone that he would not be present when the team opened its OTAs on Monday because of his contract situation.

Two years into Mathis' original four-year contract in 2003, he signed a five-year extension that took him through the 2011 season. That contract was worth \$25.5 million and included \$9.4 million in guaranteed money. It has two years left to run with Mathis scheduled to make \$3.95 million this season and \$4.45 million next year.

But the past several seasons, several of the NFL's elite defenders have signed lucrative deals that will pay them in excess of \$8 million a year, twice as much as Mathis will make each of the next two seasons.

The Jaguars aren't likely to budge with Mathis. He's their top defender, a team leader and someone who holds a young secondary together, but they are likely to maintain a firm position with regards to drawing up a new contract or extending his current. When asked if there were any on-going talks with Mathis or there were any plans on making him a new offer, Del Rio offered a clear, concise "no" on both questions.

"We're all free to make choices. In the end our choices lead to consequences," Del Rio stated. "I'm not happy with it; he knows that. He did let me know (he wouldn't be at the OTAs). We've certainly been together a number of years and I appreciated that, but I also intimated to him that I don't agree with it and I don't support it.

"We're going to continue to focus on the guys that are here and the work that needs be done and (we're) pushing every day to be as good as we can be. So I'm not going to spend a lot of time talking about it."

So while Mathis may skip all 14 of the Jaguars OTA practice sessions, the real test will come in late July when the team opens training camp and everyone under contract must be there or risk fine or possible suspension. How far Mathis takes his contract demands remains to be seen.

### PLAYER/PERSONNEL NOTES

--The Jaguars have decided an artificial practice field is no longer needed. The team has elected to tear up their FieldTurf surface and replace it with a grass field. That will give them three grass fields to alternate practice sessions on beginning in August when training camp opens.

"Years ago, when you had the old-fashioned artificial turf, you used the basketball shoe on them. It was a completely different surface," coach Jack Del Rio said.

"There comes a time when you're either going to have to put in a new one or go to grass. Going to grass and having three fields makes a lot of sense."

--The Jaguars announced this week that the Jacksonville Police Athletic League will receive a \$65,000 grant from the National Football League as part of the NFL's Grassroots Program. The grant is part of \$2.5 million in field refurbishment awards allocated this year by the NFL Youth

Football Fun and Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) in NFL market areas around the country.

Jaguars team owners Wayne and Delores Barr Weaver are strong supporters of the NFL/LISC to promote physical fitness by providing safe community playing fields for children.

"Refurbishing the field at the Eastside Community Park which is not far from the stadium, will again provide hundreds of boys and girls a safe playing surface for football, cheerleading and other activities," Delores Weaver said.

The NFL Grassroots Program has resulted in the construction or renovation of 225 football fields nationwide in the past 12 years. During that time, the NFL Youth Football Fund has granted more than \$28 million to revitalize playing fields in underserved neighborhoods. NFL/LISC community field grants to-date in Jacksonville have totaled \$665,000.

--In addition to Rashean Mathis' absence due to his desire for a new contract, 10 other players were on the sidelines for the Jaguars first organized team activity. Most were due to injuries with a number of players still recovering from ailments from the 2009 season.

Defensive ends Aaron Kampman and Reggie Hayward, expected to be key figures in the team's quest to improve the pass rush, are both sidelined recovering from surgery in 2009.

The passing game was affected with Mike Sims-Walker and Mike Thomas, expected to be the team's two top receivers this year, missing drills. Several other veterans who also were limited in the day's opener of OTAs were guard Vince Manuwai and fullback Greg Jones.

"We've got a few guys that are being held out of practice with injuries and what-not," Del Rio said. "They're on the mend. We're trying to get them back as quick as possible. We feel like we've got a good plan to get those guys back on the field when it's appropriate."

--Jaguars tight end Ernest Wilford planned to cut his signature dreadlocks after Thursday's organized team activity. Not that the long hair was bothering Wilford, but rather to show his support for the oncology patients at Wolfson Children's Hospital.

In addition, Wilford was to provide the funding for the hospital's Jaguars Den, a high-tech game room at the hospital. The Jaguars Den was designed to create an environment that helps the experimental and emotional needs of the children who are hospitalized.

QUOTE TO NOTE: "We're going to demand, we're going to push, we're going to be accountable to each other and we expect 100 percent participation and we expect 100 percent in everything you're doing every day. Anything short of that is going to be unacceptable." -- Jaguars coach Jack Del Rio on the opening day of the Jaguars' OTAs and just before announcing that veteran cornerback Rashean Mathis was not in attendance due to the desire for a new contract.

#### STRATEGY AND PERSONNEL

With no contact allowed at the organized team activities (OTAs), there is plenty of emphasis placed on a team's passing attack. Certainly the Jaguars are a team that can best use that time to work on their passing game.

The inconsistency of quarterback David Garrard and the youthful look of the wide receivers make this an area that Jacksonville needs to improve. There was plenty of talk prior to the draft that the Jaguars would look to find a quarterback that they could develop and eventually take over for Garrard one day. They didn't draft one, opting to hold off a year when the 2010 draft should contain a number of outstanding quarterbacks.

That gives Garrard one more season in which he'll need to hike his passer rating which for the last two years has been in an unacceptable low 80s range, a far cry from the 102.2 number Garrard posted in 2007 which earned him a new, \$60 million contract.

Garrard will have to be at his best this season because the receivers as a group will be below NFL-average. Mike Sims-Walker is the only receiver who has proven to be a threat at the wide receiver spot which means he'll draw a lot of double-team coverage if no other Jaguars receiver steps up as a threat. The team may still be on the hunt for a veteran receiver, but at this point, will likely have to take someone who gets released during the preseason games. Several other players have missed some of the early OTAs, but no one other than Kampman and Hayward should miss more than a handful of the OTAs.

MEDICAL WATCH: Aaron Kampman (ACL surgery) and Reggie Hayward (broken leg surgery) are still recuperating and will likely skip all of the team's OTAs. Several other players have missed some of the early OTAs, but no one other than Kampman and Hayward should miss more than a handful of the OTAs.

FRANCHISE PLAYER: None.

TRANSITION PLAYER: None.

UNRESTRICTED FREE AGENTS: None.

UNRESTRICTED FREE AGENTS (not tendered offers)

--CB Kennard Cox (not tendered as ERFA).

RESTRICTED FREE AGENTS: None.

EXCLUSIVE RIGHTS FREE AGENTS

--CB Tyron Brackenridge started five games last year when Rashean Mathis was injured.

## PLAYERS RE-SIGNED

- DL Atiyah Ellison: Potential RFA; \$1.176M/1 yr.
- OG Kynan Forney: Potential UFA; \$755,000/1 yr.
- S Courtney Greene: ERFA; terms unknown.
- DE Reggie Hayward: UFA; 1 yr, terms unknown.
- CB William Middleton: ERFA; 1 yr, terms unknown.
- TE Ernest Wilford: Potential UFA; \$630,000/1 yr.
- \*WR Troy Williamson: Potential RFA; \$800,000/1 yr, \$100,000 SB.

## PLAYERS ACQUIRED

- LB Teddy Lehman: FA; terms unknown.
- DE Aaron Kampman: UFA Packers; \$24M/4 yrs, \$10M guaranteed.
- \*LB Freddy Keiaho: Not tendered as RFA by Colts; \$630,000/1 yr.
- LB Kirk Morrison (trade Raiders).
- WR Kassim Osgood: UFA Chargers; \$6.675M/3 yrs, \$2.975M guaranteed.

## PLAYERS LOST

- LB Quentin Groves (traded Raiders).
- DT John Henderson (released).
- WR Torry Holt (released).
- \*LB Clint Ingram: RFA tender withdrawn/Saints; 1 yr, terms unknown.
- LB Brian Iwuh (released).
- DT Rob Meier (released).
- DT Greg Peterson: Not tendered as RFA/Redskins; terms unknown.
- \*DT Montavious Stanley (released; had been re-signed as potential RFA).
- OT Tra Thomas (released).

## KANSAS CITY CHIEFS

## HOT TOPIC

The question to defensive end Glenn Dorsey was simple: Has anyone in the organization talked to you at any time about moving to nose tackle?

"No, not a word," said Dorsey. "Nobody has said anything about that."

For the last month there has been a lot of chatter in the media and among the fans about the possibility of the team's No. 1 draft choice in 2008 moving inside. The guy who opened the door on speculation was GM Scott Pioli.

Asked before the draft about rumors Dorsey was moving to the nose, Pioli didn't confirm or deny; he just talked about the versatility of Dorsey, calling him "a unique player" with the "physical skill and body type to play numerous positions." When asked specifically about nose tackle, Pioli again didn't say yes or no. "He can do a lot of different things," Pioli said.

That started the speculation that Dorsey, who doesn't quite fit the 3-4 scheme at DE, might move to the other position on the line, one he seems even less suited for physically. At 6-1, and just under 300 pounds, Dorsey is not the classic nose tackle for that defense.

But Dorsey says the talk about whether he's a zero tackle, a three-technique guy or a five-technique player misses the point.

"I really don't think there's that much of a difference between the positions on the defensive line," said Dorsey. "I think too much is made of that. There are some different keys and different reads, but it's all football and it's all defense. Inside the game's a little faster, but you still have to use your hands and your feet.

"Whatever they decide to do, I'm with it."

There's little doubt why the Chiefs might ponder the possibility of moving Dorsey, given the fact they got less production out of the nose tackle position in 2009 than any of the 13 teams in the league playing the 3-4 defense. Last year there were 27 players who got significant playing time at the nose. They were an average height of 6-feet, 2.8 inches and 324.7 pounds.

However, some of the smaller and lighter nose tackles were the most productive. Both Pittsburgh's Casey Hampton and San Francisco's Aubrayo Franklin are 6-1 in height. Hampton had 42 tackles and 2.5 sacks, while Franklin had 88 tackles and two sacks. The lightest nose was New England's Mike Wright, who was 295 pounds and had 48 tackles and five sacks. Pro Bowler Jay Ratliff of Dallas is 303 pounds and he had 83 tackles and seven sacks.

"I don't feel like I have to be overly huge to play on the inside, or have to be really small to play outside," said Dorsey. "I like playing both inside and outside, so whatever is cool with me."

More than physical characteristics, it's the mentality of playing the nose tackle that is the toughest part of the game for a player adapt and learn. It's constant double-teaming, it's constant contact, there are not a lot of big plays that draw attention.

"It will be an adjustment," Dorsey admitted. "But you get used to it after awhile. All I want to do is win. I desperately want to win. Whatever they see fit, I'm going to do it to the best of my ability."

#### PLAYER/PERSONNEL NOTES

--When the Chiefs began their on-field OTA sessions on May 17 there was a major surprise. Make it two major surprises.

Taking part in the first week of workouts were veteran offensive guard Brian Waters and linebacker Mike Vrabel. Two of the oldest and most experienced players on the club's roster, Waters and Vrabel boycotted last year's OTA work, appearing only for the team's mandatory minicamp.

But they were in the house for offseason workouts in season two and that had head coach Todd Haley smiling, although he wasn't surprised.

"With both of those guys, I was in a good place," Haley said of Waters and Vrabel. "We were on the same page.

"This whole offseason has been a good sign of commitment by everybody involved. This isn't just about today; it's about the last few months. These guys are really working, and working together. Now we have the chance to take another step towards the goals that we want to reach."

Waters and Vrabel have not been talking part in the team's strength and conditioning program, as they were in their offseason homes in Texas and Ohio. But the on-field work was something neither one wanted to miss.

"I wanted to be here for two reasons," said Waters. "One was to get with the team. There are a lot of new things we are putting in and I wanted to get familiar with all the nuances of the offense. Two, we've got a big year with the CBA and I wanted to make sure I got back to communicate with the players and make sure they are informed. This is the best time to do that. (Waters is the club's player rep.)"

Vrabel's thoughts on leaving home in Ohio and taking part in the on-field work were about making more of what the Chiefs established last season.

"Every year, teams are going to be different," Vrabel said. "Some teams that had a really good season last year won't be very good this year and some teams that weren't very good last year will be good this season. We need to commit ourselves to being one of those teams."

--The only player who was absent from the Chiefs first OTA sessions was FS Jarrad Page. A restricted free agent, Page has not signed the tender offer presented him by the team in February. He could sign an injury waiver and take part in the work, but Page has chosen not to take that option. He's coming off a calf injury that sent him to the injured reserve list in early November.

--RB Jamaal Charles has been watching the OTA sessions, kept out of the work by the Chiefs because of his right shoulder that underwent surgery back in January. Charles said the team has given him no idea when he'll be allowed to practice. "I'm not worried about it right now," Charles said. "I'm doing what I can to get myself into shape and ready for the season. What matters is that I'm ready to go for training camp. I guess they are going to be careful."

--The Chiefs had about a half-dozen players who were not taking part in offseason practice sessions as they recover from injuries and off-season surgery. That group was led by RB Jamaal Charles and CB Brandon Flowers, both starters who underwent offseason shoulder surgery. Also watching the practice work were TE Brad Cottam, WR Quinten Lawrence, WR Lance Long, WR David Grimes and TE Tony Moeaki. None of the injuries was considered serious enough to be a long-term problem.

--As the Chiefs started their OTA practices, the defense had a new face starting at strong safety. It was not No. 1 draft choice Eric Berry, although he might eventually rise to that position. No, starting next to Jon McGraw on the back line of the K.C. defense was Reshard Langford. He was signed off the Eagles practice squad last year, joining the Chiefs on Christmas Day. He was inactive for the final two games of the '09 season, but the four-year starter at Vanderbilt has impressed coaches with his off-season work. "He's at the top of the list of guys working as hard as they can to put themselves in a position to succeed," said head coach Todd Haley. "All these guys know that they all have great opportunity because one thing they learned from last year (is) the guy that gives us the best chance to win will play. When guys hear that and know that, they're excited and it gives them hope and then it's just up to them to take advantage of the opportunity given."

QUOTE TO NOTE: "The attitude around here is positive and upbeat. I'm just trying to fit in. I wanted to get here, do my best to fit in and do my part." -- Chiefs veteran G Brian Waters.

#### STRATEGY AND PERSONNEL

FRANCHISE PLAYER: None.

TRANSITION PLAYER: None.

UNRESTRICTED FREE AGENTS

--SS Mike Brown opened all 16 games last year with average results.

RESTRICTED FREE AGENTS (\*indicates restricted because of uncapped year)

--\*FS Jarrad Page (tendered at \$1.759M with second-round pick as compensation) missed the second half of the '09 schedule with a calf injury.

EXCLUSIVE RIGHTS FREE AGENTS

--LS Thomas Gafford has been a fairly consistent snapper for punts and placements.

PLAYERS RE-SIGNED

--RB Jackie Battle: Not tendered as ERFA; terms unknown.

--WR Chris Chambers: UFA; \$15M/3 yrs, \$5.9M guaranteed.

--WR Terrance Copper: UFA; 1 yr, terms unknown.

--FB Mike Cox: ERFA; terms unknown.

--\*QB Brodie Croyle: RFA; (tendered at \$1.759M with second-round pick as compensation); \$1.759M/1 yr.

--QB Matt Gutierrez: Potential RFA; \$545,000/1 yr.

--\*ILB Derrick Johnson: RFA; (tendered at \$2.621M with first-round pick as compensation); \$2.621M/1 yr.

--DB Maurice Leggett: ERFA; terms unknown.

--\*ILB Corey Mays: RFA; (tendered at \$1.759M with second-round pick as compensation); \$1.759M/1 yr.

--\*OG Ikechuku Ndukwe: RFA; (tendered at \$1.684M with second-round pick as compensation); \$1.684M/1 yr.

--\*C Rudy Niswanger: RFA; (tendered at \$1.759M with second-round pick as compensation); \$1.759M/1 yr.

--\*RT Ryan O'Callaghan: RFA; (tendered at \$1.759M with second-round pick as compensation); \$1.759M/1 yr.

--OT Barry Richardson: ERFA; terms unknown.

--RB Kolby Smith: potential RFA; \$545,000/1 yr.

--LB Andy Studebaker: ERFA; terms unknown.

--OLB Mike Vrabel: UFA; \$3.425M/1 yr, \$1.425M SB.

PLAYERS ACQUIRED

--RB Thomas Jones: FA Jets; \$5M/2 yrs.

--OG Ryan Lilja: FA Colts; \$7.5M/3 yrs.

--\*DT Shaun Smith: Not tendered as RFA by Bengals; \$630,000/1 yr.

--\*WR Jerheme Urban: Not tendered as RFA by Cardinals; \$630,000/1 yr.

--C Casey Wiegmann: FA Broncos; \$2M/1 yr.

PLAYERS LOST

--OG Andy Alleman: Not tendered as RFA/Colts; 1 yr, terms unknown.

--ILB Wes Dacus (released).

--WR Devard Darling (released/failed physical).

--OG Mike Goff (released).

--ILB Justin Rogers (released).

--TE Sean Ryan: UFA Redskins; 1 yr, terms unknown.

--RB Dantrell Savage (released).

--G/C Wade Smith: UFA Texans; \$12M/4 yrs, \$6.25M guaranteed.

--WR Bobby Wade: UFA Redskins; terms unknown.

## MIAMI DOLPHINS

### HOT TOPIC

The Brandon Marshall Plan or Marshall Effect on the Dolphins' offense will have to be put on hold until the former Broncos Pro Bowl receiver mends from offseason minor hip surgery.

Marshall had a more serious hip operation on the other side in the last offseason that inflamed an already testy relationship with Broncos coach Josh McDaniels, who eventually benched Marshall for a crucial season-ending game against the Chiefs for not showing up for a therapy session for a hamstring injury.

Despite the controversy, Marshall still notched his third consecutive 100-catch, 1,000-yard season.

The Dolphins and their executive vice president of football operations Bill Parcells historically hide injuries whenever the league lets them get away with it, so coach Tony Sparano would only admit that Marshall had surgery and expects him to recover fully by training camp.

Sparano didn't seem concerned that the Dolphins might've received damaged property from the Broncos.

"It's just something that came up, we needed to get it cleaned up and we did. So, we don't play a game today, we play a game down the road somewhere," Sparano said after an OTA session Wednesday. "He's been here for eight weeks now throwing and catching and doing all of the things

necessary. He was throwing and catching the day that the procedure was done. So, I'm not even concerned about that."

Quarterback Chad Henne, who will be the starter at the start of an NFL season for the first time in his three-year career, is excited about having a playmaking receiver like Marshall to throw to.

"It's going to open up some holes, you're going to get some more double covers, hopefully open up the run game for us and then if they want to single cover us we've got a go-to guy there and obviously the other guys will get attention because if he is double covered they are single covered. So the defenses are definitely going to have to change how they play us," Henne said.

Marshall, acquired from the Broncos for a 2010 and 2011 second-round draft pick in the offseason while signing a four-year extension for \$47.5 million, is saying all the right things in an attempt to alter a selfish reputation he earned in Denver.

"It's not always going to be about Brandon Marshall, it's not always going to be about (Davone) Bess, it's not always going to be about the running game. It's a team sport, and the best way to move the ball up and down the field and get points is doing it as a team," Marshall said, sporting new jersey No. 19 because Bess has his old one, No. 15.

Marshall said he's already impressed with Henne.

"He's awesome. Straight shooter, all about business, the type of quarterback you want to play for and play with. Just watching him today, his arm is really talented. It's not just one of those arms that is straight strong, but he's accurate," Marshall said.

He's not worried about the hip, which NFL.com reported was operated on three weeks ago.

"It's definitely frustrating, but you know, some things you can't control," Marshall said. "In my past, I learned that, not to worry myself and hold my head down when I can't control it. I'm just going to do the best I can with the mental reps and prepare myself that way."

#### PLAYER/PERSONNEL NOTES

--NT Jason Ferguson, who will serve an eight-game suspension for again violating the league's substance performance enhancing policy, said it was blood pressure medication and is angry at the league for tarnishing his reputation. "I'm no cheater. ... I just wish the league would be more black and white with the suspension. You let people know we're suspended, then let them know what happened. Don't have them speculation," said Ferguson, who said his first violation in 1999, a four-game suspension, was for an over-the-counter dietary supplement.

--Former Cowboys OL Cory Procter, cut in the offseason after agreeing to a \$1.759 million tender, is expected to visit the Dolphins this week. Procter played for Dolphins coach Tony Sparano when he was the Cowboys offensive line coach from 2005-07. The Dolphins are thin at guard with incumbent LG Justin Smiley estranged from the team and Nate Garner out with an injury.

--WR Patrick Turner, the third-round draft pick out of USC who couldn't get on the field last year, is now out until training camp most likely with an undisclosed injury. "Even though it's only May, when you're a young player it's a critical time. There's nothing that Pat Turner can do about that right now. That's just the situation we're in." Coach Tony Sparano on Turner's shaky status

--RBs Ronnie Brown and Patrick Cobbs are both on the mend from a Liz Franc foot fracture and a torn ACL, respectively, with Cobbs far closer to a return. "I've been running for a while, it's good to get out here and gain some confidence. With injuries, the biggest part is the mental process." Said Brown, who missed last final nine games in 2009. You come back and try not to think about it and limit yourself in that sense."

--WR Brandon Marshall, out while recovering from minor hip surgery, is wearing jersey No. 19, the one that his underachieving predecessor, Ted Ginn Jr., wore. It's also been worn by former Dolphins quarterback Bernie Kosar, who recently filed for bankruptcy. "Yeah, definitely it's an open number when I was a rookie. I mean, I haven't decided on just yet so, it's not in stone? I don't think they've (officially) made them yet. We didn't give them the OK to make them yet," Marshall joked when asked if his new jersey was available to purchase. His No. 15 is worn by WR Davone Bess.

--Retired MLB Zach Thomas officially retired as a Dolphin Thursday. He earned seven Pro Bowl berths in playing 12 of his 13 NFL seasons in Miami.

QUOTE TO NOTE: "In my history of playing against him, the ball kind of finds him, and those are good problems to have." -- Coach Tony Sparano on offseason acquisition ILB Karlos Dansby.

#### STRATEGY AND PERSONNEL

In addition to teaching several young defensive players new positions in a different scheme, Dolphins coaches need to decide upon a starting free safety. Apparently, fifth-round rookie Reshad Jones has the inside track if he can fend off second-year safety Chris Clemons.

Thus far in OTA, veteran Tyrone Culver is backing up Yeremiah Bell at strong safety.

Also, former starting right defensive end Randy Starks must get used to nose tackle on a regular basis since being told of the switch before the draft. Starks has filled in for Jason Ferguson in the past but blossomed last year with seven sacks from the defensive end spot. He

will now be expected to occupy two offensive linemen so his linebackers can clean up after him. Phillip Merling and Kendall Langford are the starting defensive ends with first-round rookie Jared Odrick expected to compete for playing time.

New defensive coordinator Mike Nolan will also have his hands full continuing to school Cameron Wake and rookie Koa Misi as potential starting outside linebackers in pass coverage, but Quentin Moses and Charlie Anderson are also in the mix for jobs.

At quarterback, Sparano insinuated he wants Tyler Thigpen and Pat White to compete for the No. 2 job behind starter Chad Henne with veteran Chad Pennington kept around for emergencies and as a pseudo-quarterbacks coach for Henne, his protege. Pennington is still recovering from shoulder surgery and limited on his throws.

On the offensive line, the center job is being competed between injury-prone Jake Grove and Joe Berger. Thus far, Donald Thomas has taken Justin Smiley's job at left guard with offseason acquisition Richie Incognito manning the right guard spot.

The trade of kick returner Ted Ginn Jr. has opened the competition between incumbent Davone Bess, Ryan Grice-Mullen, Marlon Moore, Taurus Johnson and Brian Hartline.

**MEDICAL WATCH:** WR Brandon Marshall underwent a minor hip procedure in the offseason and is expected to be ready for training camp. ILB Channing Crowder and RB Ronnie Brown are both recovering from Liz Franc fractures and Brown is practicing on a limited basis while Crowder hasn't been cleared to practice yet. RB Patrick Cobbs (ACL surgery) also practiced on a limited basis but seems close to a full return. ILB Reggie Torbor had offseason surgery on an undisclosed body part but is close to returning to practice. WR Patrick Turner had offseason surgery on an undisclosed body part and is out until training camp. CB Will Allen (ACL surgery) is practicing on a limited basis but not in team drills. OL Nate Garner is out with a minor injury. NT Jason Ferguson (quad surgery) is riding the stationary bicycle and is out.

FRANCHISE PLAYER: None.

TRANSITION PLAYER: None.

UNRESTRICTED FREE AGENTS: None.

RESTRICTED FREE AGENTS

--RB Ronnie Brown (tendered at \$3.969M with first-round pick as compensation) became a restricted free agent when the Dolphins voided the last year of his contract that would've paid him \$5 million. He gained 648 yards (4.4 a carry) with nine touchdowns in nine games before sustaining a Lisfranc fracture of the right foot.

--TE Anthony Fasano (tendered at \$1.759M with second-round pick as compensation) regressed after a solid 2008 with just 21 catches for 339 yards and only two touchdowns. His blocking is so-so, making him expendable.

EXCLUSIVE RIGHTS FREE AGENTS: None.

PLAYERS RE-SIGNED

--WR Davone Bess: ERFA; terms unknown.

--K Dan Carpenter: ERFA; terms unknown.

--NT Jason Ferguson: UFA; terms unknown.

--TE Joey Haynos: ERFA; terms unknown.

--LB Quentin Moses: RFA; (tendered at \$1.191M with third-round pick as compensation); \$1.191M/1 yr.

--QB Chad Pennington: UFA; \$2.5M/1 yr.

DRAFT CHOICES SIGNED

--C Ted Larsen (6/205); terms unknown.

PLAYERS ACQUIRED

--LB Karlos Dansby: UFA Cardinals; \$43M/5 yrs, \$11.6M SB/\$22M guaranteed.

--LB Tim Dobbins (trade Chargers).

--\*OG Richie Incognito: Not tendered as RFA by Bills; \$725,000/1 yr, \$25,000 guaranteed.

--FB Rolly Lumbala: CFL FA; terms unknown.

--WR Brandon Marshall (trade Broncos).

--OG Dimitri Tsoumpas: CFL FA; terms unknown.

PLAYERS LOST

--LB Akin Ayodele (released).

--WR Ted Ginn Jr. (traded 49ers).

--CB Nate Jones: UFA Broncos; \$4.33M/4 yrs.

--LB Joey Porter (released).

--LB Jason Taylor: UFA Jets; terms unknown.

--S Gibril Wilson (released).

## MINNESOTA VIKINGS

## HOT TOPIC

In a perfect world, quarterbacks Tarvaris Jackson and Sage Rosenfels would have a good idea of what their roles would be with the Vikings in 2010. But that isn't going to happen as long as Brett Favre is on the team's roster -- and, more importantly, remains undecided about his future.

Unfortunately for Jackson and Rosenfels that was still the case as the Vikings opened their Organized Team Activities this week at Winter Park.

"I'm just trying to get better," Jackson said after a recent practice when asked about his mindset. "That's pretty much everybody's mindset out here now. Just trying to get better and not really worrying about who's not here. Just worrying about ourselves."

That's all the quarterbacks can do, left to wonder when Favre might show up or, in what would be a shocking scenario, tell the Vikings he isn't going to play a 20th NFL season. Favre is due to make \$13 million in the second season of a two-year contract he signed last August.

"I'm just going to go out there and keep working, keep fighting and keep learning," Rosenfels said. "That's all I can do. I can't worry about all the things that (Favre) might do or whatever. All I can worry about is myself and the guys out here that I'm working with."

Vikings coach Brad Childress said Wednesday that he hasn't spoken to Favre recently but that the two have exchanged text messages. Favre has yet to inform the Vikings if he will undergo surgery on his injured left ankle.

The 40-year-old Favre posted a message on his website last month that surgery would be only one factor in his decision on whether to play and that the "injury is not debilitating."

Jackson spent all of last season as the Vikings' second quarterback behind Favre, leaving Rosenfels in an especially interesting situation. He could either be battling for the top job or be relegated to a third-string role again.

Rosenfels was asked if he is operating under the assumption that Favre will play in 2010.

"I'm operating (by) trying to make myself the best player I can be," he said. "You can't assume anything in this league. One thing you can count on in this league is change and you never know what's going to happen."

## PLAYER/PERSONNEL NOTES

--Joe Webb arrived in Minnesota last month expecting that his days playing quarterback were finished. A sixth-round pick by the Vikings, Webb had been told that he would be a wide receiver in the NFL.

But then Vikings coach Brad Childress and the offensive staff saw Webb throw the football on the final day of a three-day rookie minicamp conducted shortly after the draft.

Webb's passes impressed the Vikings so much that the idea of moving him to wide receiver was scuttled and he was shifted back to where he played last season at Alabama-Birmingham.

"He has an aptitude to be a quarterback," Childress said. "We went and drafted him as an athlete but if you go back and look at the UAB numbers he put up outstanding numbers. So he knows what he's doing moving around back there as a quarterback. He processes very quickly. We are going to continue repping him at quarterback."

Webb was so convinced his future was at wide receiver that he worked at that position at the Senior Bowl and his Pro Day. But he is ecstatic to be back under center.

"It feels great," said Webb, who passed for 2,299 yards and ran for 1,427 yards last season at UAB. "It's been a long time since I've been at quarterback. I've been working out at receiver most of the time throughout this whole process."

Childress does not plan to shift Webb around and said he will continue to work as a signal caller in order to help his development.

"It's not like he's going to play quarterback one play and go out and play wide receiver on the next play," Childress said. "We're trying to get him immersed in the system."

--Veteran cornerback Lito Sheppard was one of seven players being given a shot to catch punts during OTAs. Sheppard, who was signed by the Vikings as a free agent after one season with the New York Jets, has returned only eight punts in eight seasons and hasn't done it since 2005.

--Coach Brad Childress said fifth-round pick Chris DeGeare will begin by playing at guard. DeGeare played both guard and tackle at Wake Forest.

--The Organized Team Activities are optional and the Vikings are using them for rookies and selected veterans, meaning many players aren't on the field on certain days. The team opened the Wednesday session to the media and the only two starters taking part were safeties Tyrell Johnson and Madiou Williams. "We'll have different people trickle in and out," Childress said. "There was a group that was out here practicing yesterday that wasn't here today. There's a group that's inside the building taking care of some of their strength needs and after the season needs. Some guys are rehabbing."

--Running back Toby Gerhart, the Vikings' second-round pick, isn't at OTAs because he is still taking classes at Stanford in preparation for his graduation in June.

QUOTE TO NOTE: "We're always inquiring. I think we talked to his agent. I don't think anybody in the organization has talked to him with the exception of maybe Sage Rosenfels, because they're former teammates (from Houston)." -- Vikings coach Brad Childress when asked about his team's reported interest in veteran guard Chester Pitts, who is a free agent and has scheduled a July 15 workout for teams. Pitts has been recovering from microfracture surgery on his right knee.

#### STRATEGY AND PERSONNEL

The Vikings still don't know if they will be without the services of starting defensive tackles Kevin and Pat Williams when the season begins. The two lost a key ruling in which Hennepin County (Minn.) Judge Gary Larson sided with the NFL and made it more likely the two will be suspended for four games apiece for violating the NFL's anti-doping policy.

If the Williamses do have to sit out, it appears they will do so at the same time and that their suspensions won't be staggered. Nonetheless, coach Brad Childress doesn't seem overly concerned.

"We've always kind of had that," Childress said of a Plan B that would include Fred Evans, Jimmy Kennedy and Letroy Guion. "It's not like we are going to come out and defensive tackles are going to drop out of the sky. They are the guys on our football team and they understand with the number of guys that we have that those will be the first guys to step up. Will we need to go out and grab somebody else? That remains to be seen. Guion is maturing in there. Jimmy Kennedy, obviously, did a great job for us last year. Fred Evans played a little bit more in the system. Those are good players."

MEDICAL WATCH: Cornerback Cedric Griffin, who tore his left ACL in the NFC title game, and linebacker E.J. Henderson, who broke his leg in December, continue to rehab their injuries in hopes of returning at some point in 2010. ... Guard Steve Hutchinson (shoulder) and nose tackle Pat Williams (elbow) are coming off offseason surgeries and are believed to have made progress. ... Antoine Winfield also continues to recover from the broken right foot he suffered last October.

FRANCHISE PLAYER: None.

TRANSITION PLAYER: None.

UNRESTRICTED FREE AGENTS: None.

RESTRICTED FREE AGENTS (\*indicates restricted because of uncapped year)

--\*DE Ray Edwards (tendered at \$2.521M with first-round pick as compensation) was second on the Vikings last season with eight sacks and is considered to be in the prime of his career.

EXCLUSIVE RIGHTS FREE AGENTS: None.

DRAFT CHOICES SIGNED: FB Ryan D'Imperio (7/237); terms unknown.

PLAYERS RE-SIGNED

--\*OL Ryan Cook: RFA; (tendered at \$1.176 with third-round pick as compensation); \$1.176M/1 yr.

--\*DT Fred Evans: RFA; (tendered at \$1.759M with second-round pick as compensation); \$1.759M/1 yr.

--S Eric Frampton: RFA; (tendered at \$1.101M with fifth-round pick as compensation); \$1.101M/1 yr.

--\*QB Tarvaris Jackson: RFA; (tendered at \$1.176M with third-round pick as compensation); \$1.176M/1 yr.

--DT Jimmy Kennedy: UFA; 2 yrs, terms unknown.

--WR Greg Lewis: Potential UFA; 1 yr, terms unknown.

--CB Benny Sapp: UFA; \$4.2M/2 yrs, \$1.5M guaranteed.

--\*FB Naufahu Tahi: RFA; (tendered at \$1.176M with no compensation); \$1.176M/1 yr.

PLAYERS ACQUIRED

--K Rhys Lloyd: Not tendered as RFA by Panthers; 2 yrs, terms unknown.

--DE Mike Montgomery: FA Packers; \$630,000/1 yr.

--CB Lito Sheppard: FA Jets; \$2M/1 yr.

PLAYERS LOST

--OL Artis Hicks: UFA Redskins; 3 yrs, terms unknown.

--\*CB Karl Paymah: Not tendered as RFA/49ers; 1 yr, terms unknown.

--RB Chester Taylor: UFA Bears; \$12.5M/4 yrs, \$2M SB/\$4M RB.

#### NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS

##### HOT TOPIC

Torry Holt signed with the Patriots this spring in part because he wanted to play with franchise quarterback Tom Brady. In doing so the former Rams star is intent on catching passes as a productive component of the Patriots' offense in his first season in New England.

But the 12th-year veteran who's caught 920 passes over the years, is also quite willing to serve a mentoring role for the young players around him. He did so last season in his only campaign in Jacksonville, aiding in the development of Mike Sims-Walker.

Holt hopes to help out in a similar fashion with New England's young receiving corps that includes second-year slot man Julian Edelman, sophomore speedster Brandon Tate and 2010 third-round pick Taylor Price.

"I think the best way I can help and teach those guys, first and foremost, is being here, being diligent, being precise, being efficient, being on time as much as I possibly can, participating in the drills, participating in the workouts, running routes at the proper depth, being efficient off the line of scrimmage -- the detailed things," Holt told reporters Wednesday afternoon at Gillette Stadium. "Most importantly, just leading by example. These guys are young, eager guys who want to learn. They want to be good at their particular craft. I know they're going to be watching me day in and day out."

It's the approach he took last season with Sims-Walker -- leading more by example than anything else -- as the second-year former third-round pick quadrupled his rookie production in becoming the Jags top target.

"I would like to think I had a pretty good role in (Sims-Walker's) development," Holt said. "Just trying to show by example. Not doing anything out of the ordinary. I'm just showing up for work every day enjoying what it is I like to do and then going out on Sundays and trying to make it work."

Last season that work included 12 starts in 15 games played for the Jaguars. Holt finished third on the team with 51 receptions -- behind Sims-Walker (63) and running back Maurice Jones-Drew (53) -- for 722 yards. Though he didn't score a single touchdown, he did have a 63-yard reception that was the team's longest on the season. And his 14.2-yard average was second on the team (TE Mercedes Lewis, 16.2) among eight Jaguars with at least 10 catches.

Though Holt may no longer be the dominant athlete he was when he had six straight seasons from 2002-07 in St. Louis with more than 90 catches and at least 1,100 yards, the sage veteran reiterated once again that has learned to maximize his remaining physical skills.

"I've gotten a lot more craftier," Holt said. "What I mean by that is a little bit more savvy, a little bit more smarter in the way I train, the way I train throughout the course of the season and how I play on Sundays. I kind of have an idea how teams are going to play me on Sundays, and like I said before, I can counter that."

"I can get to a route quicker, I can get to my spot quicker, before you even make an adjustment, because I know and I've seen pretty much every defense you can throw at someone. So just becoming smarter, savvier, a little craftier ... patience. Wiser. Those are things that you, that come when you get older as you put in the time at any profession, so those are the things I'm leaning on now."

While he's doing all those things in an effort to produce on the field, his new young teammates can lean on Holt off the field to show them the way to succeed as an elite receiver in the NFL. Just as he leaned on his veteran teammates when he was getting his feet wet as a first-round pick in St. Louis.

"I had Isaac Bruce show me that, Ricky Proehl showed me that, Marshall Faulk showed me that, Ernie Conwell showed me that, coach (Mike) Martz, the list goes on and on," Holt recalls of learning how to be a true professional. "I was fortunate enough when I came into the National Football League 12 years ago, I had good guys in front of me that worked, that paid attention to the details. Our best players on our team were the hardest workers, so for someone like myself, coming in young, there was no room for me to slack, no room for me to be a prima donna -- I had to come in and try to mimic that because that was the standard."

#### PLAYER/PERSONNEL NOTES

--Patriots Pro Bowl guard Logan Mankins, a restricted free agent thanks to the rules of the uncapped year, has remained away from New England all offseason. Clearly looking for a lucrative long term contract extension with the team that drafted him in the first round of the 2005 NFL Draft, things on that front aren't looking all that good.

"There has been discussions," Mankins' agent Frank Bauer told the Boston Herald. "We're pretty far apart. Let's leave it at that."

--CB Shawn Springs was released by New England May 18. Though Springs reportedly failed a team physical after offseason knee surgery, the 13-year veteran also had a tumultuous campaign in his first and only year with the Patriots. He started eight of 12 games played. He dealt with a knee injury but was also deemed a healthy scratch on occasion. He also had a strange season in the locker room, seemingly aligning himself with disgruntled and now departed linebacker Adalius Thomas as well as throwing teammates under the bus for blown coverages. He was also set to earn \$2.25 million in 2010, part of the three-year free agent deal he signed last spring that included a \$2.7 million signing bonus.

Despite all that, Springs seemed somewhat surprised by the move, though believing it stemmed from a focus on developing young corners Devin McCourty, Darius Butler, Jonathan Wilhite and Terrence Wheatley.

"It's hard to evaluate and give young guys a shot if you've got me," Springs told the Boston Globe.

Springs continued, discussing the meeting in which Bill Belichick told him of the decision to release the veteran. "It didn't go bad at all," Springs said. "I could see myself working for Bill. I have a lot of respect for Bill. It wasn't bad at all. It's almost like he cut me, and he wants to see what he's got without distractions. He wants to give them a shot. It's hard to give them a shot when you have the presence of a guy like me around. He's going to give you all the chances not to mess it up. It helps your psyche. You don't have to compete. Just do your job.

"Now, you don't have to worry about the pressure of guys competing with me and messing up your confidence as a young guy, feeling like, 'How am I going to compete with this guy?'"

--Patriots inside linebacker Tyrone McKenzie missed his entire rookie season thanks to a torn ACL suffered in rookie mini-camp a year ago. Now fully healthy, the former third-round pick is ready to strut his stuff when the time comes on the practice field as part of New England's burgeoning young corps of linebackers.

Based on his descriptions of his own skills, the cocksure McKenzie is raring to go.

"I'm very strong, I'm very fast. I have a lot of assets that are part of my game," said McKenzie, who emphasized that he has no lingering restrictions after suffering a torn ACL during last year's rookie mini-camp and won't wear a brace. "You guys (the media) can fill in the blanks. I'll give you plenty to write about. I just have to get on the field first."

That doesn't sound like a guy still waiting to take his first NFL snap. McKenzie, who added eight pounds to his sturdy 6-2 frame, wasn't done.

"I'm more of a hybrid linebacker, to where I have the size, I have the height, I have the weight, but I have the speed too," he said. "I now have more power to bring the heat."

McKenzie manned the middle of South Florida's 4-3 defense during his senior year but possesses a lot of Ted Johnson-like qualities that should allow him to succeed inside in the Patriots 3-4. The added size will help, and his propensity for taking on guards and enjoying the physicality of the game are absolute musts for the position.

Given his attitude, it wasn't surprising to hear his reaction to questions regarding one of this year's second-round picks, inside linebacker Brandon Spikes. Spikes has a similar resume and figures to compete for playing time immediately, possibly at the expense of McKenzie depending on how the competition works itself out.

Just don't expect McKenzie to shy away from the challenge as the competition heats up for the starting job next to Jerod Mayo.

"I'm very excited. Right now, we have so many linebackers, inside and outside. We have a lot of good guys and a lot of guys that are going to compete," McKenzie said. "At the end of the day, you want to win. So let's get the best players on the field and let's win."

Given the road McKenzie has already traveled just to get here, having to compete for a job figures to be the least of his concerns. The 24-year-old was forced to attend three colleges following an accident his mother was involved in several years ago. He worked nights while attending classes and playing football as he cared for his mother after transferring closer to home.

McKenzie's story caught Bill Belichick's eye and the coach's glowing testimonial following the 2009 draft still resonates more than a year later.

"Of all the players that I've talked to and we've interviewed this year and even through the years, Tyrone is one of the most impressive," Belichick said after drafting McKenzie. "Maturity, intelligence, what he's done with the opportunities he's had or that he's had to overcome, how he's dealt with them, how he's made the most of them; it hasn't been easy."

Easy doesn't seem to be McKenzie's way, and he has no problem with that whatsoever.

"You just have to be strong and keep bouncing back," McKenzie said after his workout at Gillette Stadium. "That's what I've done my entire life. Now I'm just excited to play."

--New England reached an agreement with the first of its 12 draft picks when it signed sixth-round C Ted Larsen May 18. The 6-2, 305-pounder out of North Carolina State converted from defensive line to center for his final two seasons with the Wolfpack. He'll be given the opportunity to compete for backup action at both center and guard in New England.

--Two full seasons into his NFL career Patriots OLB Shawn Crable has played exactly zero professional snaps. The former 2008 third-round pick out of Michigan looks the part of an outside linebacker in New England's 3-4 front thanks to his 6-5, 243 but back and leg injuries landed him on injured reserve for each of the last two falls.

"It's been a different experience," Crable told reporters at a charity softball game. "It's the first time in my life I've ever been injured. It's one of those deals that you just kind of have to get used to and move on from there."

Move on, as in on the field, is exactly what Crable would like to do this fall. New England clearly has the need at outside linebacker, but is Crable finally ready to seize the opportunity.

"I feel good physically," Crable said. "I am working on fine-tuning some stuff, but I feel good and ready to go."

--OLB/DE Derrick Burgess reportedly re-signed with the Patriots last week, though the team has yet to officially announce the move. New England traded third- and fifth-round picks to Oakland for the former Pro Bowl pass rusher last summer. Burgess then started six of 16 games for the Patriots in 2009, finishing with five sacks among his 37 tackles.

QUOTE TO NOTE: "Scars are signs of a competitor." -- Patriots second-year linebacker Tyrone McKenzie, as he works back from an ACL injury that cost the 2009 third-round pick his entire rookie season.

#### STRATEGY AND PERSONNEL

FRANCHISE PLAYER: NT Vince Wilfork (tendered at \$7.003M; re-signed March 5 for \$40M/5 yrs, \$25M guaranteed/\$18M SB).

TRANSITION PLAYER: None.

#### UNRESTRICTED FREE AGENTS

--P Chris Hanson had what may be best described as another "blah" year in New England. The Patriots have been happy with his situational punting in the past -- he had the fewest punts returned in the NFL -- but the team could and should look to upgrade at the spot after using the draft to add a young kicker and long snapper in recent years.

RESTRICTED FREE AGENTS (\*indicates restricted because of uncapped year)

--\*G Logan Mankins (tendered at \$3.268M with first- and third-round picks as compensation) is becoming a perennial Pro Bowler. He would have been a top lineman available if he were unrestricted.

#### EXCLUSIVE RIGHTS FREE AGENTS

--LB Gary Guyton (tendered at \$470,000) played a significant role for the team in his first two seasons, including 16 starts out of necessity last fall. Ideally, probably a versatile sub player.

--LB Bret Lockett (tendered at \$395,000).

#### PLAYERS RE-SIGNED

--LB Tully Banta-Cain: UFA; \$13.5M/3 yrs, \$6M SB.

--CB Leigh Bodden: UFA; \$22M/4 yrs, \$10M guaranteed.

--LB Derrick Burgess: UFA; terms unknown.

--RB Kevin Faulk: UFA; \$2M/1 yrs, \$1M SB.

--\*PK Stephen Gostkowski: RFA; (tendered at \$1.759M with second-round pick as compensation); \$1.759M/1 yr.

--OG Stephen Neal: UFA; 2 yrs, terms unknown.

--RB Chris Taylor: Not tendered as RFA; terms unknown.

--NT Vince Wilfork: FFA; \$40M/5 yrs, \$25M guaranteed/\$18M SB.

--\*LB Pierre Woods: RFA; (tendered at \$1.176M with no compensation); \$1.176M/1 yr.

#### PLAYERS ACQUIRED

--TE Alge Crumpler: UFA Titans; \$4.8M/2 yrs, \$1M SB.

--WR Torry Holt: FA Jaguars; \$1.7M/1 yr.

--DT Damione Lewis: FA Panthers; 1 yr, terms unknown.

--LB Marques Murrell: Not tendered as RFA by Jets; terms unknown.

--WR David Patten: FA; terms unknown.

--DT Gerard Warren: FA Raiders; terms unknown.

#### PLAYERS LOST

--TE Chris Baker (released).

--DE Jarvis Green: UFA Broncos; \$20M/4 yrs.

--LB Junior Seau (retired).

--CB Shawn Springs (released).

--LB Adalius Thomas (released).

--TE Benjamin Watson: UFA Browns; \$12M/3 yrs, \$6.25M guaranteed.

#### NEW ORLEANS SAINTS

##### HOT TOPIC

Barring a last-minute signing of a veteran quarterback, the Saints will begin their organized team activities on May 24 with Super Bowl XLIV MVP Drew Brees and two unproven youngsters on the roster.

The Saints, who began their off-season strength and conditioning program on April 19, move into a new phase on Monday with Mark Brunell, Brees' backup the past two seasons, still an unrestricted free agent.

That leaves coach Sean Payton with just Chase Daniel and Sean Canfield getting repetitions behind Brees for the upcoming OTA sessions and possibly for a full-squad minicamp that will be held June 4-6.

Daniel split the 2009 season between the Saints' practice squad and the active roster, where he served as the third-stringer for seven games and the backup for one when Brees was held out of the regular-season finale. Daniel also was designated as the No. 3 quarterback for all three postseason games.

Canfield, a rookie from Oregon State, was the Saints' seventh-round pick in the draft last month.

While the Saints were blessed to have Brees, who started 63 straight regular-season games for the team until watching the 2009 finale to ensure his health for the playoffs, Payton has been trying to develop the next Tony Romo -- whom he brought along when he was with the Dallas Cowboys.

If Brunell doesn't sign, Payton will likely get a good idea if Daniel or Canfield has what it takes. Because they don't have an open spot to sign another unrestricted free agent right now, they may have to wait until July 22 to sign Patrick Ramsey or Josh McCown, whom they worked out in mid-April, unless Brunell signs elsewhere.

The Saints gave then-rookie Tyler Palko a shot to be that guy in 2008 and brought in Joey Harrington last summer, but neither was the answer. And while Daniel was around for an entire season, Payton's seemingly never-ending task continues to this date.

"I think a lot of people would say that it's one of the tougher positions to evaluate because you've seen that position get more attention," Payton said during the team's rookie minicamp. "It's probably one of the more difficult positions to play, with everything that's asked of it.

"All those other things go into why so many of these guys in the first round haven't made it and why a guy like Tom Brady is drafted in the sixth round. I know there are other positions like that but certainly, quarterback would be at the top of that list."

#### PLAYER/PERSONNEL NOTES

--With organized team activities beginning on May 24, the Saints are still searching for a capable quarterback to back up Super Bowl XLIV MVP Drew Brees.

The Saints still have some time since training camp doesn't begin until late July and the first preseason game won't be played until Aug. 12, but veteran Mark Brunell remains an unrestricted agent for the time being.

That leaves coach Sean Payton with just second-year pro Chase Daniel and seventh-round draft pick Sean Canfield as the only quarterbacks to share the repetitions with Brees when OTAs begin. The two youngsters could also be forced to take on more work in a full-squad minicamp set for June 4-6.

If Brunell doesn't re-sign with the Saints soon, Payton, who for the past two years has been trying to develop a young quarterback, will likely get a good idea if either Daniel or Canfield has what it takes.

Daniel split the 2009 season between the Saints' practice squad and the active roster. He was the third-stringer for seven games and the backup for one when Brees was held out of the regular-season finale, then was the No. 3 quarterback for three postseason games. Canfield was the Saints' seventh-round draft pick out of Oregon State, last month.

In the first four years that Brees has been with the Saints, there has been little need for a backup -- at least in the regular season. He started all 63 games until being held out of the 2009 finale to ensure his health for the playoffs. Brunell started that game, but became a UFA in March.

Because they don't have an open spot to sign another unrestricted free agent right now, the Saints may have to wait until July 22 to sign Patrick Ramsey or Josh McCown, whom they worked out in mid-April, unless Brunell signs elsewhere.

Until then, Payton's search for the next Tony Romo, whom he brought along when he was with the Dallas Cowboys, might be limited to Daniel and Canfield.

"I think a lot of people would say that it's one of the tougher positions to evaluate because you've seen that position get more attention," Payton said earlier this month. "It's probably one of the more difficult positions to play, with everything that's asked of it.

"All those other things go into why so many of these guys in the first round haven't made it and why a guy like Tom Brady is drafted in the sixth round. I know there are other positions like that but certainly, quarterback would be at the top of that list."

--The Saints continue to be plagued by sports hernia injuries.

Pro Bowl right tackle Jon Stinchcomb and wide receiver Devery Henderson are the latest players to have sports hernia surgery, which has been common for the team since the summer of 2008.

Henderson reportedly underwent the surgical procedure on May 6, while Stinchcomb confirmed to the New Orleans Times-Picayune that he had it on May 14.

With the recovery period typically set at 3-to-4 weeks, that would most likely keep them out of the organized team activities that begin on May 24 and end June 16 as well as a full-squad minicamp June 4-6.

"It's disappointing not to be able to work out with the rest of the team, especially heading into these first OTAs," Stinchcomb said. "But I'm just hoping for a speedy recovery. The good news is that it's not the middle of the season, and I'm not gonna miss any games or anything like that."

Other Saints to have the procedure done in the last two years are tight end Jeremy Shockey, middle linebacker Jonathan Vilma, tackle Jammal Brown, defensive end Will Smith, cornerback Jabari Greer and free safety Usama Young.

--Even though the Saints lack a veteran backup quarterback at this point in the off-season, they don't have any interest in former LSU and Oakland Raiders quarterback JaMarcus Russell.

With their backup of two years, Mark Brunell, still on the free agent market, the Saints are looking for a veteran to serve behind Drew Brees. But Russell, released by the Raiders earlier this month, isn't that man even though the Saints continue to look for another experienced signal caller.

Russell, who will likely want go where he can compete for a starting job soon, wouldn't be a good fit for the Saints offensive system.

"I don't think (we'd consider signing him) right now, with where we're at," Saints coach Payton said earlier this month. "I know he's going to look for that next opportunity, and our league usually provides that."

The Saints brought in Patrick Ramsey and Josh McCown for workouts last month, but cannot sign either right now because of the new rule preventing the final four playoff teams from signing unrestricted free agents until they lose one of their own. The Saints currently have no spots open.

--Trying to build more depth and add competition for training camp, the Saints agreed to terms on a one-year contract with former Jacksonville Jaguars linebacker Clint Ingram.

Ingram, a third-round draft pick of the Jaguars in 2006, has played his entire NFL career with the Jaguars. The 6-foot-2, 240-pounder has played in 56 regular-season games with 46 starts and has 331 tackles, 5.5 sacks, two interceptions, seven pass defenses and one fumble recovery.

Ingram, 27, was a restricted free agent who received a one-year tender of \$1.266 million from the Jaguars. But he didn't sign the offer and the Jaguars pulled it back, making him a free agent.

Ingram, who played under current Saints defensive coordinator Gregg Williams with Jacksonville in 2008, is best known as a run-stopper. He spent part of the 2009 season on injured reserve with a shoulder problem and also reportedly had arthroscopic knee surgery this off-season.

--With Devery Henderson and Robert Meachem missing time because of recent surgeries, the Saints have brought in several wide receivers to handle the repetitions during the organized team activities and upcoming minicamp.

After signing former Indianapolis Colts wideout Roy Hall last week, the Saints also brought in Larry Beavers and Andy Tanner to help fill the void left by Henderson and Meachem, who had toe surgery earlier this month.

Beavers first entered the NFL as an undrafted free agent with the Carolina Panthers in 2009, while Tanner was signed after attending the Saints' rookie minicamp earlier this month on a tryout basis.

--Former Saints defensive tackle Norman Hand died from hypertensive cardiovascular disease, according to a report released by Colleton County (S.C.) coroner Richard Harvey.

Hand, who played for the Saints from 2000-02, died on May 14 at the age of 37 after collapsing at his South Carolina home. He battled weight issues throughout his 10-year NFL career.

Harvey said there was no way to tell if Hand's weight led to his heart disease, but said Hand did have a history of high blood pressure which led to the hypertension.

In addition to the Saints, Hand also played with the Miami Dolphins, San Diego Chargers, Seattle Seahawks and New York Giants.

QUOTE TO NOTE: "Certainly, anytime the first pick of the draft is released after three years, it's newsworthy and that next opportunity for him is going to be important. Outside of that, I really haven't had a chance to study him a lot." -- Saints coach Sean Payton, on not having an interest in bringing in former Oakland Raiders quarterback JaMarcus Russell.

#### STRATEGY AND PERSONNEL

MEDICAL WATCH: WR Devery Henderson will likely miss the organized team activities and could be held out of a full-squad minicamp set for June 4-6 after reportedly having sports hernia surgery on May 6. ... RT Jon Stinchcomb will likely be sidelined for the upcoming organized team activities and full-squad minicamp in early June after undergoing sports hernia surgery on May 14.

FRANCHISE PLAYER: None.

TRANSITION PLAYER: None.

UNRESTRICTED FREE AGENTS

--QB Mark Brunell, who turns 40 in September, may not be re-signed although he's considered to be a valuable backup to Drew Brees.

--TE Dan Campbell injured his knee in training camp and likely won't be re-signed.

--DT Kendrick Clancy was lost for the season when he injured his knee in the season opener and it's not known if he'll be offered a new contract.

--TE Darnell Dinkins was injured for the first half of the season and was inactive later in the season, so he may not be re-signed.

--TE Billy Miller tore his Achilles' tendon in the final preseason game but could be re-signed because of his locker room presence.

--DE Paul Spicer was signed when Charles Grant went on injured reserve and likely won't be back.

UNRESTRICTED FREE AGENTS (not tendered offers)

--FB Kyle Eckel (not tendered as RFA) was signed to fill in for an injured Heath Evans.

RESTRICTED FREE AGENTS (\*indicates restricted because of uncapped year)

--\*LT Jammal Brown (tendered at \$3.619 million with first- and third-round picks as compensation) missed the entire season after having hip and sports hernia surgeries but is a two-time Pro Bowl pick.

--\*SS Roman Harper (tendered at \$2.521 million with first-round pick as compensation) flourished in Gregg Williams' system and was a Pro Bowl alternate.

--\*WR Lance Moore (tendered at \$1.759 million with second-round pick as compensation) was bothered by ankle and hamstring injuries, but is a valuable asset to the offense.

--RB Pierre Thomas (tendered at \$1.684 million with second-round pick as compensation) has been the Saints' leading rusher the last two seasons.

EXCLUSIVE RIGHTS FREE AGENTS: None.

PLAYERS RE-SIGNED

--DT Remi Ayodele: RFA; (tendered at \$1.101 million with no compensation); \$1.101M/1 yr.

--LT Jermon Bushrod: RFA; (tendered at \$1.684 million with second-round pick as compensation); \$1.684M/1 yr.

--DE Jeff Charleston: RFA; (tendered at \$1.01M with no compensation); terms unknown.

--\*RG Jahri Evans: RFA; \$56.7M/7 yrs (had been tendered at \$3.168 million with first- and third-round picks as compensation).

--\*DT Anthony Hargrove: RFA; (tendered at \$1.226 million with third-round pick as compensation); \$1.226M/1 yr.

--C Nick Leckey: UFA; \$630,000/1 yr.

--LS Jason Kyle: UFA; \$1.72M/2 yrs.

--LB Marvin Mitchell: RFA; (tendered at \$1.101 million with seventh-round pick as compensation); \$1.101M/1 yr.

--S Pierson Prioleau: UFA; \$855,000/1 yr.

--S Chris Reis: RFA; (tendered at \$1.101 million with no compensation); \$1.101M/1 yr.

--\*WR Courtney Roby: RFA; (tendered at \$1.176 million with third-round pick as compensation); \$1.176M/1 yr.

--FS Darren Sharper: UFA; 1 yr, terms unknown.

--\*T Zach Strief: RFA; (tendered at \$1.759 million with second-round pick as compensation); \$1.759M/1 yr.

--\*TE David Thomas: RFA; (tendered at \$1.176 million with third-round pick as compensation); \$1.176M/1 yr.

--\*CB Leigh Torrence: Not tendered as RFA; \$630,000/1 yr.

--FS Usama Young: UFA; (tendered at \$1.101 million with third-round pick as compensation); \$1.101M/1 yr.

PLAYERS ACQUIRED

--DE Alex Brown: FA Bears; \$5.5M/2 yrs.

--RB P.J. Hill (waivers Redskins).

--\*LB Clint Ingram: RFA tender withdrawn by Jaguars; 1 yr, terms unknown.

--FB Zak Keasey: FA; \$545,000/1 yr.

--DE Jimmy Wilkerson: UFA Buccaneers; terms unknown.

PLAYERS LOST

--\*RB Mike Bell: RFA Eagles (tendered at \$1.176 million with no compensation); \$1.7M/1 yr, \$500,000 guaranteed; Saints did not match.

--LB Scott Fujita: UFA Browns; \$14M/3 yrs, \$8M guaranteed.

--DE Charles Grant (released/failed physical).

--DT Rodney Leisle (released/failed physical).

--G/C Jamar Nesbit (released).  
--MLB Mark Simoneau (released).  
--WR D'Juan Woods (released/failed physical).

## NEW YORK GIANTS

### HOT TOPIC

General manager Jerry Reese typically likes to see at least three -- if not more -- draft picks make some significant contribution in their rookie season, even if there's competition ahead of them on the depth chart.

That's just fine with the Giants' third-round pick, safety Chad Jones.

Despite having Kenny Phillips, Antrel Rolle, Deon Grant, and Michael Johnson in front of him, Jones is hoping to come in and be a part of the Giants' defense.

"I think he is a little heavy and he has some conditioning work to do," said head coach Tom Coughlin when asked what Jones' biggest obstacle will be this season. "I think he will be very cognizant of the weight and the conditioning aspect when he comes back."

The 6-foot-2, 221-pounder out of LSU, who also excelled in baseball while in school, knows that he will likely see most of his work as a rookie on special teams, perhaps as a punt returner.

Whatever role he's asked to take this season, Jones said he's more than ready for the challenge. "I'm ready to go out there and show them what I got," he said.

The biggest adjustment for Jones, besides getting his weight down, concerns getting used to the tempo of the game. "You have to catch up on the game plan much faster," he said. "They put a lot in and it's at a rapid pace, so you have to study the (play) book and get adjusted to the speed of the game."

Besides getting used to the pace of the game and his playbook, Jones is also becoming acquainted with his new teammates and has been very encouraged by what's transpired so far.

"We have a lot of talent out there so things are going good," he said. "The plan is coming along pretty good; we're looking good right now."

### PLAYER/PERSONNEL NOTES

--DT Barry Cofield, who was the last of the Giants' unsigned restricted free agents, finally inked his one-year tender for \$1.759 million. Cofield, who reportedly was almost traded to the Saints during the second day of the draft, has been working out with the club despite his unhappiness with their handling of his contract situation.

The team has reportedly told Cofield that he remains in its 2010 plans. Cofield, who signed a waiver in order to participate in the Giants' offseason program, has also been attending the OTAs that began on May 18.

--Place-kicker Lawrence Tynes insists that he doesn't read newspapers or pay attention to what is said about him on Internet web sites. However, that doesn't mean he is oblivious to mostly negative feedback about his kickoffs.

Last season Tynes, like many of his teammates, had a year to forget. The 32-year old kicker came into camp with changed kicking mechanics, particularly on kickoffs, in hopes of producing better height, distance and to get more touchbacks.

What happened, however, was that Tynes suffered through an inconsistent season. He was so shaky during the first half of the season that Giants coaches worked out numerous kickers in hopes of finding someone to deliver the consistency they were seeking.

Tynes survived the threat to his job and actually ended up achieving the consistency that was missing from his game at the start of the season. Despite ending on a positive note, he is not going to be without competition for his job this summer. He will have to fend off free agent challenger Sam Swank, who signed with the Giants in January.

Even so, Tynes isn't worried. He said that he learned that the best action plan is to stay true to what got him to the NFL in the first place and not look to make wholesale changes.

"I think I was trying to be something last year that I wasn't," Tynes said. "I am a solid kickoff guy, but I'm not the type who is going to get a lot of touchbacks. I tried to tell myself that I could get touchbacks and what happened is that last year, I ended up with a lot of mis-hits."

This year, Tynes said that he is looking to build on what he accomplished in the last half of the season, when he went back to some of his old mechanics, a move that he said made him feel more comfortable and natural in his kickoffs.

"From Week 11 on, he was very consistent," said special teams coordinator Tom Quinn. "You look at the last maybe six or seven games that we charted, (and he was) consistent with good hang time, good location, and good distance. If we can get (consistency) out of him, then we will be very happy."

--Former Giants DT Norman Hand, whose lone season with the team was in 2004, died suddenly last week at the age of 37.

Hand was rushed to the Colleton Medical Center after collapsing at his family's home in South Carolina, where he was pronounced dead 90 minutes after arriving. A coroner in South Carolina determined that heart disease was the cause of death.

Hand was born in Queens, N.Y., but grew up in Walterboro, S.C.

Drafted by Miami in the fifth round in 1995, Hand was known for his affable demeanor and his extensive collection of sports jerseys. His first and only season with the Giants was marred by a groin injury that caused him to miss five games and to quip, "I didn't know big guys had groins; I found out today that I actually had one."

Hand had 22.5 sacks and two interceptions in his career.

--Despite not receiving any guarantees from head coach Tom Coughlin or general manager Jerry Reese about getting his starting job back in 2010, DE Osi Umenyiora, who in the past suggested that the team made him a scapegoat for its defensive issues, was planning to participate in the Giants' scheduled organized team activities (OTAs) that began on May 18.

Umenyiora in April dispelled the notion that he was upset with the team after they drafted DE Jason Pierre-Paul with their first round pick. He has been told by Coughlin and Reese that he'll have to compete for his starting job. To his credit, the seven-year veteran has accepted the challenge.

"I'm not sure what all the fuss has been about with me," he said in his official blog. "There has been a lot of talk about me, about me getting traded. I didn't get traded, I'm with the team and have been with the team. I think people have been looking for me to do something to cause dissension, but that's not happening."

QUOTE TO NOTE: "I'd love to pick his brain to see how he's been able to stay so durable." -- Rookie P Matt Dodge, when asked what he'd want to know from former Giants P Jeff Feagles.

#### STRATEGY AND PERSONNEL

Although the Giants' defense underwent a massive transformation during the offseason following its inconsistent performance, one area that has been left relatively untouched is their cornerback position.

With good reason, too. Their top three corners -- Terrell Thomas, Corey Webster, and Bruce Johnson -- surrendered approximately 6.9 yards per reception, and combined for eight interceptions and 28 pass breakups while allowing 10 touchdowns and just 603 yards after the catch.

Johnson's play in particular is worth noting. An undrafted rookie free agent out of Miami who made the team after a strong showing in training camp last year, he passed Kevin Dockery on the depth chart and enabled the team to decline tendering Dockery, a restricted free agent.

With the return to health by Aaron Ross, who last year missed 12 games due to a chronic hamstring ailment and the upgrades made at the safety position and to the team's pass rush, the Giants corners are poised to have an even bigger season and could emerge as one of the team's strengths in 2010.

MEDICAL WATCH: S Kenny Phillips (knee) remains on schedule in his rehab. However, Phillips has not been working in drills with his teammates in the OTAs and is probably not going to do much this spring as he continues his comeback from microfracture knee surgery.

FRANCHISE PLAYER: None.

TRANSITION PLAYER: None.

UNRESTRICTED FREE AGENTS: None.

RESTRICTED FREE AGENTS (\*indicates restricted because of uncapped year): None.

EXCLUSIVE RIGHTS FREE AGENTS: None.

PLAYERS RE-SIGNED

--\*G/T Kevin Boothe: RFA; (tendered at \$1.176M with sixth-round pick as compensation); \$1.176M/1 yr.

--TE Scott Chandler: ERFA; \$395,000/1 yr.

--\*DT Barry Cofield: RFA; (tendered at \$1.759M with second-round pick as compensation); \$1.759M/1 yr.

--\*WR Derek Hagan: RFA; (tendered at \$1.176M with third-round pick as compensation); \$1.176M/1 yr.

--WR Domenik Hixon: RFA; (tendered at \$1.759M with second-round pick as compensation); \$1.759M/1 yr.

--CB D.J. Johnson: ERFA; terms unknown.

--\*WR Sinorice Moss: RFA; (tendered at \$1.176M with third-round pick as compensation); \$1.176M/1 yr.

--DE Dave Tollefson: RFA; (tendered at \$1.684M with second-round pick as compensation); \$1.684M/1 yr.

--RB D.J. Ware: ERFA; \$545,000/1 yr.  
--\*T Guy Whimper: RFA; (tendered at \$1.176M with fourth-round pick as compensation); \$1.176M/1 yr.  
--\*LB Gerris Wilkinson: RFA; (tendered at \$1.176M with third-round pick as compensation); \$1.176M/1 yr.  
PLAYERS ACQUIRED  
--S Deon Grant: FA Seahawks; \$855,000/1 yr.  
--S Antrel Rolle: FA Cardinals; \$37M/5 yrs, \$15M guaranteed/\$5M SB.  
--QB Jim Sorgi: FA Colts; \$1.152M/1 yr, \$175,000 SB.  
--OT Herb Taylor: Waivers Broncos.  
PLAYERS LOST  
--DT Anthony Bryant (released).  
--\*S C.C. Brown: RFA tender withdrawn/Lions; terms unknown.  
--QB David Carr: UFA 49ers; \$6.25M/2 yrs, \$2M SB.  
--LB Danny Clark: UFA Texans; terms unknown.  
--\*CB Kevin Dockery: Not tendered as RFA/Rams; \$630,000/1 yr.  
--P Jeff Feagles (retired), had re-signed as UFA; \$900,000/1 yr.  
--TE Darcy Johnson: Not tendered as RFA/Rams; \$470,000/1 yr.  
--LB Antonio Pierce (released/failed physical).  
--DT Fred Robbins: UFA Rams; \$11.25M/3 yrs, \$3.395M RB 2010.  
--S Aaron Rouse (released).

## NEW YORK JETS

### HOT TOPIC

It's become almost a daily occurrence at the Jets' training facility, now that the team's voluntary spring practices have begun.

Mark Sanchez keeps asking Rex Ryan if he can participate in 11-on-11 team drills, and each time the answer is the same.

No.

Sanchez, a dogged competitor, is disappointed, but he understands.

"It's just not worth taking a chance," Sanchez said. "What if somebody falls (on his knee)? What if I have to move too quickly and I'm not ready for it yet? It's not worth the risk.

"I do know that I'm getting better every day and I haven't had any regression," Sanchez added. "That's huge. If on one of these first couple of days, this thing swells up and shuts down my quad, then we have a problem, but it hasn't done that yet. If we keep progressing, I'm optimistic."

"I don't feel that comfortable right now," Ryan said of exposing Sanchez in full-team drills. "I don't want to risk that right now because you've got bodies flying around. I think we just need to stay the course and in due time, he'll be out there. We all know he's going to be ready to roll" for training camp in August.

"I feel really good," said Sanchez, who had surgery in February to strengthen the patella ligament in his left knee. "The most important thing in our rehab is doing the same moves, like planting and throwing during the rehab with weight vests so I get used to it, get that strength back and trust my front leg when you step and throw."

Sanchez looked sharp in individual drills and seven-on-seven work, dropping back and moving around with no difficulty.

The night before Thursday's organized team activity, the Jets' third of the spring, Sanchez and left tackle D'Brickashaw Ferguson were guests at the White House at a state dinner honoring Mexico President Felipe Calderon.

Sanchez said he was looking forward to visiting there again.

"I knew we were scoping out this territory and we're coming back in February," Sanchez said in a Ryan-like boast. "That's in the back of your head. Now, Brick and I will know where to go, so we'll just lead guys around and throw in a tour."

Sanchez enjoyed the evening, calling it a "great experience and something I'll remember." He was allowed to bring a guest, and chose teammate Ferguson because he knows of the fifth-year lineman's interest in politics.

"It just felt right to take a teammate and someone who'd be interested," Sanchez said. "He was definitely that, and he had a great time."

Sanchez admitted he was impressed when Calderon's wife, Margarita Zavala, pulled a Sanchez replica jersey out of her handbag. "It was pretty special," he said.

**PLAYER/PERSONNEL NOTES**

--Two-time Pro Bowl CB Darrelle Revis, who is seeking a new contract, said Thursday the Jets have sent his agent a proposal for restructuring his deal.

"If everything's right, the numbers are right, and everything is good, I'll sign on the dotted line," the lockdown cornerback said of the contract proposal. "If not, and we have to negotiate more, that's something we have to do."

Revis also denied an internet report that he is seeking \$20 million per season.

Revis is scheduled to make \$1 million this season in the fourth season of his six-year rookie contract. Because Revis has reached various incentives, the contract can void after this year. However, the Jets can buy back the remaining two years of his deal for \$20 million, or he becomes an unrestricted free agent in 2011.

"I don't know where the \$20 million came from," Revis said after the Jets' third organized team activity practice of the spring. "I never told you guys (reporters) that. I don't know who brought that up. I'm sure it's not going to be up in that area. That's insane.

"I just want to make it as positive as I can," he added. "I don't want it to get messy, and just try to do it the right way."

--WR Santonio Holmes believes he was singled out by a flight attendant because he is a former Pittsburgh Steeler.

"I just felt I was being scrutinized just for who I am," said Holmes, speaking publicly Thursday about a much-publicized April incident for the first time.

Authorities at Pittsburgh International Airport filed a report after an unidentified flight attendant claimed Holmes failed to follow regulations by not turning off his iPod as the plane was landing. Holmes was not arrested or charged, as police determined he did nothing wrong. He was flying from Newark to Pittsburgh.

He said the Colgan Air flight attendant "definitely just tried to make a name for herself because she actually was the one who went to the media and reported it. Nobody else did."

--OLB Jason Taylor, still recovering from surgery on his right shoulder in February, is practicing on a limited basis but expects to be a full go for training camp. Taylor, who signed with the Jets in April, isn't wearing his familiar No. 99 and has switched to No. 95. He said he has "too much respect" for new teammate Bryan Thomas, who has worn that number for eight seasons, to ask him for it and took 95 in honor of former teammate Tim Bowens.

QUOTE TO NOTE: "It is a bit of a risk, but I think the benefits we got (outweigh the risk)." - Jets' coach Rex Ryan on the signing of erratic K Nick Folk. Not re-signing incumbent K Jay Feely allowed the Jets to sign OLB Jason Taylor.

**STRATEGY AND PERSONNEL**

MEDICAL WATCH: QB Mark Sanchez, who had left knee surgery in February, is practicing on a limited basis but isn't doing 11-on-11 work. He is participating in individual and seven-on-seven drills. ... OLB Jason Taylor, who had right shoulder surgery in February, is practicing on a limited basis.

FRANCHISE PLAYER: None.

TRANSITION PLAYER: None.

UNRESTRICTED FREE AGENTS

--LS James Dearth.

--DE Marques Douglas is being encouraged by the Jets to seek other offers; longshot to be back as they want to get younger at the position.

--ILB Ryan Fowler was mostly a special-teamer and his future with the team is uncertain.

--ILB Larry Izzo is another team favorite, but a knee injury ended his season and may end this veteran's career.

RESTRICTED FREE AGENTS (\*indicates restricted because of uncapped year): None.

EXCLUSIVE RIGHTS FREE AGENTS: None.

PLAYERS RE-SIGNED

--QB Kellen Clemens: RFA; (tendered at \$1.176M with third-round pick as compensation); \$1.176M/1 yr.

--WR David Clowney: ERFA; terms unknown.

--\*CB Drew Coleman: RFA; (tendered at \$1.176M with sixth-round pick as compensation); \$1.176M/1 yr.

--\*WR Braylon Edwards: RFA; (tendered at \$5.005M with first- and third-round picks as compensation): \$5.005M/1 yr.

--TE Ben Hartsock: UFA; \$3.2M/2 yrs.

--\*OL Wayne Hunter: RFA; (tendered at \$1.176M with third-round pick as compensation); \$1.176M/1 yr.

--S James Ihedigbo: RFA; (tendered at \$1.101M with no compensation); \$1.101M/1 yr.

--FB Tony Richardson: UFA; 1 yr, terms unknown.

--\*WR Brad Smith: RFA; (tendered at \$1.759M with second-round pick as compensation); \$1.759M/1 yr.

--\*S Eric Smith: RFA; (tendered at \$1.176M with third-round pick as compensation); \$1.176M/1 yr.

#### PLAYERS ACQUIRED

--CB Antonio Cromartie (trade Chargers).

--PK Nick Folk: FA; terms unknown.

--WR Santonio Holmes (trade Steelers).

--\*LB Lance Laury: Not tendered as RFA by Seahawks; 1 yr, terms unknown.

--\*S Brodney Pool: Not tendered as RFA by Browns; \$1.3M/1 yr.

--LB Jason Taylor: UFA Dolphins; terms unknown.

--RB LaDainian Tomlinson: FA Chargers; \$5.1M/2 yrs, terms unknown.

#### PLAYERS LOST

--OG Alan Faneca (released).

--PK Jay Feely: UFA Cardinals; \$3.5M/2 yrs, \$500,000 SB.

--\*DT Howard Green: Not tendered as RFA/Redskins; terms unknown.

--RB Thomas Jones (released).

--LB Marques Murrell: Not tendered as RFA/Patriots; terms unknown.

--S Kerry Rhodes (traded Cardinals).

--CB Lito Sheppard (released).

--CB Donald Strickland (released).

--\*RB Leon Washington (traded Seahawks), had been re-signed as RFA; (tendered at \$1.759M with second-round pick as compensation); \$1.759M/1 yr.

--WR Wallace Wright: Not tendered as RFA/Panthers; \$2M/2 yrs.

#### OAKLAND RAIDERS

##### HOT TOPIC

JaMarcus who?

In the Raiders' first attempt to explain how things went so horribly wrong for the No. 1 overall draft pick in 2007, coach Tom Cable acted like a motorist making his way past a bad traffic accident.

The wreckage was there, but no sense in spending a lot of time overanalyzing the carnage.

"I think as an organization we made a decision to move forward as a team and we've done that," Cable said. "It's behind us now."

Russell was conspicuous by his absence at the Raiders' first organized team activity. He was waived May 6 not long after the post-draft mandatory minicamp where he made his last appearance in silver and black, performing decently enough on the first day but seeing his playing time and effectiveness fall off afterward.

Lots of questions remain unanswered and will likely continue as such, because neither the Raiders nor Russell are doing much talking.

Was Russell dumped after failing to agree to a dramatic salary reduction, or were the Raiders simply going to move on after acquiring Washington's Jason Campbell by trade?

Was Russell's appearance at the mandatory minicamp cosmetic in nature, or was he given an opportunity to prove he had changed?

"Let's not talk about someone who is not on our team anymore," Cable said. "It's done, it's over and we have to move forward."

Russell reportedly has rejected overtures from the Canadian Football League and the Arena League. According to the New Orleans Times-Picayune, he went home to Mobile, Ala., and has been consoling those disappointed in his failure.

Campbell, a Southeastern Conference rival while he was at Auburn and Russell was at Louisiana State, offered some advice before Russell was let go.

"I've talked to him since he's been here. We had a lot of conversations," Campbell said. "I told him there are things that happen in professional sports that are out of our control and the only thing you can do is just move forward and don't let anything get you down."

"Like I told him, he's still young in his career. I think the thing he has to do in the summer is put the work in and when his opportunity comes again just do your best."

Campbell conceded a team willing to part ways with a No. 1 overall pick has sent a message.

"Everybody's out here fighting for jobs," Campbell said. "I think it helps push us as a team. Right now we pretty much know who are starters are going to be, but at the same time everyone is out here competing as if it's an open field because you want to get better and the only way you get better is competing against each other."

"The offense is talking to the defense, the defense is shouting back. It's a very competitive environment and that's what you want to see."

## PLAYER/PERSONNEL NOTES

--Jason Campbell, the Raiders' presumptive starting quarterback following the departure of JaMarcus Russell, has backed way off his declaration the day he was traded that he was told he'd be the new No. 1.

Asked at the Raiders' organized team activity if he expected to be the starter, Campbell smiled sheepishly, gave his best "aw shucks" and said, "I'm just out there competing, doing what I have to do to get better."

Coach Tom Cable is pushing the company line that Campbell is just one of four quarterbacks fighting to be the starter along with Bruce Gradkowski, Charlie Frye and free agent acquisition Kyle Boller.

Gradkowski, however, is out until training camp following surgery for a torn left pectoral muscle and is being paid \$1.759 million on his restricted free agent tender.

Frye and Boller have starting experience but neither player is making anything in the realm of the \$7.7 million Campbell is expected to receive over the next two seasons, including a \$4.6 million extension in 2011.

Economics say Campbell is the man, even if the Raiders won't.

And while Cable is saying as little as possible about Russell, the former No. 1 overall pick who cost \$39 million and produced seven wins in 25 starts, he bit on a question about whether Campbell was an anti-Russell of sorts in terms of preparation and work ethic.

"I don't think there is any question about that," Cable said. "We make a trade, he shows up, he's here for four days, he goes into minicamp, he never blinks. It's not real familiar to him, makes some mistakes, but he never once backed away from it."

No one is sure whether the Raiders offered Russell a chance to stay with a significant pay cut, or if they were going to cut him anyway. And what about the mandatory minicamp appearance for Russell, was that, in a sense, his final tryout?

"Let's not talk about someone who is not on our team anymore," Cable said. "It's done, it's over and we have to move forward."

Campbell effectively deflected questions about any change in locker room chemistry in Russell's absence.

"I'm not sure about that," Campbell said. "I just know guys have talked about this offseason how bad they want to get back to the winning side. I know the last seven seasons, they've talked about how tough it's been. Guys just want to win."

"Outside of that, guys are just putting forth the effort because they want to win and get better. It's a young football team, but a lot of guys want to work."

--Following the Raiders' mandatory minicamp, Raiders coach Tom Cable said defensive lineman Richard Seymour, who hadn't signed his exclusive franchise free agent tender, was nearing a contract extension with the team.

As the Raiders gathered for their first organized team activity, Seymour still hadn't signed the \$12.4 million tender, and Cable didn't sound nearly as optimistic.

"Still working, still working," Cable said in regards to Seymour negotiations.

The Raiders have been down this road before with exclusive franchise free agents. Cornerback Charles Woodson stayed out of training camp until the start of the regular season. Cornerback Nnamdi Asomugha signed his tender to be with the team when training camp began.

The Seymour watch will begin in late July.

--Although it was shrugged off as common sense, there was enough concern about the left foot of wide receiver Chaz Schilens to keep him off the field for the non-contact OTAs.

Schilens isn't even running drills with his teammates, watching from the sideline.

The third-year wide receiver was Oakland's most productive offensive player in training camp, only to break a fifth metatarsal on his left foot while in the process of pushing off for a pass pattern.

Schilens underwent surgery, missed the first eight games of the season, and still caught 29 passes despite never reaching his training camp form. Cable revealed at the mandatory minicamp that Schilens had undergone a "follow-up" procedure.

The Raiders are in no rush to put him back on the field.

"I think we'll take our time with that, just to be smart," Cable said. "I don't want to do anything to set it back. If he's there when we go to camp -- which he will be -- I'll be happy with that."

--Wide receivers caught the ball more cleanly in the single OTA session available to the media than they did during the mandatory minicamp, after which Cable lamented the amount of passes left on the ground.

With a dearth of veteran wide receivers, speculation surfaced on ESPN that the Raiders had at least inquired about Terrell Owens, the 36-year-old wide receiver who played last season for Buffalo.

Owens caught 55 passes for 829 yards for the Bills, figures which would have led Raiders wideouts in both categories by a considerable margin.

If T.O. is on the Raiders' radar, Cable was keeping it to himself.

"We haven't had any discussions whatsoever about that," Cable said.

--Quarterback Bruce Gradkowski, the author of stirring come-from-behind wins over Cincinnati and Pittsburgh after taking over for JaMarcus Russell, plans on giving Jason Campbell all he can handle during training camp.

Gradkowski sustained a torn left pectoral muscle during free weight reps on the bench press and had surgery but promised to be ready for training camp. He is taking Cable at his word that Campbell won't simply be handed the starting job.

"I definitely believe it's an open competition," Gradkowski said. "I don't think you can go about it any other way. I don't think anyone deserves to automatically be the guy and get anointed to be the guy. We have to earn it, deserve it."

Having started and been cut by the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, as well as spending time with struggling teams in Cleveland and St. Louis, Gradkowski wasn't about to let Campbell's acquisition get him down.

"This is a business," Gradkowski said. "Teams are going to do what they feel they need to do with bringing in another quarterback. It's good for us. It's just going to make the competition better and the guys around us better."

QUOTE TO NOTE: "Right now it's about ball security and confidence. If we accomplish those things, we'll be a tough team that will get after you and play with great confidence." -- Raiders coach Tom Cable on his vision of the 2010 Raiders.

#### STRATEGY AND PERSONNEL

The Raiders tinkered with the offensive line during the organized team activity, utilizing Khalif Barnes, a veteran tackle, as a left guard, and rookie third-round pick Jared Veldheer, a left tackle, for a few snaps at center.

Langston Walker continues to get the majority of first-team snaps at right tackle. Rookie fourth-round pick Bruce Campbell played during the mandatory minicamp at left guard but wasn't at the OTA because of the NFL rule prohibiting him from attending until his class graduated.

MEDICAL UPDATES: Wide receiver and return specialist Nick Miller was on the field with no restrictions during OTAs. Miller, an undrafted free agent out of Southern Utah, made the 53-man roster and stayed there for 15 games despite a broken fibula before going on injured reserve. Wide receiver Chaz Schilens (foot) will remain on the sidelines until training camp. Defensive end Matt Shaughnessy strained a hamstring during the first OTA practice and missed the second one. Quarterback Bruce Gradkowski is no longer wearing a sling on his left arm after surgery on his left pectoral, but won't practice until training camp.

FRANCHISE PLAYER: DL Richard Seymour (tendered at \$12.398M).

TRANSITION PLAYER: None.

UNRESTRICTED FREE AGENTS

--C John Wade was waived/injured following training camp and had cleaned out his locker and left the building by October.

UNRESTRICTED FREE AGENTS (not tendered offers)

--RB Gary Russell (not tendered as RFA) ended the season as an undersized fullback and is best suited as a backup at both running back positions.

RESTRICTED FREE AGENTS (\*indicates restricted because of uncapped year): None.

EXCLUSIVE RIGHTS FREE AGENTS: None.

PLAYERS RE-SIGNED

--\*OT Khalif Barnes: Not tendered as RFA; terms unknown.

--\*LB Ricky Brown: RFA; (tendered at \$1.759M with second-round pick as compensation); \$1.759M/1 yr.

--C Jon Condo: RFA; (tendered at \$1.759M with second-round pick as compensation); terms unknown.

--S Hiram Eugene: RFA; (tendered at \$1.759M with second-round pick as compensation); \$1.759M/1 yr.

--\*QB Charlie Frye: RFA; (tendered at \$1.226M with third-round pick as compensation); \$1.226M/1 yr.

--QB Bruce Gradkowski: RFA; (tendered at \$1.759M with second-round pick as compensation); \$1.759M/1 yr.

--WR Jonathan Holland: ERFA; terms unknown.

--\*LB Thomas Howard: RFA; (tendered at \$1.759M with second-round pick as compensation); \$1.759M/1 yr.

--PK Sebastian Janikowski: Potential UFA; \$16M/4 yrs, \$9M guaranteed.

--DT William Joseph: UFA; \$755,000/1 yr.

--FB Luke Lawton: RFA; (tendered at \$1.176M with no compensation); \$1.176M/1 yr.

--C/G Chris Morris: RFA; (tendered at \$1.101M with seventh-round pick as compensation); \$1.101M/1 yr.

--LB David Nixon: ERFA; terms unknown.  
--\*CB Stanford Routt: RFA; (tendered at \$3.268M with first- and third-round pick as compensation); \$3.268M/1 yr.  
--G/T Langston Walker: UFA; terms unknown.  
--WR Todd Watkins: ERFA; terms unknown.  
--LB Sam Williams: UFA; terms unknown.

## PLAYERS ACQUIRED

--RB Michael Bennett: FA Chargers; terms unknown.  
--QB Kyle Boller: UFA Rams; terms unknown.  
--QB Jason Campbell (trade Redskins).  
--FB Rock Cartwright: FA Redskins; terms unknown.  
--DT Chris Cooper: FA; terms unknown.  
--WR/KR Yamon Figurs: FA; terms unknown.  
--LB Quentin Groves (trade Jaguars).  
--G/T Daniel Loper: FA Lions; terms unknown.  
--TE John Owens: FA Seahawks; terms unknown.  
--CB Joey Thomas: FA; terms unknown.  
--LB Kamerion Wimbley (trade Browns).

## PLAYERS LOST

--\*LB Jon Alston: Not tendered as RFA/Buccaneers; terms unknown.  
--DE Greg Ellis (released).  
--RB Justin Fargas (released/failed physical).  
--RT Cornell Green: UFA Bills; \$9M/3 yrs.  
--QB J.P. Losman: Not tendered as RFA/Seahawks; 1 yr, terms unknown.  
--\*LB Kirk Morrison (traded Jaguars), had been re-signed as RFA; (tendered at \$2.525M with third-round pick as compensation); \$2.525M/1 yr.  
--FB Oren O'Neal (released).  
--QB JaMarcus Russell (released).  
--WR Javon Walker (released).  
--DT Gerard Warren (released).

## PHILADELPHIA EAGLES

## HOT TOPIC

The Eagles traded up 11 spots in the first round of the draft last month to grab defensive end Brandon Graham. And while the team is hopeful that Graham will make a significant contribution to the defense's pass rush as a rookie, they actually are expecting their second-round pick, safety Nate Allen, to make a more immediate contribution.

Allen was a much bigger "need" pick than Graham. Free safety was a black hole for Sean McDermott's defense last season as three different players -- Quintin Demps, Sean Jones and rookie Macho Harris -- tried but failed to replace Brian Dawkins, who signed with the Denver Broncos after the 2008 season.

Without Dawkins, the Eagles' secondary was out of synch, giving up 27 touchdown passes, the most of the Andy Reid era.

Allen is a highly-regarded safety with cornerback-like cover skills. McDermott isn't handing him the starting free safety job. But if he can pick up the defense quickly enough, it will be his job to lose heading into training camp.

"Definitely (starting) is the goal of everybody," Allen said. "You've just got to go compete. Let everything else fall into place. If I compete, we'll see what happens."

Allen acknowledged that the Eagles' defensive system is "a little more diverse than the one I played in college." He spent the Eagles' first minicamp two weeks ago watching from the sidelines as he continued to recover from a two-month-old quad injury. But he was back on the field this week for the opening of Organized Team Activities and seemed to be getting acclimated with the defense.

Last year, the Eagles handed the starting free safety job to '08 fourth-round pick Demps heading into training camp. It took him only two weeks to lose the job. He's hoping to bounce back this summer and push Allen for the starting job.

"Everybody's going to go through growing pains, one year or another," Demps said. "It's just part of the game, man. I'm just glad I went through mine earlier than later.

"I tried to figure everything out all last year. I had a headache every morning. I'm just happy to be running around out there, happy to be healthy. Whatever's on my plate, man, I'm going to eat it and ask for dessert. I know I can play. I know I can start in this league."

**PLAYER/PERSONNEL NOTES**

--Macho Harris was a college cornerback at Virginia Tech who ended up starting eight games at free safety for the Eagles as a rookie. Now, it looks like he might be moving back to the outside.

The '09 fifth-round pick found himself working at cornerback this week at the first of two camps for rookies and selected veterans.

This might mean nothing or it might mean something. Harris struggled making the transition to safety last season. But it remains to be seen whether he has the speed and cover ability to play cornerback in the NFL.

The Eagles have been preaching versatility this offseason with respect to many of their defensive backs, including Harris, suggesting many of them can play both inside and outside.

Second-round pick Nate Allen would appear to be the favorite to be the season-opening starting free safety. The Eagles also signed ex-Colt Marlin Jackson, who has played both corner and safety, but is recovering from his second ACL tear in as many years.

That may be why defensive coordinator Sean McDermott is leaning toward moving Harris to corner. With the March trade of Sheldon Brown, his replacement on the right side still is up in the air. McDermott has penciled in Ellis Hobbs there. But he is coming off a career-threatening spine injury. Veteran Joselio Hanson is a possibility, but he is better suited for nickel. Rookie fourth-round pick Trevard Lindley is talented, but raw.

"One of the coaches asked me, 'Do you think you can play corner?'" Harris said. "I'm a competitor, so I feel I can do anything.

"I've just got to get used to backpedaling, got to get used to coming out of the break. It's a different technique than playing free safety. I'll get it, though."

--Wide receiver Blue Cooper, an undrafted free agent who caught 84 passes for Tennessee-Chattanooga last season, will marry his fiancée, Maci Gault, next month after the Eagles complete their Organized Team Activities. Cooper proposed to Gault at midfield last November after a 31-28 UTC win over The Citadel. He had her look up at the stadium's video scoreboard, which was running a slideshow of photos of the couple. Then he dropped to one knee and proposed to her. "A lot of people do it on Senior Night before the game," said Cooper. "But I didn't want to do that. I was afraid if we lost, it wouldn't have been very kosher. In fact, we were actually losing at halftime. But I had a pretty good game (he had 14 receptions in the win), we came back and won and the rest, as they say, is history."

--Safety Kurt Coleman already faces an uphill battle making the Eagles' roster because of the fact that he wasn't selected until the seventh round (244th overall pick). Making things even more difficult is the fact that he won't be able to participate in any of the team's OTAs over the next three weeks. With the exception of the first post-draft minicamp, rookies aren't allowed to practice with their teams until their school's spring semester is completed. Most schools have a two-semester-per-year system that ends in late April or early May. But Coleman's school, Ohio State, is on a quarter system. Final exams run through the second week in June.

--Guard Max Jean-Gilles returned to practice this week after having a gastric lap-band inserted around his stomach a few weeks ago. The surgery prevented him from participating in the Eagles' post-draft minicamp two weeks ago. Jean-Gilles said he already has lost close to 30 pounds and is down to 358.

--Quarterback Kevin Kolb isn't at the team's two-day rookie camp this week, but is expected to participate in next week's four-day camp for rookies and selected veterans, as well as the team's final two voluntary full-squad camps in June.

--The Eagles will open training camp at Lehigh University on Monday, July 26. Veterans are scheduled to report on July 29. Camp will run through August 18.

QUOTE TO NOTE: "They're going to be in it and we're not." -- Pennsylvania governor and lifelong Eagles fan Ed Rendell on why he intends to root for ex-Eagle quarterback Donovan McNabb and the Redskins in the playoffs

**STRATEGY AND PERSONNEL**

The Eagles continue to play musical chairs with their defensive backs. Macho Harris, who started eight games last season at free safety, found himself playing cornerback this week at the team's OTAs for rookies and selected veterans. It's too soon to say whether the move is permanent.

FRANCHISE PLAYER: None.

TRANSITION PLAYER: None.

UNRESTRICTED FREE AGENTS

--LB Jeremiah Trotter came out of retirement and did a surprisingly decent job as a run-stopping MIKE 'backer. But with Stewart Bradley and Omar Gaither both returning, Trotter will be headed back to retirement.

--LB Tracy White was initially signed for his special-teams prowess, but he played well as a nickel 'backer. Eagles want him back.

RESTRICTED FREE AGENTS (\*indicates restricted because of uncapped year): None.

EXCLUSIVE RIGHTS FREE AGENTS: None.

PLAYERS RE-SIGNED

--\*WR Jason Avant: RFA; (tendered at \$1.759M with second-round pick as compensation); \$18M/5 yrs, \$8 million guaranteed.

--\*G Nick Cole: RFA; (tendered at \$1.759M with second-round pick as compensation); \$1.759M/1 yr.

--\*LB Omar Gaither: RFA; (tendered at \$1.176M with fifth-round pick as compensation); \$1.176M/1 yr.

--\*CB Ellis Hobbs: RFA; (tendered at \$2.7995M with first-round pick as compensation); \$2.621M/1 yr.

--\*OG Max Jean-Gilles: RFA; (tendered at \$1.176 with fourth-round pick as compensation); \$1.176M/1 yr.

--LB Akeem Jordan: RFA; (tendered at \$1.684M with second-round pick as compensation); \$1.684M/1 yr.

--P Sav Rocca: RFA; (tendered at \$1.101M with no compensation); \$1.101M/1 yr.

--\*FB Leonard Weaver: RFA; (Tendered at \$1.809M with second-round pick as compensation); \$11M/3 yrs, \$6.5M guaranteed.

PLAYERS ACQUIRED

--\*WR Hank Baskett: Not tendered as RFA by Colt; 1 yrs, terms unknown.

--\*RB Mike Bell: RFA Saints (tendered at \$1.176 million with no compensation); \$1.7M/1 yr, \$500,000 guaranteed; Saints did not match.

--LB Alex Hall (traded Browns).

--\*CB Marlin Jackson: Not tendered as RFA by Colts; \$6M/2 yrs.

--RB Martell Mallett: CFL FA; terms unknown.

--LB Ernie Sims (trade Lions).

--DE Darryl Tapp (trade Seahawks, new contract \$9M/3 yrs, \$3M SB).

PLAYERS LOST

--T Shawn Andrews (released/failed physical).

--DE Jason Babin: UFA Titans; \$1M/1 yr (had individually negotiated right of first refusal/Eagles did not match).

--WR Reggie Brown (traded Buccaneers).

--CB Sheldon Brown (traded Browns).

--DE Chris Clemons (traded Seahawks).

--WR Kevin Curtis (released).

--LB Chris Gocong (traded Browns).

--DE Darren Howard (released).

--S Sean Jones: UFA Buccaneers; terms unknown.

--QB Donovan McNabb (traded Redskins).

--\*TE Alex Smith: Not tendered as RFA/Browns; 1 yr, terms unknown.

--RB Brian Westbrook (released).

--LB Will Witherspoon (released).

**PITTSBURGH STEELERS**

**HOT TOPIC**

Bruce Arians agrees with his bosses who say the Steelers must have a better running game in 2010 than they did in 2009. The offensive coordinator, though, has not provided a concrete answer on how he will go about improving it.

"You just focus on it," Arians said.

The Steelers, who often finish among the top five in the NFL in rushing, slipped to No. 19 in 2009, but it was not just the rushing numbers that bothered club president Art Rooney and head coach Mike Tomlin. It was the inability to run when they needed to run, such as at the goal-line or on third-and-one and, in particular, in fourth quarters when they had a lead.

Arians says he recognizes all that, speaking publicly for the first time since Rooney complained in January about his team's inability to run the ball in 2009.

"At the end of the game, in the four-minute (offense) to run out the clock and not punt the ball, short yards, goal-line are areas we have to be more efficient," Arians said.

The Steelers, though, have done little on the personnel side to beef up their running game. They let Willie Parker go in free agency as well as Carey Davis. They did not draft a running back until the sixth round, Jonathan Dwyer of Georgia Tech. They have only two backs with any experience, starter Rashard Mendenhall and backup Mewelde Moore. They also have no pure fullback, the only fullback on the roster converted Virginia Tech defensive tackle Demetrius Taylor, an

undrafted rookie. Veteran tight end Sean McHugh and second-year tight end David Johnson also line up in the backfield.

"Get better at it," Arians reasoned as to what must be done to improve the ground game from 2009. "Get better at it and again, the change between Willie, Rashard, Mewelde -- they all do things differently. We kind of found what Rashard did pretty well and he had real good success. When Willie got back healthy in the last game or two he had some success.

"Yeah, I think the critical runs -- short-yardage, goal-line -- have been a problem. They got addressed with Gary Russell. Now is it going to be Rashard? It could be Isaac Redman, it could be a bunch of guys. Is it a back or is it by committee? Those are the things. This time of year, you get your running game going but in training camp you find out that short-yardage stuff and you win jobs that way."

His own job might be on the line if they do not get better at it.

#### PLAYER/PERSONNEL NOTES

--SS Troy Polamalu, who attended the team's first two OTAs April 19-20 and then their required minicamp, did not show when they resumed practices this week. He has worked out in California the previous two seasons. Veteran Will Allen has taken his place at strong safety in practices.

Coach Mike Tomlin, though, sounded a bit irked that Polamalu has disappeared.

"I tend to focus on the guys who are here. That's probably a good focus to have."

--The more Mike Tomlin insists his three "other" quarterbacks will get opportunities to compete for Ben Roethlisberger's job, the more snaps Byron Leftwich takes with the first team.

The Steelers knocked out three more OTA practices this week and Leftwich ran with the ones in all three after doing so in five minicamp practices early this month. They are down to nine OTAs remaining for either Dennis Dixon or Charlie Batch to get their "opportunity" because Tomlin has said he will know his No. 1 quarterback entering training camp, or at least that's what he said last week.

"I won't necessarily know who the starter is, per se, by the end of the OTAs," Tomlin said this week. "I did make a comment last week in regards to how I'm approaching it. I really don't believe it's an effective approach to go in with a pure open quarterback competition, if you will, a three-headed quarterback battle. There simply aren't enough snaps to go around.

"We'll go in with a pecking order, if you will, and the opportunities to show what you're capable of will be based on that pecking order. All guys will be given an opportunity, not an equal opportunity, that's the nature of this game, the nature of this business. I will make those judgments based on intuition and knowledge I have of the men at an appropriate time and we'll proceed."

Offensive coordinator Bruce Arians says it's a process that starts with the system and goes from there.

"This time of year you find out what they can do," Arians said of the quarterbacks. "You keep stretching the envelope and say, 'OK, this is the offense, everybody's doing it,' and then you just make mental notes as you go along: 'He really struggles with that throw or he really struggles with that footwork, or this type of read or letting him change protections.' So if and when the time comes to call on one you can tailor your game plan to fit him."

The different styles of the quarterbacks does not matter, Arians said.

"You have an offense that you hope is broad enough that can fit each guy's style, what he does best, and you don't ask guys to do things they can't do. That's the key to all offenses is you take your personnel, you find out what we can do and it's broad enough if an injury occurs here or there."

Roethlisberger is suspended for the first four games of the season and he still has not been cleared by the commissioner to rejoin his teammates for spring practice. Tomlin said that's not necessarily a good thing.

"It is important to work, that's why we work."

--The Steelers are looking hard at a kickoff specialist, unhappy with kicker Jeff Reed's relatively short kickoffs. Former Pitt punter Adam Graessle has been kicking off in special teams practices.

--Defensive coordinator Dick LeBeau has been wearing the game jerseys of his defensive veterans during spring practices. So far, he's worn jerseys of linebacker James Farrior and defensive end Aaron Smith. He's going by seniority so nose tackle Casey Hampton is next.

Several times, his defensive players wore his jersey, once before a playoff game in 2005, once before a game in Detroit and when the Steelers played in Canton for the Hall of Fame game.

--Kick return specialist Stefan Logan, a wide receiver last year and listed as a wide receiver on the roster, has been with the running backs this spring.

QUOTE TO NOTE: "He'll jump right back in there. He's going to have to play 12 games." -- Coordinator Bruce Arians, on what Ben Roethlisberger will do if and when he's cleared to return before the end of spring practices.

**STRATEGY AND PERSONNEL**

MEDICAL WATCH: WR Hines Ward, who strained a hamstring in the first minicamp practice April 30, has not practiced since then, mostly as a precaution.

FRANCHISE PLAYER: PK Jeff Reed (tendered at \$2.814M); signed tender April 13.

TRANSITION PLAYER: None.

**UNRESTRICTED FREE AGENTS**

--LB Rocky Boiman was a late edition to try to save their drowning special teams. He's not likely to return.

--SS Tyrone Carter won't get a contract from the Steelers again unless he finds nothing from anywhere else.

--DE Travis Kirschke, although he turns 36 this year, has been dependable and could re-sign if he does not go elsewhere, especially if they get nothing at the position in the draft.

--CB Deshea Townsend thinks he can still start in the league and the Steelers have no plans for him to do that. If he finds nothing of his liking in free agency, they will offer him a contract to return.

**UNRESTRICTED FREE AGENTS (not tendered offers)**

--RB Carey Davis (not tendered as RFA).

--OG Darnell Stapleton (not tendered as RFA) was their starting right guard until an injury put him on injured reserve.

RESTRICTED FREE AGENTS (\*indicates restricted because of uncapped year): None.

EXCLUSIVE RIGHTS FREE AGENTS: None.

**PLAYERS RE-SIGNED**

--LB Patrick Bailey: ERFA; terms unknown.

--QB Charlie Batch: UFA; 2 yrs, terms unknown.

--FS Ryan Clark: UFA; \$14M/4 yrs, \$3M SB.

--DE Nick Eason: UFA; 1 yr.

--NT Casey Hampton: Potential UFA; \$21.3M/3 yrs, \$11M guaranteed/\$6.5M SB.

--\*OT Willie Colon: RFA; (tendered at \$2.521M with first-round pick as compensation); \$2.521M/1 yr.

--CB William Gay: RFA; (tendered at \$1.101M with fifth-round pick as compensation); \$1.101M/1 yr.

--PK Jeff Reed: Franchise FA: \$2.814M/1 yr.

--P Daniel Sepulveda: RFA; (tendered at \$1.101M with fourth-round pick as compensation); \$1.101M/1 yr.

--TE Matt Spaeth: RFA; (tendered at \$1.101M with fifth-round pick as compensation); \$1.101M/1 yr.

**PLAYERS ACQUIRED**

--S Will Allen: UFA Buccaneers; \$4.4M/3 yrs, \$950,000 SB.

--WR Arnaz Battle: UFA 49ers; \$3.975/3 yrs, \$975,000 SB.

--LB Derrick Doggett: CFL FA; terms unknown.

--LB Larry Foote: UFA Lions; \$9.3M/3 yrs, \$1.8M SB.

--QB Byron Leftwich (trade Buccaneers).

--CB Bryant McFadden (trade Cardinals).

--WR Antwaan Randle El: FA Redskins; \$7M/3 yrs, \$900,000 SB.

--OT Jonathan Scott: Not tendered as RFA by Bills; \$545,000/1 yr.

**PLAYERS LOST**

--WR Joey Galloway: UFA Redskins; terms unknown.

--WR Santonio Holmes (traded Jets).

--RB Willie Parker: UFA Redskins; 1 yr, terms unknown.

**SAN DIEGO CHARGERS****HOT TOPIC**

The Chargers have started their organized team activity workouts and just where are all the familiar faces?

While a solid core of players remains, another core has moved on: running back LaDainian Tomlinson, defensive tackle Jamal Williams, cornerback Antonio Cromartie and backup quarterback Charlie Whitehurst.

"It's certainly the first practice without some guys that have been around here a long time," quarterback Philip Rivers said after a recent session. "But we have gone 6-8 weeks with the offseason program and the participating has been good as since I have been here. We got 45 guys with the 7:30 (a.m.) group pretty consistently."

The Chargers are striving to stay the course, one they hope will eventually get them to the Super Bowl. While proud of winning four straight AFC West titles, the Chargers know the bigger prize has eluded them.

So they are attacking OTAs and many of the other spring tune-ups with a purpose.

Rivers thinks it's important for the younger players to see and learn just how to go about their business.

"The guys that have been here kind of took control of things and helped guys out that needed it because obviously it was cranked up from their rookie camp," Rivers said.

But many of those rookies didn't see some well-known former or current Chargers. In addition to those moving on, linebacker Shawne Merriman, left tackle Marcus McNeill and wide receivers Malcom Floyd and Vincent Jackson have yet to sign their tender offers. So far, they are declining to participate in the team practice sessions.

That opens doors for others to make an impression and Rivers said that is the silver lining from those skipping the team work.

That's especially true for the wideouts; Legedu Naanee is also out while rehabbing a foot injury.

"They are going to get the opportunity," Rivers said. "We know what Vince and Malcom mean to this team and bring and they will be in there.

"But to have the opportunity to be in with guys who wouldn't normally have an opportunity ? it gives them a chance to show what they can do."

The showing of so many fresh Chargers faces underlines the fact that many new players will be asked to contribute this season.

"We've know who is going to be here for some time now," Rivers said. "The attendance and work has been awesome since the last week of March.

"We have laid the ground work, now we get to go do some football stuff the next couple of weeks."

#### PLAYER/PERSONNEL NOTES

--It's a safe bet that the most spirited competition at the Chargers' training camp will be at strong safety.

The Chargers have been searching for someone at the spot since releasing Clinton Hart last season. Rookie Kevin Ellison got a few starts after Hart was cut; Paul Oliver and Steve Gregory have also punched the clock at strong safety but neither convinced coaches they could keep it long-term.

The Chargers tipped their hand at the recent draft -- they are again seeking an upgrade. Why else but burn a fourth-round pick on Kansas' Darrell Stuckey?

"It's simple: if you play bad they take you out," Ellison said.

Ellison's play, though, wasn't bad last year. He made mistakes, most of which come with being a rookie, but he didn't embarrass himself by any standard.

Still, the Chargers are looking for more of a thumper and someone with better range. Stuckey just might be that guy -- if he can beat out Ellison, Oliver and Gregory and to a lesser degree, C.J. Spillman.

Gregory's fate is interesting in that he proved his versatility last year.

When Antoine Cason struggled in the nickel role, Gregory stepped in and did so well Cason never won the position back.

But with Antonio Cromartie being shipped to the Jets, many expect Cason will take over as a starting cornerback. But if he can't -- and what that means to Gregory -- it could jumble the secondary unit.

Stuckey is impressive but what's more telling is how fast he can ride the steep NFL learning curve. While he was a stud in the Big 12 -- which bodes well considering the pass-happy offenses in that conference -- playing in the NFL is a whole other matter.

"Getting better every single day is the best thing I can do right now," Stuckey said after a recent Chargers OTA session.

"I think the thing about competition is it makes all of us better and it forces the person who wins the starting job to be that much better."

--Ex-Chargers QB Drew Brees is in town for a charity golf tournament. QB Philip Rivers wasn't sure if their paths would cross. "Drew and I traded text messages probably a week or so ago," Rivers said. "I don't know if I will run into him or not but we certainly stay in touch."

--WR Buster Davis, a former first-round pick, is getting to work with the first team with restricted free agents Vincent Jackson and Malcom Turner unsigned.

"Buster understands this is a great opportunity for him," coach Norv Turner said. "He's making all the catches," S Eric Weddle said.

"I know I have to keep my body healthy," said Davis, who has been slowed by various injuries.

--Jim Jauch, a former Chargers scout, has rejoined the club. Jauch comes from the Browns, where he was associate director of college and pro scouting. His first stint with the Chargers was from 1992-03. He replaces Darrell Moody after he exited to join the Bills.

--The Chargers' top two draft picks, RB Ryan Mathews and ILB Donald Butler, are missing the OTA workouts because their classes are still in session at their universities.

--OLB Shawne Merriman and LT Marcus McNeill are skipping the OTAs because the restricted free agents haven't signed their contract tenders.

--K Nate Kaeding isn't participating because he is still nursing a groin injury.

--The team signed rookie free-agent LBs Boris Lee and Mike Nixon.

--QB Philip Rivers will host a football camp in San Diego on July 10-11. He promises to throw each camper at least one pass. "Even if some of them are there as quarterbacks," he said.

--The team continues to push its downtown site as the best spot to build a venue to replace Qualcomm Stadium.

QUOTE TO NOTE: "The more young guys you bring in, the better chance you have striking gold. There are good players here that have had success in the past and are prepared to play." -- Coach Norv Turner on having seven rookie wide receivers taking part in the offseason workouts.

#### STRATEGY AND PERSONNEL

FRANCHISE PLAYER: None.

TRANSITION PLAYER: None.

#### UNRESTRICTED FREE AGENTS

--C Dennis Norman is at a spot where the team has depth and likely won't come back.

--OL Jon Runyan is going to retire and run for Congress.

#### UNRESTRICTED FREE AGENTS (not tendered offers)

--\*OLB Marques Harris (not tendered as RFA) is a decent pass rusher but the Chargers will likely see him go where he would get more of a chance to contribute.

--\*LB Dontarrious Thomas (not tendered as RFA) seldom saw the field when arriving late last year and appears to be a goner.

#### RESTRICTED FREE AGENTS (\*indicates restricted because of uncapped year)

--\*WR Malcom Floyd (tendered at \$3.168M with first- and third-round picks as compensation) could likely get more passes thrown his way elsewhere, but he likes San Diego and will likely take a little less to remain here.

--\*WR Vincent Jackson (tendered at \$3.268M with first- and third-round picks as compensation) is the team's top receiver and will be brought back -- unless the team has grown tired of his immaturity; that's doubtful after two 1,000-yard seasons.

--\*DL Travis Johnson (tendered at \$1.226M with first-round pick as compensation) will probably have to settle for less money, but the former first-round pick of the Texans might have found a home in San Diego.

--\*LT Marcus McNeill (tendered at \$3.168M with first- and third-round picks as compensation) is a stud at left tackle and among the team's biggest offseason priorities.

--\*OLB Shawne Merriman (tendered at \$3.168M with first- and third-round picks as compensation) will return, possibly, if willing to swallow his pride and lower his price tag. A motivated Merriman playing on a one-year deal could be attractive to the Chargers.

EXCLUSIVE RIGHTS FREE AGENTS: None.

#### PLAYERS RE-SIGNED

--OLB Antwan Applewhite: ERFA; \$470,000/1 yr.

--DT Alfonso Boone: UFA; 2 yrs, terms unknown.

--OT Jeromey Clary: RFA; (tendered at \$1.684M with second-round pick as compensation); \$1.684M/1 yr.

--\*DT Antonio Garay: Not tendered as RFA; terms unknown.

--DT Ian Scott: UFA; 1 yr, terms unknown.

--\*RB Darren Sproles: RFA; (tendered at \$7.283M with first- and third-round picks as compensation); \$7.283M/1 yr.

--FB Mike Tolbert: ERFA; \$470,000/1 yr.

--TE Kris Wilson: UFA; 2 yrs, terms unknown.

#### PLAYERS ACQUIRED

--RB Marcus Mason (waivers Redskins).

--CB Donald Strickland: FA Jets; 2 yrs, terms unknown.

--CB Nate Vasher: FA Bears; \$4.5M/2 yrs.

#### PLAYERS LOST

--RB Michael Bennett (released).

--WR Demetrius Byrd (released/non-football injury).

--CB Antonio Cromartie (traded Jets).

--\*ILB Tim Dobbins (traded Dolphins), had been re-signed as RFA; (tendered at \$1.176M with fifth-round pick as compensation); \$1.176M/1 yr.

--\*C Eric Ghiaciuc: Not tendered as RFA/Browns; terms unknown.

--TE Brandon Manumaleuna: UFA Bears; \$15M/5 yrs, \$\$2M SB/\$3M RB.

--WR Kassim Osgood: UFA Jaguars; \$6.675M/3 yrs, \$2.975M guaranteed.

--RB LaDainian Tomlinson (released).

--\*QB Charlie Whitehurst: RFA; (tendered at \$1.176M with third-round pick as compensation); re-signed, traded to Seahawks.

--NT Jamal Williams (released).

#### SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS

##### HOT TOPIC

Whether he emerges as a solid starting quarterback this season remains in question, but Alex Smith has one nagging obstacle out of the way. For the first time in his career, Smith has the same offensive coordinator for back-to-back seasons.

The previous turnover -- five coordinators in five years -- would undermine any quarterback, but the constant change has been particularly hard on Smith. The thoughtful type, Smith needs to intellectualize a playbook before he can turn it loose on the field.

And until he gets it, he's tentative with his throws and with his command of the huddle. His reserved nature was such a problem at times last season that coach Mike Singletary approached Smith and urged him to be more vocal.

As Singletary recalled it, Smith responded by saying: "Coach, in all honesty, I can give you everything that you want. I know that I can do it. I just need a little continuity. I'm still trying to learn some of the things that we are doing. Once I get it, I promise you I will show you that I can take command of the offense."

So far, it looks as if Smith is delivering on his promise. During the recent organized team activities, the sixth-year quarterback was noticeably more in charge of the action. In one memorable early-practice session, Smith gave a tutorial to the rest of the offense about adjusting pass protection in third-and-long situations.

Smith read the defense, barked out communication to center Eric Heitmann and redirected a play.

How did he handle the same situation last year?

"Most of it was: 'I hope I'm right and if not, then I'll scramble to my right,' " offensive coordinator Jimmy Raye said, smiling.

Smith fared fine last season after taking over as the starter, throwing 18 touchdowns and 12 interceptions and compiling an 81.5 passer rating. But the 49ers will need more from him if they are to make the playoffs for the first time since the 2002 season.

Raye, like Singletary, thinks the quarterback will be better equipped to handle the mental side in 2010. He thinks that Smith, for example, will be able to direct traffic in big third-down situations when he's operating out of the shotgun. Raye pointed to the way Peyton Manning and Tom Brady thrive in similar situations because of their understanding of the offense.

"The final call goes to the quarterback because there are some things, in assessing the top of the defense, that the center can't see," Raye said. "At a certain point, it falls into the lap of the quarterback."

Smith faces no major competition for the starting job this season, with David Carr brought in only as insurance. Between that and his improved understanding of the playbook, Smith clearly feels more comfortable. This is the first time since Greg Knapp (2002-04) that the 49ers have retained an offensive coordinator from one season to the next.

"It's a completely different mindset," Smith said. "I'm absolutely confident in my protections and what's expected of me. I know when I can take my shots, when I can gamble a little bit."

##### PLAYER/PERSONNEL NOTES

--Impressed by his handling of the draft, the 49ers promoted Trent Baalke to vice president of player personnel. The job comes with a four-year contract and more responsibility but stops short of giving him general manager duties.

Team president Jed York, in announcing Baalke's promotion, said that coach Mike Singletary will retain final say over the 53-man roster. Some of the other lines of power are gray, which means some of the decision-making will be done by consensus.

Baalke acknowledged: "I think people get way too caught up in the term 'general manager' and what that states. I think from the draft, free agency, the final 53, the cuts, all that stuff, when you look at the broad scope, it's a team effort. Someone ultimately has to make the final decision, but there's a lot of thought put into it and a lot of other people involved in the decisions that are made."

For Baalke, it's been a rapid rise. The 49ers hired him as a Western Region scout in 2005 and promoted him to director of player personnel in 2008. Baalke was abruptly thrust into the spotlight just five weeks before the draft when the team parted ways with general manager Scot McCloughan.

The team liked the way Baalke handled the process, including his selections of tackle Anthony Davis and guard Mike Iupati with first-round picks.

"I thought there was great communication between the coaching staff and scouting staff, great internal communication," York said. "And I think it's going to continue."

So why not promote him to GM? While Baalke has an extensive scouting background, he's fairly new to the business side of budgeting and contract negotiations. Paraag Marathe, the team's vice president of football operations, remains the 49ers' lead negotiator, just as he was during McCloughan's reign.

Baalke inherits the same title McCloughan had for three seasons before being promoted to GM. York indicated Baalke could be on the same career path.

"Trent is a great talent evaluator. He's meticulous. He's very organized. He's great at putting a staff together," York said. "He's still learning some of the other pieces of the business that will ultimately put him as a general manager. I want to make sure that we don't put too much on Trent's plate as he continues to grow in his role."

--The 49ers' punt-return candidates struggled during spring workouts. Ted Ginn Jr., acquired in a trade with Miami, dropped so many during one ragged practice that coach Mike Singletary summoned him to the sideline for a long, one-way chat. Nothing is settled at that spot, but Singletary said: "Ball security is the number one thing. I don't care how fast he is. I don't care how many guys he can make miss. If he can catch the ball, that's step number one."

--In a technicality, receiver Isaac Bruce remains listed on the roster. But the 49ers see no scenario in which the veteran is back and have already given his No. 88 to new tight end Tony Curtis.

--Brandon Dale, a 15-year-old cancer patient from Santa Clara, visited 49ers practice wearing a Patrick Willis jersey. Willis sought the kid out when he came off the field and signed countless autographs for Brandon and his family.

--Left guard David Baas took some snaps at center during OTAs. With first-round pick Mike Iupati poised to take a starting job soon, the team wants to see what Baas looks like at another position.

QUOTE TO NOTE: "That'll be a blooper for sure." -- OT Anthony Davis after falling off his stool during a locker room interview.

#### STRATEGY AND PERSONNEL

FRANCHISE PLAYER: NT Aubrayo Franklin (tendered at \$7.003M).

TRANSITION PLAYER: None.

UNRESTRICTED FREE AGENTS

--CB Dre' Bly did a good job in extended playing time, but his return is questionable. He'll test the free-agent market.

--CB Walt Harris continues to rehab from surgery to repair a torn ACL in the offseason. He plans to return to action, but the 49ers are undecided about how he fits into the future.

--S Mark Roman saw significant playing time in 2009 as an extra defensive back but it might be time to get some young players on the field.

UNRESTRICTED FREE AGENTS (not tendered offers)

--RB Thomas Clayton (not tendered as ERFA) is returning from ACL surgery and he faces long odds to win a roster spot.

RESTRICTED FREE AGENTS (\*indicates restricted because of uncapped year): None.

EXCLUSIVE RIGHTS FREE AGENTS: None.

DRAFT CHOICES SIGNED

--WR Kyle Williams (6/206); 4 yrs, terms unknown.

--CB Phillip Adams (7/224); 4 yrs, terms unknown.

PLAYERS RE-SIGNED

--K Shane Andrus: Not tendered as ERFA; terms unknown.

--\*OG David Baas: RFA; (tendered at \$1.226M with third-round pick as compensation); \$1.226M/1 yr.

--\*LB Ahmad Brooks: RFA; (tendered at \$1.809M with second-round pick as compensation); \$4.225M/2 yrs, \$1.85M SB.

--OT Barry Sims: UFA; 1 yr, terms unknown.

--LB Matt Wilhelm: Potential UFA; terms unknown.

PLAYERS ACQUIRED

--QB David Carr: UFA Giants; \$6.25M/2 yrs, \$2M SB.

--TE Tony Curtis: FA; terms unknown.

--WR Ted Ginn Jr. (trade Dolphins).

--CB Will James: UFA Lions; 1 yr, terms unknown.

--LB Travis LaBoy: FA; \$1.6M/1 yr.

--\*CB Karl Paymah: Not tendered as RFA by Vikings; 1 yr, terms unknown.

PLAYERS LOST

--WR Arnaz Battle: UFA Steelers; \$3.975/3 yrs, \$975,000 SB.

--QB Shaun Hill (traded).

--\*CB Marcus Hudson: Not tendered as RFA/Panthers; \$630,000/1 yr.

- OT Tony Pashos: UFA Browns; \$10.3M/3 yrs, \$4.5M guaranteed.
- K Ricky Schmitt: Not tendered as ERFA/Titans; terms unknown.
- LB Jeff Ulbrich: UFA; retired.

## SEATTLE SEAHAWKS

### HOT TOPIC

Seeing new quarterback Charlie Whitehurst on the practice field executing the team's new offense for the first time confirmed what Seahawks' head coach Pete Carroll already believed -- he can play.

"I feel very comfortable with him with the offense," Carroll said. "He seems to have a sense for it. He's not lagging behind any of the learning at all. Charlie has a terrific arm and a nice release and all that kind of stuff. The physical stuff is there. Up to this point Charlie has done everything we've asked of him, and I think he's confident in what we're doing right now.

"But it's going to come down to playing time and to see how he does, and how he handles game situations."

That's the key issue for Seattle. The 27-year-old out of Clemson has never thrown a pass in a regular-season game in his four years in the league. And his preseason numbers are nothing to write home about.

In preseason action Whitehurst has thrown for 1,031 yards, completing 53 percent of his passes with five touchdowns and seven interceptions. He's also been sacked 13 times.

Carroll said that he expects Whitehurst to play a lot this upcoming preseason, and again reiterated one of the reasons the team made the trade for Whitehurst with San Diego is the Seahawks see him as a future starter.

"We think he can become a starter and be a heck of a football player," Carroll said. "We love the fact that he can move. He's got good feet and mobility. So there's nothing but upside at this point, but there are going to be challenges once he gets out there. But so far he's done very well."

That said, Carroll emphasized Matt Hasselbeck is still the starter.

"I'm real pleased with Matt being the quarterback right now and being in the lead position in it," Carroll said. "I have been from the start and I've never wavered on that. However, we're trying to make it as competitive as possible, and trying to push Matt to make him better and elevate Charlie's game as well. And that's the way we're doing it. So it will always be a competition in my mind."

Although San Diego's offense led by head coach Norv Turner has traditionally been more about pushing the ball downfield, and the West Coast offense is based on the short passing game, Whitehurst said both offenses have elements of the short and vertical passing game. Whitehurst also said the transition to Jeremy Bates' West Coast offensive system has not been as severe as expected.

"There's not that much of a difference," Whitehurst said. "You're still trying to put points on the board."

Whitehurst's physical tools are obvious. He's got an excellent arm and easily generates velocity on the ball. He has a quick release, and moves well inside the pocket. But there have been times when he appears to be thinking through his reads and does not process the offense as quickly as Hasselbeck.

That's to be expected. Hasselbeck already knows some of the terminology from his years playing in Mike Holmgren's version of the West Coast offense, and is ahead of the game in terms of knowing protection calls, blitz reads and just the overall philosophy of the offense.

However, Whitehurst said he's feeling more comfortable with the offense with each snap he takes in practice.

### PLAYER/PERSONNEL NOTES

--Seahawks' linebacker Leroy Hill still has not participated in the any of the team's offseason workouts, as head coach Pete Carroll and general manager John Schneider continue to excuse him from team activities while Hill deals with legal issues.

Asked if he expected Hill to be on the team this season, Carroll said: "I am hoping he will be. We need to see what that all means, but we'll figure it out when the time comes."

Hill appeared in Issaquah municipal court this week for a scheduled pretrial hearing in front of Judge N. Scott Stewart. The 27-year-old linebacker faces a misdemeanor charge of assault for his role in a domestic dispute at his Issaquah home on April 10.

Hill's attorney, Jon Fox, submitted a motion asking for a continuance, which was granted. Another pretrial hearing has been scheduled for June 11 at 9 a.m.

According to a representative of the municipal court, a victim's advocate asked on behalf of the victim that a no-contact order keeping Hill away from the victim be lifted. Hill's attorney

agreed with the request, but the prosecutor did not, and Stewart determined the order will remain in place.

Keeping close tabs on the situation thousands of miles away is Brian Fortner, solicitor-general for Douglas County, Ga.

Hill's run-in with the law in April was his second in a little more than a year. And it came just 10 days after he received a sentence of 12 months probation for misdemeanor drug possession for a Jan. 24, 2009, incident in which he was found asleep at the wheel by police in suburban Atlanta and marijuana was discovered in his car.

Fortner said Wednesday that if prosecutors in Issaquah move forward with their case against Hill, he will likely file a motion to revoke Hill's probation, which would include a hearing that would require Hill's presence in court in Douglas County.

"I would say the odds are now that we are probably going to move forward to remove his probation," Fortner said. "It doesn't matter who you are, you need to be on your best behavior. That's the reality."

Fortner said he will continue to monitor the situation, talking with prosecutors in Issaquah in the near future in order to help make his decision.

"We've been in contact with them and we are expecting to hear from them this week to help determine exactly what we are going to do," Fortner said. "It's disappointing that he got that charge that soon, so he's probably going to have to come here to Georgia to account for his behavior."

--The Seahawks signed veteran quarterback J.P. Losman this week to fill the team's third-string quarterback position.

Seahawks' general manager John Schneider said Losman had an unbelievable workout for the team, which eventually led to Seattle signing him to a one-year deal worth \$630,000.

Losman, 29, fits the mold of quarterback that Schneider likes -- a big, strong guy who can move. The 6-foot-3, 220 pounder out of Tulane was drafted in the first round as the No. 22 pick overall in the 2004 NFL draft by Buffalo.

However, Losman never translated his physical talents to wins on the field for the Bills, finishing with a 10-23 record in Buffalo. Losman spent 2009 with the Las Vegas Locomotives of the UFL before finishing the season with Oakland.

--With Seattle signing Losman the writing was on the wall for second-year quarterback Mike Teel. The third-string quarterback was waived from the team's active roster this week.

A sixth-round pick in 2009 out of Rutgers, Teel did not see any regular-season action for Seattle. But he completed 20-of-41 passes for 238 yards, with three touchdowns and an interception in preseason action for Seattle last year.

Teel said goodbye to Seahawks fans via twitter: "Thanks to everyone in Seattle. All of you have been great, I enjoyed my time here."

--So far, so good for Seattle's revamped offensive line. Seattle drafted rookie Russell Okung with the team's No. 6 overall pick to play left tackle after Walter Jones announced his retirement.

Sean Locklear has been moved from left tackle to his more natural right tackle position, while veteran Ben Hamilton has been brought in to mentor Okung and play left guard. Chris Spencer has been moved to his more natural center position from right guard, and second year player Max Unger is filling in at right guard after playing center the last three games in 2009.

"The right side has been looking great," said offensive coordinator Jeremy Bates. "Max has been looking strong and is doing everything we heard he could do. He's really into the game and loves football and wants to max out. Every day, he's very consistent."

"And Sean (Locklear) is back to his natural position at right tackle, which he has played extremely well in the past. He looks natural there. Watching him is great to see because he looks so strong. And then Chris Spencer at center is the captain of the line. He's working hard, has all the calls down and he's going to be running this line and leading them to exciting levels this season."

--Seahawks vice president of player personnel Ruston Webster is leaving to join the Tennessee Titans in a similar job.

It's a place Webster almost ended up three years ago, losing out to current Tennessee general manager Mike Reinfeldt for that position. Webster was hired by former president and general manager Tim Ruskell in 2006, and served as Seattle's interim general manager when the team fired Ruskell in December.

Webster was considered for the position, but once the team hired John Schneider, Webster retained his position of vice president of player personnel, while Will Lewis was elevated from director of pro personnel to vice president of pro personnel.

Along with Reinfeldt, Tennessee's director of pro scouting Lake Dawson also worked for the Seahawks.

The Seahawks also promoted Scott Fitterer to director of college scouting and Eric Stokes to assistant director.

QUOTE TO NOTE: "He came in and was extremely focused. He's on a mission -- he wants to be as good as he can be as fast as he can be. He came in and all he wanted to do was work. He wasn't into the spotlight of being a first-round draft pick or any of that. He's focused on learning the offense and understanding the technique and fundamentals and hopefully he can dominate in the future. He's got some time to go before he learns the offense but we're excited for him." -- Seahawks offensive coach Jeremy Bates on first round draft pick rookie offensive tackle Russell Okung.

#### STRATEGY AND PERSONNEL

FRANCHISE PLAYER: PK Olindo Mare (tendered at \$2.814M; signed tender March 9).

TRANSITION PLAYER: None.

#### UNRESTRICTED FREE AGENTS

--FB Justin Griffith is a crafty veteran and experienced blocker in the zone running scheme. The Seahawks could use him.

--LS Kevin Houser finished the season on injured reserve after suffering a collapsed lung against Tampa Bay, missing the final two games of the season.

--LB D.D. Lewis was a capable fill-in and special-teams player, but he likely will not be back.

--CB Ken Lucas was supplanted by Josh Wilson in the starting lineup in the second half of the season. He likely will not be back.

--OT Damion McIntosh played solidly when the team picked him up midseason. He'll likely leave in free agency because he's looking for a starting job.

--LS Jeff Robinson keeps rolling along, snapping when he gets the call.

#### UNRESTRICTED FREE AGENTS (not tendered offers)

--OL Brandon Frye (not tendered as RFA) showed some promise before going on injured reserve with a neck issue. He has some versatility with the ability to play guard and tackle.

RESTRICTED FREE AGENTS (\*indicates restricted because of uncapped year): None.

#### EXCLUSIVE RIGHTS FREE AGENTS

--LB David Hawthorne led the team in tackles with 117, starting 11 games for injured middle linebacker Lofa Tatupu.

#### PLAYERS RE-SIGNED

--K Olindo Mare: FFA; \$2.814M/1 yr.

--S Lawyer Milloy: UFA; terms unknown.

--WR Ben Obomanu: RFA; (tendered at \$1.101M with seventh-round pick as compensation); \$1.101M/1 yr.

--P Jon Ryan: Potential RFA; \$9.1M/6 yrs, SB unknown.

--\*OG Chris Spencer: RFA; (tendered at \$2.621M with first-round pick as compensation); \$2.621M/1 yr.

#### PLAYERS ACQUIRED

--TE Chris Baker: FA Patriots; \$4.75M/2 yrs, \$2.75M guaranteed.

--DE Chris Clemons (trade Eagles).

--DE/LB Ricky Foley: CFL FA; terms unknown.

--RB Quinton Ganther: Not tendered as ERFA by Redskins; terms unknown.

--G Ben Hamilton: UFA Broncos; terms unknown.

--DE Robert Henderson (trade Lions).

--QB J.P. Losman: Not tendered as RFA by Raiders; 1 yr, terms unknown.

--LS Patrick MacDonald: CFL FA; terms unknown.

--\*WR Ruvell Martin: Not tendered as RFA by Rams; 1 yr, terms unknown.

--LB Matt McCoy: Not tendered as RFA by Buccaneers; terms unknown.

--WR Sean Morey: UFA Cardinals; terms unknown.

--S Quinton Teal: Not tendered as RFA by Panthers; terms unknown.

--DT Kevin Vickerson (trade Titans).

--RB Leon Washington (trade Jets).

--RB LenDale White (trade Titans).

--QB Charlie Whitehurst (trade Chargers, new contract \$8M/2 yrs).

--WR Mike Williams: FA; terms unknown.

--WR Reggie Williams: FA; terms unknown.

#### PLAYERS LOST

--WR Nate Burleson: UFA Lions; \$25M/5 yrs, \$11M guaranteed.

--OG Trevor Canfield (released).

--S Deon Grant (released).

--OT Walter Jones (retired).

--DE Patrick Kerney (retired).

--\*LB Lance Laury: Not tendered as RFA/Jets; 1 yr, terms unknown.

--RB Xavier Omon (released).

--TE John Owens (released).

--DL Cory Redding: UFA Ravens; \$6M/2 yrs.  
--QB Mike Reilly (released).  
--OG Rob Sims (traded Lions).  
--\*DE Darryl Tapp (traded Eagles); had been tendered at \$1.176M with second-round pick as compensation, signed tender and traded.  
--QB Seneca Wallace (traded Browns).

#### ST. LOUIS RAMS

##### HOT TOPIC

He is a spectator at the team's OTAs, which started this week. But running back Steven Jackson has no doubt he'll be ready to go when the Rams begin training camp at the end of July.

Jackson had surgery on April 15 to repair a herniated disk in his back, an injury that affected the final stretch of the season as he continued to play despite the shooting nerve pain he was experiencing.

Asked if he felt immediate relief following the surgery, Jackson said, "Well, from the nerve pain, yes. Now what we are working on is strengthening my core and my back muscles. The back feels good. I'm staying in shape. I'm in the pool. Though I'm not on the field running and cutting, my wind is still here. I make sure I get in the pool. That allows me to keep my endurance up and allows me to stay in shape. I've adjusted (to not being on the football field) in that kind of way."

When the season ended, Jackson hoped that rest would solve the problem. It was a close call when it came to deciding to have surgery. In the end, it was his decision.

"The surgery really was up to me," Jackson explained. "I decided to have the surgery because I was still in the grey area on needing the surgery and not going with the surgery. I met with three specialists around the country. No one said definitely get the surgery, but looking at the season and being able to fully recover from the injury and being able to go for training camp, April was kind of the deadline so that I could have a full recovery in June and have six solid weeks to get ready for training camp, then training camp all the way to September 12 for the Arizona Cardinals."

Jackson was told the usual recovery time is six-to-eight weeks. Eight weeks would be in time for the start of the team's minicamp June 10, and the final OTA is June 17. But the Rams won't take any unnecessary chances.

Said coach Steve Spagnuolo, "Hopefully, he'll get some OTAs at the end, but we're not going to push anything. We're going to tread lightly. He's done great. He's rehabbing. He's doing everything you can do except be out here and do the football."

Looking back on the games he played with the injury, Jackson admitted that, "It was really tough. Going back and looking at the film, it was just certain moves and certain plays that I couldn't make that I could normally make. The pain, it was there. I can't say it wasn't there, it was there all the way through surgery. It's a different type of pain. Muscle pain I've been able to deal with, but nerve pain is something that just doesn't go away. And anybody that's dealt with back pain knows, it's a different monster."

And, when it's time to play football, Jackson said he won't be any different than he's always been.

"I play with reckless abandonment, so whenever the time comes for me to suit up, I'll be ready," he said. "I'll play football the only way I know how. I wouldn't be doing myself justice if I didn't play my game. What you get is what you get when you see me. I don't need to come in and feel timid about anything."

##### PLAYER/PERSONNEL NOTES

--Because of the shoulder injury he suffered last year at Oklahoma, questions about QB Sam Bradford's durability were frequent prior to the draft. Some of those questions appeared to be answered at the scouting combine in February when Bradford weighed in at 236 pounds, 13 more than his listed weight last season.

However, he was down to 228 when he weighed in at the rookie minicamp two weeks ago.

Asked if he plans to get back working out to get his weight higher, Bradford said, "I think the weight I'm at right now, probably between 226 and 230 is probably the weight I want to play at. I came in at 236 at the combine just to prove to people that if they felt I needed to be bigger, I could be bigger. Obviously, I'm going to work with our strength and conditioning staff here; work with the coaches. Whatever weight they want to be at, I'll be at."

--It was only the first day of OTAs, and while the question throughout the spring and summer will be whether rookie quarterback Sam Bradford is able to earn the starting job, when the first snaps were taken Tuesday, A.J. Feeley was the first-string signal-caller.

Asked about the first-team reps, coach Steve Spagnuolo said, "Right now, A.J. Feeley is getting them all, and then Sam and Keith (Null) kind of mix in with the 2s and 3s, and that won't change until ... somewhere in there we'll give both Sam and Keith some reps with the first group just to get them used to it, but right now, all the reps are evenly split. It's not like the 1s are getting more than the 2s or 3s. You want everyone to get a chance."

Running back Steven Jackson, who was a spectator as he rehabs after back surgery, noted the "definite new feel" with the new quarterbacks.

Said Jackson, "With A.J. one, you can see the leadership and you can see he has the offense down pat. He knows what he is doing, and he is going to be good for us and he's going to be good for Sam."

As for Bradford, Jackson said, "It's up to coach to make the call, but you can see why he was the No. 1 pick. You can see the arm strength, the accuracy and his intellect. He's really a smart guy. All the quarterbacks we have here, they all deserve to be here and it will be very interesting to see how things play out."

Bradford is glad to have someone with experience in the offense like Feely to lean on at times.

"He was very helpful today," Bradford said after his first practice with veterans on the field. "Obviously, he's very familiar with this offense and I'm just excited to watch him and Keith both practice because I know they're both familiar with this offense. They both have way more experience than I do, so to watch those guys and get a better feel for how this offense works and what it's supposed to look like; I think that's going to help me tremendously."

--During the conditioning part of the offseason program last week, left guard Jacob Bell experienced some knee issues while running. Bell had an MRI, and underwent arthroscopic surgery Tuesday to repair what Spagnuolo referred to as "loose bodies."

Said Spagnuolo, "He's had, I think, before he came here he had an issue with it, and it was more of a cleanup than anything else. But it was bothering him and we figured we'd do it now."

Spagnuolo said Bell should be fine in four-to-six weeks. That will likely knock him out of the OTAs, but he should be ready for the start of training camp at the end of July.

--WR Mardy Gilyard, the team's fourth-round pick, was robbed at gunpoint Monday night (May 18) outside a gas station near the University of Cincinnati campus. Gilyard had stopped for gas and snacks after returning from a fishing trip over the weekend with his brother and a friend.

By NFL rule, Gilyard can't be at the Rams' OTAs until after June 12 when Cincinnati has graduation exercises.

After the incident, Gilyard said, "I am OK. Just upset, you know, more than anything. It's part of living in the city. I know from my experiences in the city when it warms up -- as soon as it warms up -- the grimy cats in the city come out. I wasn't paying attention to my surroundings as much as I should have been."

"I'm just glad I get to go to training camp. I had that thing pointed at my head. I could have been paralyzed or brain dead or killed. I'm truly blessed to still be here talking to you."

The robbers got away with about \$300 in cash and two necklaces said to be worth \$500 each.

--Safety Oshiomogho Atogwe, an unsigned restricted free agent is not in attendance at the OTAs and continues to rehab his shoulder in California.

Asked where Atogwe is in his rehab and if there has been communication with him, Spagnuolo said, "I talked to O.J. -- it's been a little while now, I'm going to guess a month ago -- and he looked like he was doing good to me. He says he's doing great. The reports are he's doing really good, but I have not seen him in a while so I don't really know."

QUOTE TO NOTE: "Yes, because I'm healthy again. It will make me a better running back. And, two, I proved a lot to myself that ... I always kind of prided myself on playing with pain, but now I've taken my body to another level." -- RB Steven Jackson, saying he believes he will be a better player after fighting through a back injury last season.

#### STRATEGY AND PERSONNEL

MEDICAL WATCH: Players that did not participate in the first OTA because of injuries from last season were tight end Daniel Fells (knee), long snapper Chris Massey (knee) and guard Roger Allen (knee). ... Cornerback Bradley Fletcher, who suffered a season-ending knee injury in October, is limited to individual drills and has just started doing change-of-direction work. Spagnuolo is hopeful, but not sure if Fletcher will be ready for the starting of training camp. Also limited were wide receiver Keenan Burton (knee) and defensive end C.J. Ah You (knee).

FRANCHISE PLAYER: None.

TRANSITION PLAYER: None.

UNRESTRICTED FREE AGENTS

--S Clinton Hart was with the team in the last half of the season and didn't play much. Hart's recent arrest and the acquisition of Kevin Payne from the Bears likely ends any chance there was of him being re-signed.

--DE Leonard Little ended the season with a knee injury, but remains the team's best pass rusher when healthy. He canceled a scheduled visit to New Orleans in early March and it has been quiet since. Little is still deciding whether to continue playing, and the Rams remain interested.

--TE Randy McMichael was a huge disappointment as a receiver because of drops and won't be offered a new contract.

UNRESTRICTED FREE AGENTS (not tendered offers)

--S Eric Basse (not tendered as RFA) missed the 2009 season because of a knee injury.

--\*RB Samkon Gado (not tendered as RFA) is versatile and solid on special teams.

--LS Ryan Neill (not tendered as RFA) did a good job as Chris Massey's replacement, but is now looking elsewhere after Massey was re-signed.

RESTRICTED FREE AGENTS (\*indicates restricted because of uncapped year)

--\*S Oshiomogho Atoogwe (tendered at \$1.226M with no compensation) was the franchise player last season, but the low tender gave him the chance to test the market. With the passing of April 15, his exclusive rights revert to the Rams, but the team must decide by June 1 whether to tender him at \$6.976 million or have him become an unrestricted free agent. He has not been participating in the team's offseason conditioning program.

EXCLUSIVE RIGHTS FREE AGENTS

--DE C.J. Ah You (tendered at \$395,000) missed the second half of the season with a knee injury, but prior to that he was contributing in the line rotation and on special teams.

--LB Larry Grant (tendered at \$470,000) didn't progress as coaches hoped, but he did contribute on special teams.

--WR Jordan Kent (tendered at \$470,000) quickly became one of the team's best special-teams players in coverage.

--OT Ryan McKee (tendered at \$395,000) joined the team late in the season, but could compete at right tackle.

--S David Roach (tendered at \$395,000) was decent on special teams, but not much else. Will compete for a roster spot again.

PLAYERS RE-SIGNED

--\*DE Victor Adeyanju: RFA; (tendered at \$1.176M with fourth-round pick as compensation); \$1.176M/1 yr.

--CB Quincy Butler: ERFA; \$470,000/1 yr.

--S Craig Dahl: RFA (had been tendered at \$1.01M with no compensation); \$3.6M/3 yrs, \$755,000 RB 2010.

--RB Kenneth Darby: ERFA; \$470,000/1 yr.

--TE Daniel Fells: Not tendered as RFA; \$770,000/1 yr.

--\*DT Gary Gibson: Not tendered as RFA; 1 yr, terms unknown.

--DE James Hall: UFA; \$8.25M/3 yrs, \$1.895M RB 2010.

--LS Chris Massey: UFA; \$4.4M/4 yrs, \$250,000 RB 2010/\$500,000 RB 2011.

--NT Clifton Ryan: RFA; (tendered at \$1.684M with second-round pick as compensation); \$1.684M/1 yr.

--\*OG Mark Setterstrom: Not tendered as RFA; \$597,500/1 yr, \$52,500 RB.

--LB David Vobora: ERFA; \$470,000/1 yr.

PLAYERS ACQUIRED

--LB Bobby Carpenter (trade Cowboys).

--LB Na'il Diggs: FA Panthers; \$2.5M/2 yrs.

--\*CB Kevin Dockery: Not tendered as RFA by Giants; \$630,000/1 yr.

--QB A.J. Feeley: UFA Panthers; \$6M/2 yrs, \$2.25M RB 2010/\$500,000 RB 2011.

--C Hank Fraley: FA Browns; \$3.055M/3 yrs, \$200,000 RB 2010.

--TE Darcy Johnson: Not tendered as RFA by Giants; \$470,000/1 yr.

--S Kevin Payne (trade Bears).

--DT Fred Robbins: UFA Giants; \$11.25M/3 yrs, \$3.395M RB 2010.

PLAYERS LOST

--\*OT Alex Barron (traded Cowboys); had been tendered at \$2.73M with second-round pick as compensation).

--QB Kyle Boller: UFA Raiders; terms unknown.

--QB Marc Bulger (released).

--DT Adam Carriker (traded Redskins).

--LB Paris Lenon: UFA Cardinals; 3 yrs, terms unknown.

--\*WR Ruvell Martin: Not tendered as RFA/Seahawks; 1 yr, terms unknown.

--DT LaJuan Ramsey (released).

--CB Jonathan Wade: Not tendered as RFA/Lions; terms unknown.

## TAMPA BAY BUCCANEERS

## HOT TOPIC

This could be the final season for Ronde Barber.

The 35-year-old cornerback is entering his 14th season and is in the final year of his contract with the Bucs.

"Very few guys get to go into Mark Dominik's office or Raheem Morris' office and say, 'Hey buddy, I'm done. I've had enough,'" Barber said Tuesday. "Most guys get it the other way. They don't think you can play anymore. But that's what it would be for me, to look those guys in the eyes, and call the Glazers and say, 'Thanks for the opportunity, it's been fun.' I don't know when that is. Maybe it will be at the end of this year."

The five-time Pro Bowler is coming off a season in which he failed to record an interception for the first time since his rookie year. But Barber says the tape indicates he played well in 2009, despite the Bucs' struggles on defense until coach Raheem Morris took over the play-calling duties from defensive coordinator Jim Bates the final six games of the season.

Barber said he isn't certain when he will know the right time to step away, but he knows he's not going to play beyond the point where he can no longer maintain the standard he's established.

"For me, I have no idea what it will be, but I'll know," Barber said. "You all won't know. It won't be to the point where you all are sitting up in the press box and you say, 'God, that dude can't play anymore.' I promise you it won't be that."

Barber, the Bucs career interception leader, eventually will give away to another cornerback. The Bucs are hopeful Vanderbilt rookie Myron Lewis will one day take his place. Morris has raised the prospect of Barber playing another five years as the slot defender during nickel pass situations.

Certainly, Barber appears in good shape. He says every year he changes up his training regimen in the off-season. This year, he trained with his wife, Claudia, for biathlons.

But when he was a third-round pick out of Virginia in 1997, the Bucs lone survivor from their Super Bowl XXXVII victory never figured to be playing 14 NFL seasons.

"I definitely didn't set out (to play) this long," Barber said. "When I started, I was like, 'Can I get three years without them cutting me?' Can I get three years in? I tell a lot of our guys this. ? You can't start out looking to play 14 years. That's impossible. You don't know how your injury situation is going to go, you damn sure don't know how your contract situation is going to go, what the market is going to tell you you're worth. You just keep grinding day to day. My insight is that it's a grind. You work hard to make it look easy. Me sitting here 14 years in, everybody is like, 'How do you play 14 years?' Does it look like I'm playing 14 years? No, you just grind away to make it look easy. Fourteen years later, you're still here."

## PLAYER/PERSONNEL NOTES

--The Bucs plan to limit the offseason workload for tight end Kellen Winslow as he recovers from a fifth surgery on his right knee.

The minor arthroscopic procedure was necessary to repair some scar tissue from previous surgeries and should not prevent him from participating in training camp, according to general manager Mark Dominik. Winslow is not participating in voluntary workouts this week.

Bucs guard Davin Joseph will also miss several Organized Team Activities recovering from arthroscopic knee surgery.

"Like Davin and dozens of players throughout the league, Kellen did have a procedure on his knee to clean up some things," Dominik said. "In light of the fact that he is an established veteran, we plan to limit him during the OTA's and off-season work."

--Michael Clayton admits the obvious -- his job is in jeopardy after the Bucs drafted two receivers.

Clayton acknowledged Monday that the Bucs' drafting of two receivers and his large contract may put him in jeopardy of making the team.

After beginning Organized Team Activities as one of the club's starting receivers, he vowed to put in the work and mentor young players as long as the Bucs will have him.

"Business-wise, it could be," Clayton said when asked if he was on the bubble. "But I know regardless of what happens, I'll be on a team next year."

After signing a five-year contract worth nearly \$26-million last year, Clayton had his worst season as a pro in 2009, catching 16 passes for 230 yards and one touchdown.

He is expected to fall further down the depth chart after the Bucs used a second round pick on Illinois receiver Arrelious Benn and a fourth-rounder on Syracuse receiver Mike Williams. The team also traded for Philadelphia receiver Reggie Brown. Sammie Stroughter (31) and Maurice Stovall (24) were more productive than Clayton last season.

"Every year it's been about work," Clayton said. "I've been in a lot of positions where I've had to climb from the bottom of the totem pole. That's no different from this year. I believe in my talents and what I can do to help this football team. I'm here as a mentor, as a leader and I'm going to want to be the starter."

Clayton indicated a lot of factors conspired to limit his numbers in 2009, including three starting quarterbacks and a change of offensive coordinators when Jeff Jagodzinski was fired 10 days before the start of the regular season.

"We had a lot of things going on last year," Clayton said "I would like to keep last year and let it be last year. We had a young quarterback come in half of the season who didn't get any reps. We had an offensive coordinator who was fired and we were going week-by-week. The positive things we take from last year is that everybody still continued to work. We didn't give up, regardless of the situation."

Offensive coordinator Greg Olson said Clayton looked good and caught the ball well in practice again Monday. But as Olson noted, Clayton always plays like a No. 1 receiver in the offseason.

"Mike always looks good this time of year," Olson said. "We said it today, and he has. Every year, you're going to come out of the spring saying, 'Mike is the No. 1.' That's why he's going to be difficult to beat out."

"Who knows? You'd like to think it's not a confidence issue because you talk to Mike and he's a very confident person, a very confident player. But he makes all the catches out here. We just got done watching a training cut-up of our plays and these cut-ups go back four or five years ago. And here's Mike making a great catch ... so we know that it's in him. And he's proven he can do it. He's just got to do it on a more consistent basis. For whatever reason, he's struggled a little bit."

Re-signing Clayton could prove to be one of the worst decisions by general manager Mark Dominik. But the Bucs' options now are limited. They can cut their losses or allow Clayton to compete and hope he doesn't suffer a season-ending injury. Most likely, Clayton will get the Chris Simms treatment and linger until the final roster cut. Under that scenario, Clayton will work off some of the \$10-million guaranteed while the Bucs wait for another team to suffer a rash of injuries at the receiver position.

What was Clayton's reaction to the Bucs' selecting Benn and Williams?

"Finally, we drafted a receiver," Clayton said. "I've been here a long time and we haven't seen many guys drafted at receiver. I'm seven years in and at some point we've got to get the next guys in to be the young faces of this football team. I was fortunate to sign a new deal and I'm going to be here as long as they keep me. The work habits won't change. It's my job to make sure those guys are fully prepared and the best man is going to play."

--RB Derrick Ward did not produce much in 2009 after signing a 4-year, \$17 million deal as a free agent with the Giants. He averaged under 4 yards per carry. He also would not talk to the media after the first few weeks.

Ward says he's got a much better approach for 2010.

"I was just taken aback by the way we were losing," Ward said. "Nobody's used to losing. I came from New York where we were consistent winners every year. So I just had to take a step back and re-evaluate myself. This year, I'm coming back healthier and stronger than ever."

--Eagles free agent S Sean Jones will battle Sabby Piscitelli for the starting strong safety job. Look for Jones to win it.

"I want that type of player on my team," said defensive backs coach Jimmy Lake.

QUOTE TO NOTE: "I got to respect how he came to work today. He played hard, he worked hard and he went out there and competed with the young guys. He'll continue to do that and he's got to get better." -- Bucs coach Raheem Morris on Michael Clayton.

#### STRATEGY AND PERSONNEL

MEDICAL WATCH: TE Kellen Winslow and OG Davin Joseph are recovering from arthroscopic knee surgery. Winslow will be limited most of the off-season. Joseph could return in a few weeks.

FRANCHISE PLAYER: None.

TRANSITION PLAYER: None.

UNRESTRICTED FREE AGENTS

--S Jermaine Phillips broke his hand and finished the year on injured reserve.

UNRESTRICTED FREE AGENTS (not tendered offers)

--FB Byron Storer (not tendered as RFA) spent the year rehabbing his knee. He could be done.

--LB Rod Wilson (not tendered as RFA) is a special-teams player and backup middle linebacker.

RESTRICTED FREE AGENTS (\*indicates restricted because of uncapped year)

--\*OT Donald Penn (tendered at \$3.168M with first- and third-round picks as compensation) is a very capable left tackle and did his best the first weeks of 2009. But then he seemed to shut it down and gained weight.

EXCLUSIVE RIGHTS FREE AGENTS: None.

PLAYERS RE-SIGNED

--WR Mark Bradley: RFA; (tendered at \$1.809M with second-round pick as compensation); \$1.809M/1 yr.

--LB Angelo Crowell: UFA; 1 yr, terms unknown.

--CB Elbert Mack; terms unknown.

--\*LB Barrett Ruud: RFA; (tendered at \$3.268M with first- and third-round picks as compensation)\$3.268M/1 yr.  
 --RB/KR Clifton Smith: ERFA; terms unknown.  
 --\*WR Maurice Stovall: RFA; (tendered at \$1.176M with third-round pick as compensation); \$1.176M/1 yr.  
 --\*OT Jeremy Trueblood: RFA; (tendered at \$1.759M with second-round pick as compensation); \$1.759M/1 yr.  
 --\*RB Cadillac Williams: RFA; (tendered at \$2.299M with first-round pick as compensation); \$2.299M/1 yr.

## PLAYERS ACQUIRED

--\*LB Jon Alston: Not tendered as RFA by Raiders; terms unknown.  
 --WR Reggie Brown (trade Eagles).  
 --S Sean Jones: UFA Eagles; terms unknown.

## PLAYERS LOST

--S Will Allen: UFA Steelers; \$4.4M/3 yrs, \$950,000 SB.  
 --FB B.J. Askew (released).  
 --P Josh Bidwell (released).  
 --WR Antonio Bryant: UFA Bengals; \$28M/4 yrs.  
 --WR Brian Clark: Not tendered as RFA/Lions; 1 yr, terms unknown.  
 --CB Torrie Cox (released).  
 --DT Chris Hovan (released).  
 --P Dirk Johnson (released).  
 --QB Byron Leftwich (traded Steelers).  
 --LB Matt McCoy: Not tendered as RFA/Seahawks; terms unknown.  
 --OG Shawn Murphy (released).  
 --P Sam Paulescu (released).  
 --OG Arron Sears (released).  
 --DE Jimmy Wilkerson: UFA Saints; terms unknown.

## TENNESSEE TITANS

## HOT TOPIC

The Tennessee Titans made a rare front office addition last week when they hired former Seattle Seahawks vice president of player personnel Ruston Webster in the same capacity.

Webster had been interviewed a couple of times before by the Titans, including when the team hired Mike Reinfeldt as general manager in 2007. Webster's resume includes four years with the Seahawks and prior to that 18 years in the Tampa Bay Buccaneers' organization.

"When I joined the Titans organization, we were able to fill a number of roles in the pro and college departments, but we didn't fill the player personnel spot at the time," Reinfeldt said. "I wanted the right person to fill that role and wanted to see how the organization would function in the various departments before making this hire. I have a great deal of respect for Ruston as a football guy and as a person. He will focus on the college draft, but will assist in the other areas of the personnel department as well."

Webster continues the pipeline from Seattle to Nashville, joining Reinfeldt and director of pro personnel Lake Dawson as former Seahawks front office members to join the Titans' staff.

In Reinfeldt's statement, he indicated that Webster's primary responsibilities would come in overseeing the college draft and evaluation side of things. However, judging from the results, the Titans probably need more help in evaluating the pro players they have brought in to fill holes over the years.

Certainly, the college side had has some missteps (Andre Woolfolk, Chris Henry, Paul Williams, Pacman Jones), but once Keith Bulluck finds a landing spot in Tennessee or elsewhere, it will mean that every Titans first-round pick -- with the exception of Woolfolk in 2003 -- is still on an NFL roster somewhere.

Additionally, Jones, Woolfolk and Henry -- the Titans' biggest busts over the past decade -- were selected in spite of some loud objections from the scouting department.

The staff -- spearheaded by venerable C.O. Brocato, scouting coordinator Blake Beddingfield and veteran hand Cole Proctor -- have helped Tennessee build a decent foundation for two different runs since the team relocated from Houston.

The Titans not only gambled and won in the first round with Chris Johnson, who some teams regarded as only a third-down back, and others, but have had their share of middle and late-round hits, including starters like Cortland Finnegan, Bo Scaife, David Stewart and Stephen Tulloch.

It is on the pro side where Tennessee has seemingly had less of a success rate lately. While Justin Gage, Nick Harper and Alge Crumpler were solid pickups, there have been a few head-

scratching moves as well, such as trading for Bryce Fisher and the signings of players like Kelly Herndon, Ryan Fowler and DeMarcus Faggins that didn't work out as planned.

Faggins was the most interesting of those signings, as he didn't even make the roster out of training camp, when the Titans could have had Rod Hood instead, but didn't make a move to sign him until an injury to Harper and an 0-5 start. Hood wound up with three interceptions as a fill-in for Harper and as soon as he recovers from groin surgery projects in the mix as a contender for the opening starting cornerback spot opposite Finnegan.

As for how much power Webster ultimately wields in the front office and in what capacity, stay tuned.

#### PLAYER/PERSONNEL NOTES

--Michael Griffin's 2009 season was one he'd like to forget.

It was so bad that when he turns on the film from last season and sees a No. 33 out there for the Tennessee Titans, he wonders just who that was.

Griffin was a Pro Bowl selection in 2008 and had seven interceptions, but his play tailed off so badly last year, thanks to personal and injury issues, that a website called ProFootballFocus.com rated him the worst safety in the NFL last year.

First, there was an off-field family issue the free safety dealt with at the start of the season. Then, injuries took their toll, including a torn labrum in his shoulder that required surgery, as well as problems with his ankle and stingers.

Still, Griffin owned up to the fact that 2009 did not go well for him.

"You've just got to critique yourself and be very honest. Last year, I played very poorly, and I've just got to turn things around and improve and hopefully help this team out," Griffin said.

Griffin was recently cleared from the shoulder surgery to return to OTA work and looks back on last season reflectively.

"I know that's not me. All my life, I've been a good player, and last year, I looked like a player that shouldn't even be in the NFL," Griffin said. "You just look back, and watch film from last year. You look back and say, 'That wasn't me.'"

The fact that the Titans started off 0-6 last year, ruining any chance of returning to the playoffs, made things even worse for the 2007 first-round pick.

"The low point? It had to be 0-6. I know this team is not a losing team, and this team is a great team. That had to be the lowest point," Griffin said. "That 0-6, that right there was very frustrating coming to work every day.

"You're having off the field issues, mental issues and you come here and it's like a sad place too, being 0-6. That was a tough situation. There's like nowhere you can go to find a happy place."

Griffin said friends and coaches have offered advice he is willing to listen to regarding his focus on the field.

"I've been talking to a lot of friends and coaches, and you've just got to leave all that stuff at home when you come to this place," Griffin said. "There's a lot of people that would love to be here and play this game for a living."

Titans coach Jeff Fisher also believes Griffin will bounce back to his former self this season.

"He's been very consistent. He had to rehab his shoulder and he did. He got through. He just got cleared, and he's determined to have a good solid year," Fisher said.

--The Titans would love for tight end Jared Cook to take a big step forward this season, and with Bo Scaife absent from off-season work, even after signing his \$4.9 million tender, Cook is getting the chance to do just that.

"With Bo gone you've got to get all the reps you can get, which is good for me and just learn everything because you can never learn enough," Cook said. "It's good to get the game-like situations and get as many reps as you can."

The Titans traded their 2010 second-round pick to move back into the third round last year to choose Cook. It looked like a great move last year early on, but after an ankle injury against Cleveland late in preseason, Cook disappeared with just nine receptions all season.

The Titans need Cook to justify that the trade by taking on a bigger role, with or without Scaife on the field.

"He's in the position now, especially with Bo not here, where he has to show what he can do. This is invaluable to him," tight ends coach John Zernhelt said. "It gives him a chance to get a ton more reps and really in his own eyes to see the role that he will play on our football team."

Even when Scaife returns, it appears the Titans are going out of their way to incorporate Cook into the offense more this year.

--Titans coach Jeff Fisher didn't rule out Keith Bulluck coming back to the team and reclaiming his old starting outside linebacker role. But Fisher probably knew he was hedging his bet when he spoke. That's because Bulluck just began running about a week or so ago in his rehab from a torn ACL, and would be iffy at best to be ready for the start of the 2010 season.

Bulluck, an unrestricted free agent, has said he wants to wait until he is healthier before fielding offers with any team. He spent the first 10 years of his career in Tennessee, and had started 127 straight games until injuring his knee last December.

"Hypothetically, if Keith was fine for training camp and ready to play in the preseason games, and was 100 percent, and we were able to get him under contract, then, yes, he's a starter," Fisher said. "But that's the best-case scenario, but it's not going to be a realistic scenario just from a timing standpoint as he deals with the ACL."

Meanwhile, the Titans still have David Thornton under contract, but he has been nowhere to be found during OTAs as he rehabs from a torn pectoral in his shoulder.

Asked if Thornton would be a starter, Fisher tap-danced again.

"He's still a ways away. Right now, he's not able to practice, so, no," he said.

--Titans rookies practiced for the first time with their veteran teammates on May 18, and the getting-to-know-you process was an interesting one.

Linebacker Rennie Curran, a rookie third-rounder from Georgia, took time after practice to introduce himself to Vince Young, and addressed Young as "sir," even though the quarterback is only six years older than Curran, 21.

"That was my first time meeting Vince. I've seen him on TV all the time. That's part of what's cool about this job is you get to play with guys you grew up watching as a kid," Curran explained.

Curran already has made friends with one veteran, fellow Georgia Bulldog alum Will Witherspoon, a fellow linebacker.

"He's my translator. He's like my big brother, and that's a good situation to be in," Curran said.

--The apple apparently doesn't fall far from the tree. Kevin Matthews, son of Bruce Matthews, not only is an offensive lineman, but in Tuesday's special teams work, Matthews was working as a long snapper as well. A couple of snaps sailed high for the undrafted rookie.

"I've got to get his technique down. I was throwing it a little high today. If you want to play in the NFL, you've got to be able to do a whole lot. I did it in high school, and backed up for punts and did field goals my senior year," Matthews said. "We worked at it all the time. He's a lot better at it than I am."

He said his father, a Hall of Famer who is now an assistant coach with the Houston Texans, is still quite the long snapper even at age 48.

"He can still do it right now even though he's getting old and decrepit. He can still sling it back there and hurt your hands," Kevin Matthews said.

--RB Dominique Lindsay (torn Achilles) underwent surgery and the club will reach an injury settlement with the undrafted rookie.

QUOTE TO NOTE: "He's giving me some more reads and things like that. I'm happy about that. That's just to show I've been paying attention and my preparation is getting better and better. I want to keep that up. ... I don't want him screaming at me or hollering at me and things like that." -- Titans' quarterback Vince Young on offensive coordinator Mike Heimerdinger opening up the playbook.

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#### STRATEGY AND PERSONNEL

The Titans are still without three holdouts during OTAs, and the drop-off at a couple of spots is noticeable. It's not second-year RB Javon Ringer's fault, as he has the potential to be a productive player, but when you have to fill in for Chris Johnson, that is a major chore.

Johnson is angling for a new contract after rushing for 2,006 yards a year ago, even though his current deal has three years to run, and the Titans' policy is not to redo deals with more than one year remaining.

At linebacker, Stephen Tulloch, a restricted free agent, has yet to sign his tender, and Colin Allred is holding his spot for him. Allred struggled on the outside when he had to fill in for injured Keith Bulluck late in the year.

At tight end, Jared Cook is getting Bo Scaife's share of the reps, and the Titans wouldn't mind if he showed enough to keep a spot in the lineup even when Scaife reports.

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MEDICAL WATCH: CB Rod Hood (groin) is still not participating in OTA work after undergoing surgery for a sports hernia; DT Jason Jones (shoulder) might not be ready until training camp; LB David Thornton (shoulder) still has not returned from surgery and his future is up in the air. LB Pago Togafau (foot) is out after breaking a bone in his foot. DE Derrick Morgan, the Titans' first-round pick, tweaked his hamstring and has yet to work with the veterans in OTAs. WR Mark Jones (hamstring) is still limited. DT Tony Brown (knee) has not yet been cleared to return to team work.

FRANCHISE PLAYER: None

TRANSITION PLAYER: None.

## UNRESTRICTED FREE AGENTS

--LB Keith Bulluck's future is uncertain, as the Titans are saying only that they would like to retain him but are opening no dialogue with his agent. Further complicating the situation is Bulluck's torn ACL, the first significant injury of his 10-year career.

--CB Nick Harper is 35, and injuries and age have taken a toll. A stand-up guy and solid pro, Harper likely won't be back with the Titans and might be at the end of the line career-wise.

--S Kevin Kaesviharn, picked up after injuries hit the Titans' secondary, did a decent job as a backup and on special teams, but probably won't return.

--DE Jevon Kearse's October benching was a sure sign that Kearse probably won't be back as a Titan. Although he says he wants to play next season, it might be tough to find a taker.

--C Kevin Mawae is now 39 and wants to stay in Tennessee. But with Leroy Harris waiting in the wings, the question is whether the Titans retain Mawae after Eugene Amano was re-signed.

## RESTRICTED FREE AGENTS (\*indicates restricted because of uncapped year)

--\*LB Stephen Tulloch (tendered at \$2.521M with first-round pick as compensation) needs to be reupped soon, as he is the only current starter under 30 among the linebackers.

EXCLUSIVE RIGHTS FREE AGENTS: None.

## PLAYERS RE-SIGNED

--LB Colin Allred: Potential ERFA; terms unknown.

--G Eugene Amano: Potential UFA; \$25.7M/5 yrs, \$10.337M guaranteed (\$7.25M SB/\$3.087 base guarantee '10).

--LS Ken Amato: potential UFA; 2 yrs, terms unknown.

--\*DE Dave Ball: RFA; (tendered at \$1.809M with second-round pick as compensation); \$1.809M/1 yr.

--\*DT Tony Brown; RFA; (tendered at \$2.621M with first-round pick as compensation); 3 yrs, terms unknown.

--CB Rod Hood: UFA; 1 yr, terms unknown.

--S Donnie Nickey: Potential UFA; \$755,000/1 yr.

--G/T Mike Otto: Potential ERFA; terms unknown.

--\*TE Bo Scaife: RFA; (tendered at \$4.906M with first-round pick as compensation); \$4.906M guaranteed/1 yr.

## PLAYERS ACQUIRED

--DE Jason Babin: UFA Eagles; \$1M/1 yr (had individually negotiated right of first refusal/Eagles did not match).

--CB Tye Hill: FA Falcons; 1 yr, terms unknown.

--P/K Ricky Schmitt: Not tendered as ERFA by 49ers; terms unknown.

--QB Chris Simms: FA Broncos; 1 yr, terms unknown.

--LB Pago Togafau: Waivers Cardinals.

--LB Will Witherspoon: FA Eagles; \$11M/3 yrs, \$5M guaranteed.

## PLAYERS LOST

--TE Alge Crumpler: UFA Patriots; \$4.8M/2 yrs, \$1M SB.

--P Craig Hentrich: UFA; retired.

--DE Kyle Vanden Bosch: UFA Lions; \$26M/4 yrs.

--\*DT Kevin Vickerson (traded Seahawks), had been re-signed as RFA; (tendered at \$1.759M with second-round pick as compensation); \$1.759M/1 yr.

--\*RB LenDale White (traded Seahawks), had been re-signed as RFA; (tendered at \$1.176M with second-round pick as compensation); \$1.176M/1 yr.

## WASHINGTON REDSKINS

## HOT TOPIC

Dan Snyder hasn't been very visible since he hired coach Mike Shanahan in January to replace Jim Zorn, who was 12-20 the past two seasons. But the Redskins' owner, who had replaced longtime front office boss Vinny Cerrato with general manager Bruce Allen in December, said he really isn't any less involved than he had been during his first 10-1/2 years in command.

"The approach has always been a little bit more hands-off than probably written about or reported about," Snyder said on May 15 at the unveiling of a youth football field in the District that the Redskins' Foundation paid to have renovated. "But you need to ask Bruce about my involvement with him and Mike."

Whether the owner's involvement has changed or not, he didn't dispute that the atmosphere has changed at Redskins Park where the host team lost 18 of its past 24 games.

"We had two rough years," Snyder said. "This feels really like we're going in the right direction. (We're) really excited about it. I'm having a lot of fun. These guys are incredible and really fun to work with."

That also goes for six-time Pro Bowl quarterback Donovan McNabb whom the Redskins acquired from the NFC East rival Philadelphia Eagles on April 4.

"You can feel the energy, the excitement out of Mike and Bruce and now adding Donovan really gets us going," he said. "We have a lot of confidence -- we've restored our confidence."

Snyder said the Redskins had that confidence under Hall of Fame coach Joe Gibbs from 2004-07.

"I feel like we got close a few times (making the playoffs under Gibbs in 2005 and 2007)," Snyder said. "I feel good about those days. And then we had a couple of bad years. Now we got to get those behind us and move on, and that's what we're doing. Obviously, the pedigree and the success of the people that I've brought in, you could tell we're going in the right direction. We're really excited about it."

That we doesn't include Albert Haynesworth, the defensive tackle upon whom Snyder bestowed a seven-year, \$100 million contract in 2009 that included \$41 million guaranteed. Even though Hayesworth has already received \$32 million from the Redskins, he has skipped the entire "voluntary" offseason because he doesn't want to play nose tackle in new coordinator Jim Haslett's 3-4 defensive scheme.

"I'm disappointed he's not here, absolutely," Snyder said of Haynesworth. "We're expecting our players to lead by example and ... to understand that they're Redskins and they need to be here."

Haynesworth is due to rejoin the team for the mandatory minicamp June 16-18, but the relationship between the Redskins and their highest-paid player couldn't be much worse given that he has spurned requests to report from Shanahan, McNabb and others in the organization.

#### PLAYER/PERSONNEL NOTES

--WR Santana Moss, according to the Washington Post and following a report in the Buffalo News first naming him, was one of several professional athletes who received "treatment" from a Canadian doctor arrested last September for smuggling and distributing HGH. The News said Moss isn't likely to face legal ramifications. He declined to discuss matters unrelated to football Wednesday.

"I'll talk about football. I don't know about nothing else," Moss said in the Post. "I ain't got nothing to do with nothing that ain't about me."

Moss, who is sitting out much of the Redskins' offseason work so that he can rehabilitate his left knee after minor surgery, said he wouldn't comment on whether he had ever met or been treated by the doctor.

"I'm telling you right now, I'm talking about football," Moss said. "You talk about football. Anything else out of that, no."

--The big news at Redskins Park during the May 19 organized team activities was the story that had broken the previous day that a member of the 2009 Redskins had scheduled a meeting with a Canadian doctor who has been charged with illegally bringing human growth hormone into the United States.

Human growth hormone (HGH) is banned by the NFL.

"I've heard so many different reports and there are so many rumors and speculation, (we'll let) the due process take care of itself and if there's any validity in those statements, we'll react accordingly," said coach Mike Shanahan, who wasn't with the Redskins last year. "Those things do happen. That's why the NFL's been on top of everything. To me, the competitive edge that people have had before ... you go back 10, 15, 20 years there are a lot of stories. If there's any validity to it, (league officials will) contact me, they'll contact the organization."

Defensive end Phillip Daniels, the senior Redskin at 37, is also a world-class power-lifter who's very strict about what he puts in his body.

"There's no excuse," Daniels said. "Every guy knows you can't use that. We got the NFL hotline. Guys have me call it sometimes for them. I call it all the time to check on stuff I'm taking to make sure it's legal. You got avenues that you can go to get information. Guys that use HGH, they know what they're doing. For all the other supplements, just call. (But) the hotline really don't help you a whole lot because they say it could still be contamination. I wish there was something just set in stone where they tell you this product is good, you can use it and go from there. When you call the hotline, they tell you you're responsible for what you put in your body. I try to use reliable companies, but who knows? A lot of work needs to be done."

But neither Daniels nor linebacker Andre Carter will turn their backs on a teammate.

"If he did or didn't make that mistake, he's still family," Carter said.

"We're going to support him and keep going," Daniels said. "Nobody knows the truth but him and the doctor. And nobody knows which one of them is gonna be telling the truth. He's my teammate, whoever it is. I don't know. I hope it never comes out. I'll be his teammate because he needs us, he needs people around that can influence him the right way. I'm not going to react any different. I'll be a friend, a teammate. I'll talk to him and hopefully we can get this thing ironed out and move on. Ain't no need dwelling on it."

In fact, Daniels would prefer not to know if a teammate took HGH.

"Guys talk about it in the locker room," Daniels said. "They want to know who it is, but nobody's gonna come forward until the details come out. I hope the details don't come out. I don't want to know to tell you the truth. I don't want to have to look at my partner and say 'You were doing that illegally all this time. Dude, you were using HGH and getting an upper hand on everybody.' Who knows if it helped him or hurt him?"

Daniels has been anti-steroids since he did a report on the subject in high school.

"I was one of those guys that never wanted to use anything crazy," Daniels said. "I remember going to a gym in my hometown when I first came out of high school and this guy approached me about steroids. I said 'Dude, no thanks because I know the history of it. I know what it does to the body.' It might do you good when you're lifting and playing but when ... you ain't doing that no more, you break down. I know guys with hip problems because they used that stuff, guys in my hometown their bodies are breaking down, they don't look the same. I tell guys stay away from that stuff. You do your homework and you'll realize you don't want to use that."

--Mike Shanahan and Bruce Allen have basically added two kinds of players this offseason: those who will be at least 30 come November (Donovan McNabb, Rex Grossman, Larry Johnson, Willie Parker, Joey Galloway, Artis Hicks, Sean Ryan, Maake Kemoeatu, Phillip Buchanon, Josh Bidwell) and those who play the defensive line (Kemoeatu, Adam Carriker, Greg Peterson, Anthony Bryant, Darrion Scott).

The Redskins' braintrust hit both markers with the May 17 signing of Vonnie Holliday, a 34-year-old defensive end who has played 12 seasons for Green Bay, Kansas City, Miami and Denver.

"I liked what I saw on film," coach Mike Shanahan said. "I think he fits our defense extremely well, a 3-4 defensive end (with) long arms. He's a guy we feel can fit it into our scheme and play it extremely well."

As a situational player with the Broncos last season, Holliday had five sacks, raising his career total to 60, the same total as that of holdover end Phillip Daniels and 3.5 fewer than Redskins active leader Andre Carter.

The 6-foot-5, 285-pound Holliday had started the previous four years for the Dolphins, helping them rocket from 1-15 in 2007 to the AFC East title in 2008. Holliday played for the Chiefs in 2003-04 after spending his first five years with the Packers for whom he recorded at least five sacks each year. He made the All-Rookie team with eight sacks in 1998.

Holliday will compete principally with Daniels and converted tackle Kedric Golston as well as newcomer Adam Carriker to start at the ends in new coordinator Jim Haslett's 3-4 defense.

--Lorenzo Alexander joined the Redskins in October 2006 as a practice squad defensive tackle after stints with Carolina and Baltimore. In the 3-1/2 years since, Alexander has played defensive tackle, defensive end, offensive tackle, guard, fullback and tight end (in short yardage and goal line) and special teams.

And now Washington's jack of all trades is adding another position: outside linebacker.

"It's all good," Alexander said with a chuckle. "I did whatever I had to do to get in the league and I'm staying this way. I'm still working on pass coverage and playing in space, but overall it's going pretty well. I have to know the whole defense, coverage switches based on motion, things I didn't have to think about when I was playing D-line. All the 7-on-7 stuff we're doing now is really helping. The physical part, that's just football, no matter what."

--The Redskins jumped from four to seven undrafted rookie free agents with the May 17 signings of Kansas State return man Brad Banks, Mississippi receiver Shay Hodge and Texas-El Paso cornerback Melvin Stephenson.

Banks is just 5-foot-7 and 150 pounds, but he returned a nation-leading four kickoffs for touchdowns last season while ranking fifth with 1.127 kickoff return yards and 12th with a 28.9-yard average. He averaged 9.1 yards on punt returns and was named the Big 12 Special Teams Player of the Year.

As a junior, Banks led the Wildcats with 67 catches for 1,049 yards and nine touchdowns.

Hodge caught a school record 2,646 worth of receiving yards for Ole Miss. His 173 catches and 22 touchdowns rank second. As a senior, the 6-2, 207-pound All-SEC selection led the conference with 5.4 catches and 87.3 receiving yards per game.

The 5-10, 185-pound Stephenson started two of his four seasons at UTEP, recording 128 tackles and four interceptions.

--Mike Shanahan said the Redskins are still considering signing former Philadelphia Eagles standout running back Brian Westbrook, who visited the team earlier this month despite the additions of former 1,000-yard backs Larry Johnson and Willie Parker.

"We're still talking to Brian and I'm sure he's looking at his options," Shanahan said. "We'll find out in the near-future what happens there."

QUOTE TO NOTE: "As a defensive lineman, you just go like a madman. As a linebacker, you gotta be a little bit more patient before you break or try to make a play." -- Lorenzo Alexander on making the switch from defensive lineman to linebacker.

#### STRATEGY AND PERSONNEL

FRANCHISE PLAYER: None.

TRANSITION PLAYER: None.

UNRESTRICTED FREE AGENTS

--LS Ethan Albright had another fine season at 38. He hopes to return for a 10th year in Washington under a fifth coach.

--OT Levi Jones sparkled in his first start in place of the injured Chris Samuels. However, Jones showed the rest of the season why Cincinnati let him go last offseason.

--P Hunter Smith had a solid first year in Washington at 32. However, he could look for a spot with a contender.

--DE Renaldo Wynn only got into one game after returning to Washington last March. Wynn, who'll be 36 in September, might well be headed to retirement.

--TE Todd Yoder remains a yeoman blocker and he had three touchdowns on just four catches in 2009. Yoder, who'll be 32 next month, remains an important player since fellow tight ends Chris Cooley and Fred Davis are more receivers than blockers.

RESTRICTED FREE AGENTS (\*indicates restricted because of uncapped year)

--\*S Reed Doughty (tendered at \$1.759M with second-round pick as compensation) bounced back from back surgery in 2008 to start most of the 2009 season. An overachiever and major special teams contributor, Doughty will likely re-sign for a second straight offseason.

--\*LB Rocky McIntosh (tendered at \$1.759M with second-round pick as compensation) had another solid season on the weak side in 2009. McIntosh might test the market, but could also return as an inside linebacker in a 3-4 alignment.

--\*CB Carlos Rogers (tendered at \$2.621M with first-round pick as compensation) hasn't played like the ninth pick in the draft as he was in 2005, but he has had some high points during his four seasons as a starter. Now that former defensive coordinator Greg Blache has retired, it's more likely that Rogers will want to return opposite starter DeAngelo Hall.

EXCLUSIVE RIGHTS FREE AGENTS: None.

PLAYERS RE-SIGNED

--LB Lorenzo Alexander: RFA (had been tendered at \$1.101M with no compensation); 3 yrs, terms unknown.

--DE Phillip Daniels: UFA; terms unknown.

--\*DT Kedric Golston: RFA; (tendered at \$1.759M with second-round pick as compensation); \$1.759M/1 yr.

--OT Stephon Heyer: RFA; (tendered at \$1.684M with second-round pick as compensation); \$1.684M/1 yr.

--\*C Will Montgomery: RFA: (tendered at \$1.101M with seventh-round pick as compensation); terms unknown.

--C Casey Rabach: UFA; \$12.3M/3 yrs.

--G/T Mike Williams: UFA; 3 yrs, terms unknown.

--LB Chris Wilson: RFA; (tendered at \$1.684M with second-round pick as compensation); terms unknown.

PLAYERS ACQUIRED

--P Josh Bidwell: FA Buccaneers; terms unknown.

--DT Anthony Bryant: FA Giants; terms unknown.

--CB Phillip Buchanon: FA Lions; \$1.5M/1 yr.

--LB Chris Draft: UFA Bills; terms unknown.

--WR Joey Galloway: UFA Steelers; terms unknown.

--\*DT Howard Green: Not tendered as RFA by Jets; terms unknown.

--QB Rex Grossman: UFA Texans; 1 yr, terms unknown.

--WR Marques Hagans: FA; terms unknown.

--OL Artis Hicks: UFA Vikings; 3 yrs, terms unknown.

--DE Vonnie Holliday: UFA Broncos; terms unknown.

--RB Larry Johnson: UFA Bengals; \$3.5M/3 yrs.

--NT Maake Kemoatu: FA Panthers; \$7M/2 yrs, \$700,000 guaranteed.

--OG Kory Lichtensteiger: FA; terms unknown.

--QB Donovan McNabb(trade Eagles).

--PK Justin Medlock: CFA FA; terms unknown.

--RB Willie Parker: UFA Steelers; 1 yr, terms unknown.

--DT Greg Peterson: Not tendered as RFA by Jaguars; terms unknown.

--TE Sean Ryan: UFA Chiefs; 1 yr, terms unknown.

--DE Darrion Scott: FA; terms unknown.

--RB Ryan Torain: FA; terms unknown.

--WR Bobby Wade: UFA Chiefs; terms unknown.

--WR Roydell Williams: FA; terms unknown.

PLAYERS LOST

--RB Ladell Betts (released/failed physical).

--\*QB Jason Campbell (traded Raiders), had re-signed as RFA; (tendered at \$3.410M with first-round pick as compensation); \$3.410M/1 yr.  
--FB Rock Cartwright (released).  
--QB Todd Collins (released).  
--RB Quinton Ganther: Not tendered as ERFA/Seahawks; terms unknown.  
--DT Cornelius Griffin (released).  
--RB Marcus Mason (released).  
--\*DT Anthony Montgomery (released); had re-signed as RFA; (tendered at \$1.176M with fifth-round pick as compensation); \$1.176M/1 yr.  
--WR Antwaan Randle El (released).  
--OT Chris Samuels (retired/released/failed physical).  
--DL J.D. Skolnitsky (released).  
--CB Fred Smoot (released).  
--OG Randy Thomas (released).  
--FB Eddie Williams (released).