Draft Scouting and Depth Charts for Every Team

The Official Guide

EA SPORTS™

NFL

HEAD COACH

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BASED ON A GAME RATED BY THE ESRB

EVERYONE

NFL HEAD COACH

PRIMA OFFICIAL GAME GUIDE

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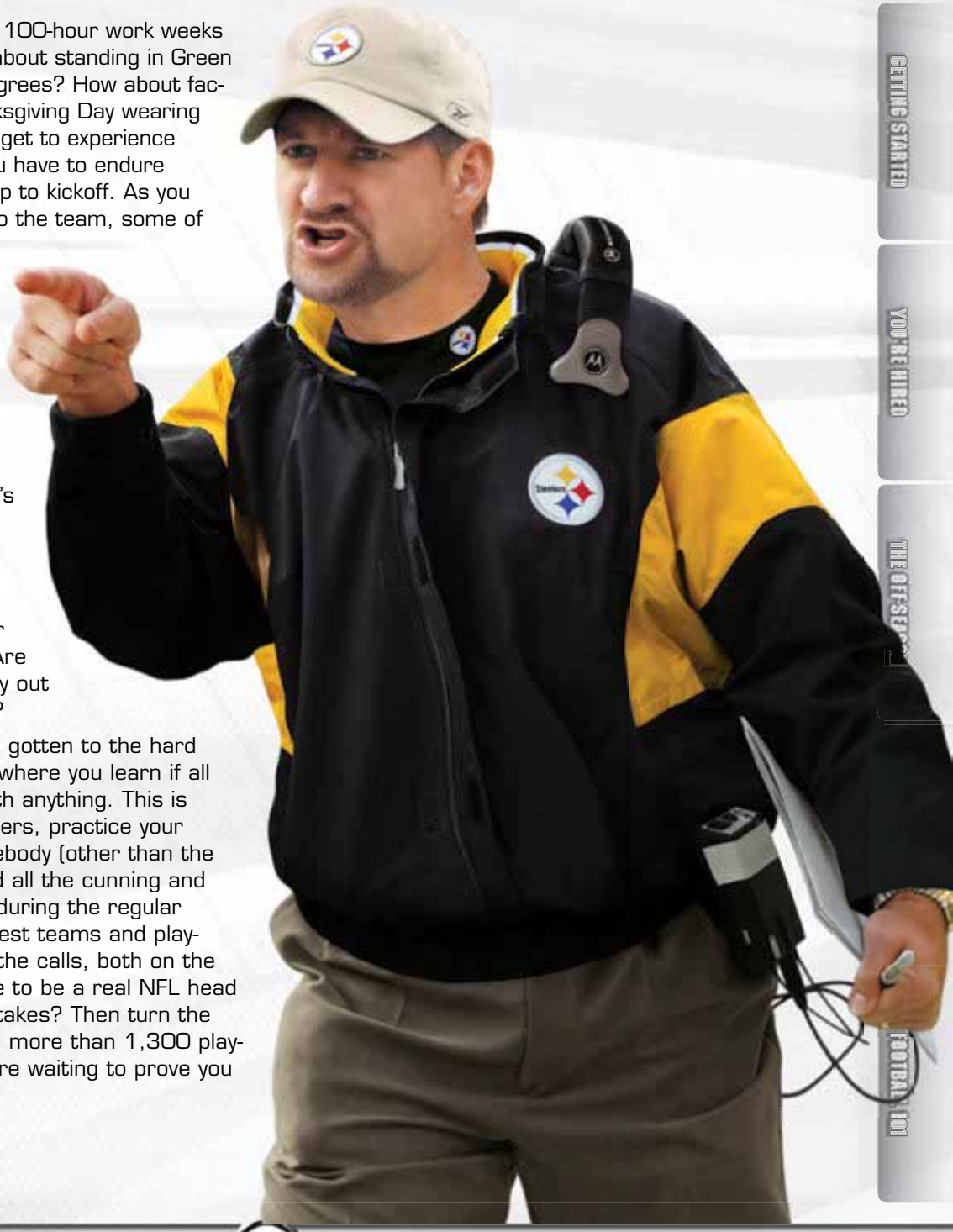
Prologue

What does it take to be an NFL® head coach? Is it raw leadership like Bill Cowher? Is it the mastery of a scheme like Mike Shanahan? Is it the work ethic of Joe Gibbs? You're about to find out! In *NFL Head Coach*, your ability to run an entire NFL franchise is put to the test. From the very start, you have to hope someone offers you an interview with their team, but that's just the first step. Next you have to ace the interview by correctly answering the questions the owner asks you. If you can prove yourself worthy after this process, you get hired and it's off to your new office in the stadium.

Are you still here? The idea of 100-hour work weeks hasn't scared you off yet? How about standing in Green Bay with the wind chill at -35 degrees? How about facing the Dallas Cowboys on Thanksgiving Day wearing a Redskins uniform? Before you get to experience any of those game day tests, you have to endure the four to five months leading up to kickoff. As you bring your coaching philosophy to the team, some of your coaches will either be the right or wrong fit. Do you have the guts to fire one of your assistant coaches in front of the rest of your staff? Better watch your back!

Just when you thought it was safe to go to your office, your phone rings. On the phone a dangerous creature—a player's agent. Do you think you can negotiate a contract with an agent, manage the salary cap, and trade and cut players? Are you ready to figure out who your number-one draft pick will be? Are you ready to work day in and day out to be the best team in the NFL?

Still with us? We haven't even gotten to the hard part yet: training camp. This is where you learn if all the hours you've put in are worth anything. This is where you have to set your rosters, practice your plays, and get ready to hit somebody (other than the players on your team). You need all the cunning and skills of a real NFL head coach during the regular season when you play the greatest teams and players in the league. You make all the calls, both on the field and off. This is what it's like to be a real NFL head coach. Think you've got what it takes? Then turn the page, because 31 other teams, more than 1,300 players, and all the head coaches are waiting to prove you wrong. Welcome to the NFL!



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Getting Started

ORIENTATION

Welcome to the big leagues, Coach! *NFL Head Coach* will test you in ways no other football game has. You have to make all the decisions a real NFL® coach makes throughout the entire year, not just in the fall. So sharpen your pencils, dust off your clipboard, and get ready for the year-round challenge of being an NFL head coach.

Turn your system on and Bill Cowher, head coach of the Super Bowl Champion Pittsburgh Steelers, welcomes you to the world of an NFL head coach and general manager. Choose a gameplay mode to take you on the first step down the road to the football Hall of Fame.

BILL COWHER

MAIN MENU

MY CAREER

Alright Coach, this is where you make the basic choices to either start or continue your career. If you start a career, you are asked to make decisions that impact your job. If you've already been hired and have started your career, you begin at your last saved point.

COACH NOW

Choose this mode for a quick game where you make the calls on the field. Coach against the best the NFL has to offer. *NFL Head Coach* is a one-player game unless you are battling online. Coach Now mode allows you to step into a game and play without the setup required in My Career mode. Because *NFL Head Coach* is a simulation-style game, you are making the calls but not controlling the play as you do in the *Madden NFL Football* games. Choose what team you want to coach, then the team you want to coach against. All uniforms are available, as well as all the NFL stadiums. You can use your career rosters if you have a current game saved, or use the current team rosters.

1. **My Roster:** Choose between default mode and My Career mode, which uses your current Career roster.
2. **CPU Roster:** Choose between default mode and My Career mode.
3. **Where to Play:** Choose to take advantage of playing at home or play away.
4. **Pick Team Uniforms:** Choose home, away, or alternate jerseys.
5. **Pick CPU Team:** Choose home, away, or alternate jerseys for the CPU team.

COACH ONLINE

Do you have what it takes to battle the best armchair coaches in the world? Pit your coaching philosophies online against the best *NFL Head Coach* players and compete to see if you're the next coaching mastermind or just another wannabe. Online is the true field of competition, so prepare your game plan, motivate your players, and make sure your Internet provider is paid. This guide helps you craft a competitive team that will do you proud in the online fields. It can't call the plays for you, but it can give you the tools to get the job done.

To play online, either create an account or use your current account. See the instruction manual for more information.

MY COACH

In My Coach mode, if you feel your team is good enough, you can export it to *Madden NFL 07*. This expands the world of play for every EA SPORTS football fan. In *NFL Head Coach* you build the team, and in *Madden NFL Football* you get to control the players. It's the ultimate football experience, now available for year-round play.

You can also adjust your settings in this mode. Set your camera angles so you can see the game in all the different views an NFL head coach uses every day, whether it's game day or at the practice complex. Those alternate jerseys are popular with your fans, and now you can make them your default threads.

- Audio settings
- Video settings: Set camera angles, the field line, and the choice of home or away uniforms
- Save and loading options
- Export to *Madden NFL 07*: Only one team at a time may be exported

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CREATE COACH

This is the starting point for a career in the NFL. After deciding whether you start as an offensive or defensive coordinator, you apply and interview for a chance to coach an NFL team. NFL teams operate within a league salary cap. Choose the team with the greatest cap room that fits your coaching style.

Select one of eight different looks to fit your coaching style. Decide on your age, the sound of your voice, and the offensive and defensive principles that define your coaching style. Use R1 (for PS2) or RT (for Xbox) to adjust coach characteristics.

CONFIGURING YOUR COACH

This section is all about you. What kind of coach are you? Choose your coaching style or take a chance and let the computer choose for you!

TIP

MORE INFORMATION ON THE DEFENSIVE AND OFFENSIVE FORMATIONS APPEARS LATER IN THE GUIDE. THIS IS A QUICK OVERVIEW OF THE VARIOUS CHOICES. CONSIDER YOUR CHOICES CAREFULLY AND CHOOSE WHAT'S RIGHT FOR YOU.

OFFENSIVE

Pick from the proven coaching styles of real NFL coaches:

West Coast: A pass-first offense that uses quick timing routes

Vertical: Uses speed to stretch the defense down field

Spread: Focuses on creating holes in a defense by flooding it with receivers

Single Back: Stresses a balanced offensive system in which you can easily attack with the pass or the run

Balanced: Focuses on a more traditional system that uses the run to set up the pass

DEFENSIVE

Choose the style that works best with your team roster and playing style:

4–3: Relies on a strong defensive line and a tenacious middle linebacker

3–4: Emphasizes the outside linebacker blitz

Cover 2: Emphasizes zone coverage

46: Focuses on the blitz by overloading the offensive line

TIP

DEFENSE WINS CHAMPIONSHIPS!

RANDOM

The random selection automatically selects your team and skips the interview process. Using this option doesn't allow you to view the team's salary cap, define your coaching principles, or design your head coach. This option is not recommended for rookie coaches. Why? Because just like real coaching, you wouldn't want to start your career on game day. It's better to take the time to learn the offenses, defenses, and strategy needed to be a successful head coach in the NFL.

CHOOSING YOUR TEAM

Here are the options to consider as the league's hottest coordinator steps into the shoes of a head coaching position.

TEAM ANALYSIS

Here is a team-by-team breakdown of every NFL franchise and their strengths, weaknesses, and greatest needs for the upcoming season.

The 2006 draft looks to be one of the best in recent memory; every need for your team is addressed by position. A hot list of potential draft choices is provided and you also see how much money you have to spend based on the current NFL salary cap. View your team's coaching ratings for offense and defense. Choose the franchise with the best upward potential—and the ability to pay for it.

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Chicago Bears

2006 SCHEDULE

PRE-SEASON

1. @ San Francisco
2. San Diego
3. Arizona
4. @ Cleveland

REGULAR SEASON

1. @ Green Bay
2. Detroit
3. @ Minnesota
4. Seattle
5. Buffalo
6. @ Arizona
7. BYE Week
8. San Francisco
9. Miami
10. @ New York Giants
11. @ New York Jets
12. @ New England
13. Minnesota
14. @ St. Louis
15. Tampa Bay
16. @ Detroit
17. Green Bay

SEASON PREVIEW

It was a banner year for Bears fans. The dominating defense that had been their trademark for so many years had returned to the windy city. The Bears are going to return all 11 starters from the 2005 team, and will continue as one of the league's stingiest defenses in the red-zone. The team's needs are simple: Find offensive playmakers and keep everyone healthy on defense. Chicago will continue to rise as a power in the NFC.

DRAFT NEEDS

Heading into the 2006 season, the Bears will look to improve at these positions.

- Quarterback
- Tight End
- Cornerback
- Outside Linebacker
- Wide Receiver

TOP DRAFT PROSPECTS

- Outside Linebacker: E. Sims
- Defensive Tackle: J. McCargo
- Cornerback: K. Jennings
- Cornerback: T. Hill
- Offensive Guard: R. Sims

SALARY CAP ROOM

$38.74 Million

COACHING STAFF RATINGS

Offensive Coordinator: 78

Defensive Coordinator: 74

Average of Other Coaches: 66.9

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TEAM DEPTH CHARTS

OFFENSE

HALFBACK
(1) T. Jones
(2) C. Benson

FULLBACK
(1) J. McKie
(2) B. Johnson

WIDE RECEIVER
(2) J. Gage
(4) B. Berrian

QUARTERBACK
(1) R. Grossman
(2) K. Orton

WIDE RECEIVER
(1) M. Muhammad
(3) M. Bradley

RIGHT TACKLE
(1) F. Miller
(2) P. Mannelly

RIGHT GUARD
(1) T. Metcalf
(2) S. Edwards

CENTER
(1) O. Kreutz
(2) R. Garza

LEFT GUARD
(1) R. Brown
(2) Q. Mitchell

LEFT TACKLE
(1) J. Tait
(2) J. St. Clair

TIGHT END
(1) D. Clark
(2) J. Gilmore

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

DEFENSE

LEFT DEFENSIVE END
(1) A. Ogunleye
(2) M. Haines

LEFT DEFENSIVE TACKLE
(1) T. Harris
(2) A. Boone

RIGHT DEFENSIVE TACKLE
(1) I. Scott
(2) T. Johnson

RIGHT DEFENSIVE END
(1) A. Brown
(2) I. Idonije

LEFT OUTSIDE LINEBACKER
(1) H. Hillenmeyer
(2) M. Reese

MIDDLE LINEBACKER
(1) B. Urlacher
(2) B. Ayanbadejo

RIGHT OUTSIDE LINEBACKER
(1) L. Briggs
(2) L. Joe

CORNERBACK
(2) N. Vasher
(4) R. Davis

FREE SAFETY
(1) M. Green
(2) C. Harris

STRONG SAFETY
(1) M. Brown
(2) T. Johnson

CORNERBACK
(1) C. Tillman
(3) J. Azumah

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

SPECIAL TEAMS

PUNT RETURNER
—

KICK RETURNER
(1) J. Azumah
(2) M. Bradley

LONG SNAPPER
D. Clark

PUNTER
B. Maynard

KICKER
R. Gould

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

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Cincinnati Bengals

2006 SCHEDULE

PRE-SEASON

1. Washington
2. @ Buffalo
3. Green Bay
4. @ Indianapolis

REGULAR SEASON

1. @ Kansas City
2. Cleveland
3. @ Pittsburgh
4. New England
5. BYE Week
6. @ Tampa Bay
7. Carolina
8. Atlanta
9. @ Baltimore
10. San Diego
11. @ New Orleans
12. @ Cleveland
13. Baltimore
14. Oakland
15. @ Indianapolis
16. @ Denver
17. Pittsburgh

SEASON PREVIEW

During the regular season last year, Cinderella wore orange and black, and the slipper fit just fine. The Bengals re-emerged as an AFC power with an 11-5 record, and winning the AFC Central. The Bengals should think about drafting another LB in the first round. Coach Marvin Lewis wants to have the Bengals back for another run, and has the talent on the offensive side of the ball, but the defense needs to be addressed also.

DRAFT NEEDS

Heading into the 2006 season, the Bengals need help at the following positions:

- Quarterback
- Defensive Tackle
- Tight End
- Safety
- Cornerback

TOP DRAFT PROSPECTS

- Safety: D. Whitner
- Tight End: M. Lewis
- Defensive Tackle: C. Wroten
- Quarterback: C. Whitehurst
- Offensive Guard: C. Spencer

SALARY CAP ROOM

$39.04 million

COACHING STAFF RATINGS

Offensive Coordinator: 72

Defensive Coordinator: 77

Average of Other Coaches: 67.7

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TEAM DEPTH CHARTS

OFFENSE

HALFBACK
(1) R. Johnson
(2) C. Perry

FULLBACK
J. Johnson

WIDE RECEIVER
(2) T. Houshmandzadeh
(4) C. Henry

QUARTERBACK
(1) C. Palmer
(2) J. Kitna

WIDE RECEIVER
(1) C. Johnson
(3) K. Washington

RIGHT TACKLE
(1) W. Anderson
(2) S. Andrews

RIGHT GUARD
(1) B. Williams
(2) S. Kooistra

CENTER
(1) R. Braham
(2) E. Ghiaciuc

LEFT GUARD
E. Steinbach

LEFT TACKLE
(1) L. Jones
(2) E. Steinbach

TIGHT END
(1) R. Kelly
(2) M. Schobel

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

DEFENSE

LEFT DEFENSIVE END
(1) J. Smith
(2) C. Powell

LEFT DEFENSIVE TACKLE
(1) B. Robinson
(2) M. Askew

RIGHT DEFENSIVE TACKLE
(1) J. Thornton
(2) S. Smith

RIGHT DEFENSIVE END
(1) R. Geathers
(2) D. Clemons

LEFT OUTSIDE LINEBACKER
(1) D. Pollack
(2) L. Johnson

MIDDLE LINEBACKER
(1) O. Thurman
(2) N. Webster

RIGHT OUTSIDE LINEBACKER
(1) B. Simmons
(2) M. Wilkins

CORNERBACK
(2) D. O'Neal
(4) R. Bauman

FREE SAFETY
(1) M. Williams
(2) K. Kaesviharn

STRONG SAFETY
(1) I. Ohalete
(2) A. Mitchell

CORNERBACK
(1) T. James
(3) K. Ratliff

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

SPECIAL TEAMS

PUNT RETURNER
K. Ratliff

KICK RETURNER
(1) C. Perry
(2) T. Houshmandazeh

LONG SNAPPER
M. Schobel

PUNTER
K. Larson

KICKER
S. Graham

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

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Buffalo Bills

2006 SCHEDULE

PRE-SEASON

1. @ Carolina
2. Cincinnati
3. Cleveland
4. @ Detroit

REGULAR SEASON

1. @ New England
2. @ Miami
3. New York Jets
4. Minnesota
5. @ Chicago
6. @ Detroit
7. New England
8. BYE Week
9. Green Bay
10. @ Indianapolis
11. @ Houston
12. Jacksonville
13. San Diego
14. @ New York Jets
15. Miami
16. Tennessee
17. @ Baltimore

SEASON PREVIEW

Last year was a challenging year for Bills fans. Owner Ralph Wilson had brought back one of the most colorful figures in NFL coaching lore, Marv Levy. Coach Levy took the Bills to four Super Bowls and came within a field goal attempt—it sailed wide right—of winning the Super Bowl. The Bills have hired Dick Jauron as their new head coach; he will have his hands full trying to repair offensive and defensive lines.

DRAFT NEEDS

Heading into the 2006 season, the Bills need to improve the following positions:

- Offensive Tackle
- Defensive Tackle
- Cornerback
- Strong Safety
- Outside Linebacker

TOP DRAFT PROSPECTS

- Defensive Tackle: H. Ngata
- Outside Linebacker: B. Carpenter
- Cornerback: A. Youboty
- Offensive Tackle: E. Winston
- Offensive Tackle: B. Butler

SALARY CAP ROOM

$34.31 million

COACHING STAFF RATINGS

Offensive Coordinator: 69

Defensive Coordinator: 62

Average of Other Coaches: 66.3

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TEAM DEPTH CHARTS

OFFENSE

HALFBACK
(1) W. McGahee
(2) S. Williams

FULLBACK
(1) D. Shelton
(2) J. Burns

WIDE RECEIVER
(2) L. Evans
(4) R. Parrish

QUARTERBACK
(1) K. Holcomb
(2) J. Losman

WIDE RECEIVER
(1) E. Moulds
(3) J. Reed

RIGHT TACKLE
(1) J. Peters
(2) G. Jerman

RIGHT GUARD
(1) C. Villarrial
(2) J. Geisinger

CENTER
(1) T. Teague
(2) D. Preston

LEFT GUARD
B. Anderson

LEFT TACKLE
(1) M. Gandy
(2) D. McFarland

TIGHT END
(1) M. Campbell
(2) T. Euhus

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

DEFENSE

LEFT DEFENSIVE END
(1) C. Kelsay
(2) R. Denney

LEFT DEFENSIVE TACKLE
(1) S. Adams
(2) R. Edwards

RIGHT DEFENSIVE TACKLE
(1) T. Anderson
(2) J. Jefferson

RIGHT DEFENSIVE END
(1) A. Schobel
(2) J. Bannan

LEFT OUTSIDE LINEBACKER
(1) J. Posey
(2) M. Haggin

MIDDLE LINEBACKER
(1) L. Fletcher
(2) L. Ezekiel

RIGHT OUTSIDE LINEBACKER
(1) T. Spikes
(2) A. Crowell

CORNERBACK
(2) T. McGee
(4) E. King

FREE SAFETY
(1) T. Vincent
(2) R. Baker

STRONG SAFETY
(1) L. Milloy
(2) C. Wire

CORNERBACK
(1) N. Clements
(3) K. Thomas

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

SPECIAL TEAMS

PUNT RETURNER
N. Clements

KICK RETURNER
(1) T. McGee
(2) S. Williams

LONG SNAPPER
D. Preston

PUNTER
B. Moorman

KICKER
R. Lindell

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

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Denver Broncos

2006 SCHEDULE

PRE-SEASON

1. @ Detroit
2. Tennessee
3. Houston
4. @ Arizona

REGULAR SEASON

1. @ St. Louis
2. Kansas City
3. @ New England
4. BYE Week
5. Baltimore
6. Oakland
7. @ Cleveland
8. Indianapolis
9. @ Pittsburgh
10. @ Oakland
11. San Diego
12. @ Kansas City
13. Seattle
14. @ San Diego
15. @ Arizona
16. Cincinnati
17. San Francisco

SEASON PREVIEW

The Broncos came within one game of going to the Super Bowl last season, but some guys in black helmets got in the way. The Broncos have some issues with the salary cap that you should keep a eye on, but with the coaching mastermind of Mike Shanahan at the helm, the Broncos are expected to be one of the elite teams in the AFC. A pass rushing defensive end is a high priority for the Broncos at this year's draft if any are available when they pick.

DRAFT NEEDS

Heading into the 2006 season, the Broncos need to improve the following positions:

- Offensive Guard
- Wide Receiver
- Safety
- Defensive End
- Running Back

TOP DRAFT PROSPECTS

- Offensive Guard: D. Joseph
- Free Safety: K. Simpson
- Tight End: D. Byrd
- Wide Receiver: D. Hagen
- Strong Safety: B. Pollard

SALARY CAP ROOM

$28.21 million

COACHING STAFF RATINGS

Offensive Coordinator: 69

Defensive Coordinator: 65

Average of Other Coaches: 70

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TEAM DEPTH CHARTS

OFFENSE

HALFBACK
(1) M. Anderson
(2) T. Bell

FULLBACK
K. Johnson

WIDE RECEIVER
(2) A. Lelie
(4) D. Terrell

QUARTERBACK
(1) J. Plummer
(2) B. Van Pelt

WIDE RECEIVER
(1) R. Smith
(3) D. Watts

RIGHT TACKLE
(1) G. Foster
(2) E. Pears

RIGHT GUARD
(1) C. Carlisle
(2) D. Carswell

CENTER
(1) T. Nalen
(2) C. Myers

LEFT GUARD
(1) B. Hamilton
(2) T. Whitley

LEFT TACKLE
(1) M. Lepsis
(2) C. Green

TIGHT END
(1) S. Alexander
(2) J. Putzier

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

DEFENSE

LEFT DEFENSIVE END
(1) C. Brown
(2) E. Ekuban

LEFT DEFENSIVE TACKLE
(1) M. Pope
(2) M. Myers

RIGHT DEFENSIVE TACKLE
(1) G. Warren
(2) D. Veal

RIGHT DEFENSIVE END
(1) T. Price
(2) J. Engelberger

LEFT OUTSIDE LINEBACKER
(1) D. Williams
(2) P. Chukwurah

MIDDLE LINEBACKER
(1) A. Wilson
(2) K. Burns

RIGHT OUTSIDE LINEBACKER
(1) I. Gold
(2) L. Green

CORNERBACK
(2) D. Williams
(4) K. Paymah

FREE SAFETY
(1) J. Lynch
(2) C. Cox

STRONG SAFETY
(1) N. Ferguson
(2) S. Brandon

CORNERBACK
(1) C. Bailey
(3) D. Foxworth

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

SPECIAL TEAMS

PUNT RETURNER
D. Williams

KICK RETURNER
(1) D. Williams
(2) R. Alexander

LONG SNAPPER
N. Leach

PUNTER
T. Sauerbrun

KICKER
J. Elam

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

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Cleveland Browns

2006 SCHEDULE

PRE-SEASON

1. @ Philadelphia
2. Detroit
3. @ Buffalo
4. Chicago

REGULAR SEASON

1. New Orleans
2. @ Cincinnati
3. Baltimore
4. @ Oakland
5. @ Carolina
6. BYE Week
7. Denver
8. New York Jets
9. @ San Diego
10. @ Atlanta
11. Pittsburgh
12. Cincinnati
13. Kansas City
14. @ Pittsburgh
15. @ Baltimore
16. Tampa Bay
17. @ Houston

SEASON PREVIEW

Last year, Cleveland compiled a respectable 5-5 record against non-division opponents, but lost 5 out of 6 to their division counterparts. Cleveland will be active in the free agent market because of the room they have under the salary cap. The defense needs some depth and offense needs help at receiver and the line. The Dawg Pound will not be happy with another 6-10 effort. If Coach Romeo Crennel can improve the defense, a .500 record is within reach.

DRAFT NEEDS

Heading into the 2006 season, the Browns have to look hard at the following positions:

- Linebacker
- Nose Tackle
- Offensive Tackle
- Safety
- Wide Receiver

TOP DRAFT PROSPECTS

- Nose Tackle: B. Bunkley
- Outside Linebacker: B. Carpenter
- Nose Tackle: B. Oshinowo
- Defensive End: J. Jenkins
- Free Safety: A. Smith

SALARY CAP ROOM

$44.81 million

COACHING STAFF RATINGS

Offensive Coordinator: 69

Defensive Coordinator: 68

Average of Other Coaches: 64.7

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TEAM DEPTH CHARTS

OFFENSE

HALFBACK
(1) R. Droughns
(2) L. Suggs

FULLBACK
T. Smith

WIDE RECEIVER
(2) D. Northcutt
(4) F. Jackson

QUARTERBACK
(1) C. Frye
(2) T. Dilfer

WIDE RECEIVER
(1) A. Bryant
(3) B. Edwards

RIGHT TACKLE
(1) R. Tucker
(2) N. Dorsey

RIGHT GUARD
(1) C. Coleman
(2) D. Yovanovits

CENTER
(1) M. Pucillo
(2) J. Faine

LEFT GUARD
(1) J. Andruzzi
(2) P. McMahon

LEFT TACKLE
(1) L. Shelton
(2) K. Chambers

TIGHT END
(1) S. Heiden
(2) A. Shea

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

DEFENSE

LEFT DEFENSIVE END
(1) O. Roye
(2) S. Fraser

LEFT DEFENSIVE TACKLE
J. Fisk

RIGHT DEFENSIVE TACKLE
E. Kelly

RIGHT DEFENSIVE END
(1) A. McKinley
(2) N. Eason

LEFT OUTSIDE LINEBACKER
(1) M. Stewart
(2) K. Lang

MIDDLE LINEBACKER
(1) A. Davis
(2) B. Taylor

RIGHT OUTSIDE LINEBACKER
(1) C. Thompson
(2) N. Speegle

CORNERBACK
(2) D. McCutcheon
(4) L. Bodden

FREE SAFETY
(1) B. Russell
(2) B. Pool

STRONG SAFETY
(1) C. Crocker
(2) S. Jones

CORNERBACK
(1) G. Baxter
(3) R. Mickens

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

SPECIAL TEAMS

PUNT RETURNER
D. Northcutt

KICK RETURNER
(1) W. Green
(2) R. Droughns

LONG SNAPPER
S. Heiden

PUNTER
K. Richardson

KICKER
P. Dawson

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

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Tampa Bay Buccaneers

2006 SCHEDULE

PRE-SEASON

1. New York Jets
2. Miami
3. @ Jacksonville
4. @ Houston

REGULAR SEASON

1. Baltimore
2. @ Atlanta
3. Carolina
4. BYE Week
5. @ New Orleans
6. Cincinnati
7. Philadelphia
8. @ New York Giants
9. New Orleans
10. @ Carolina
11. Washington
12. @ Dallas
13. @ Pittsburgh
14. Atlanta
15. @ Chicago
16. @ Cleveland
17. Seattle

SEASON PREVIEW

Last season the Bucs won their first southern division title since 2002 with 3 rookies starting, a practice Coach Gruden has never embraced. Chris Simms came off the bench when Brian Griese got injured and propelled the Bucs into the playoffs. Tampa is solid at all positions and will use the draft to build a solid base for the future.

DRAFT NEEDS

Heading into the 2006 season, the Bucs need to strengthen the following positions:

- Offensive Tackle
- Cornerback
- Linebacker
- Wide Receiver
- Running Back

TOP DRAFT PROSPECTS

- Outside Linebacker: E. Sims
- Offensive Tackle: E. Winston
- Offensive Guard: D. Joseph
- Cornerback: A. Zemaitis
- Outside Linebacker: R. McIntosh

SALARY CAP ROOM

$32.12 million

COACHING STAFF RATINGS

Offensive Coordinator: 68

Defensive Coordinator: 96

Average of Other Coaches: 69.8

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TEAM DEPTH CHARTS

OFFENSE

HALFBACK
(1) C. Williams
(2) M. Pittman

FULLBACK
(1) M. Alstott
(2) J. Cook

WIDE RECEIVER
(2) I. Hilliard
(4) E. Shepherd

QUARTERBACK
(1) C. Simms
(2) L. McCown

WIDE RECEIVER
(1) M. Clayton
(3) J. Galloway

RIGHT TACKLE
(1) K. Walker
(2) C. Colmer

RIGHT GUARD
(1) S. Mahan
(2) J. Terry

CENTER
(1) J. Wade
(2) S. Jackson

LEFT GUARD
(1) D. Buenning
(2) M. Stinchcomb

LEFT TACKLE
(1) A. Davis
(2) T. Steussie

TIGHT END
(1) A. Becht
(2) A. Smith

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

DEFENSE

LEFT DEFENSIVE END
(1) G. Spires
(2) D. White

LEFT DEFENSIVE TACKLE
(1) C. Hovan
(2) J. Bradley

RIGHT DEFENSIVE TACKLE
(1) A. McFarland
(2) E. Wyms

RIGHT DEFENSIVE END
(1) S. Rice
(2) D. White

LEFT OUTSIDE LINEBACKER
(1) R. Nece
(2) M. Cooper

MIDDLE LINEBACKER
(1) S. Quarles
(2) B. Ruud

RIGHT OUTSIDE LINEBACKER
(1) D. Brooks
(2) J. Gooch

CORNERBACK
(2) B. Kelly
(4) J. Bolden

FREE SAFETY
(1) D. Jackson
(2) W. Allen

STRONG SAFETY
(1) J. Phillips
(2) D. Nicholson

CORNERBACK
(1) R. Barber
(3) T. Cox

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

SPECIAL TEAMS

PUNT RETURNER
M. Jones

KICK RETURNER
(1) M. Jones
(2) T. Cox

LONG SNAPPER
—

PUNTER
J. Bidwell

KICKER
M. Bryant

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

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Arizona Cardinals

2006 SCHEDULE

PRE-SEASON

1. Pittsburgh
2. @ New England
3. @ Chicago
4. Denver

REGULAR SEASON

1. San Francisco
2. @ Seattle
3. St. Louis
4. @ Atlanta
5. Kansas City
6. Chicago
7. @ Oakland
8. @ Green Bay
9. BYE Week
10. Dallas
11. Detroit
12. @ Minnesota
13. @ St. Louis
14. Seattle
15. Denver
16. @ San Francisco
17. @ San Diego

SEASON PREVIEW

The biggest addition to the Cardinals in 2006 won't be a player, but their new $370 million, state-of-the-art stadium. The Cardinals have improved slowly but consistently over the last couple of years. They need to address the ground game quickly; on the flip side, WR Larry Fitzgerald has the potential to become one of the best receivers in the league. Coach Denny Green will be aggressive in the draft and free agency.

DRAFT NEEDS

Heading into the 2006 season, the Cardinals need to strengthen the following positions:

- Outside Linebacker
- Running Back
- Free Safety
- Defensive Line
- Quarterback

TOP DRAFT PROSPECTS

- Outside Linebacker: W. Justice
- Running Back: L. White
- Defensive Tackle: C. Wroten
- Defensive End: T. Hali
- Defensive Tackle: R. Wright

SALARY CAP ROOM

$40.09 million

COACHING STAFF RATINGS

Offensive Coordinator: 62

Defensive Coordinator: 62

Average of Other Coaches: 64.4

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TEAM DEPTH CHARTS

OFFENSE

HALFBACK
(1) J. Arrington
(2) M. Shipp

FULLBACK
O. Ayanbadejo

WIDE RECEIVER
(2) L. Fitzgerald
(4) R. Swinton

QUARTERBACK
(1) K. Warner
(2) J. McCown

WIDE RECEIVER
(1) A. Boldin
(3) B. Johnson

RIGHT TACKLE
(1) O. Ross
(2) D. Ellington

RIGHT GUARD
(1) F. Wakefield
(2) J. Bridges

CENTER
(1) N. Leckey
(2) A. Stepanovich

LEFT GUARD
(1) R. Wells
(2) I. Allen

LEFT TACKLE
L. Davis

TIGHT END
(1) E. Edwards
(2) A. Bergen

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

DEFENSE

LEFT DEFENSIVE END
(1) C. Okefor
(2) A. Palepoi

LEFT DEFENSIVE TACKLE
(1) R. Kolodziej
(2) L. Moore

RIGHT DEFENSIVE TACKLE
(1) D. Docket

RIGHT DEFENSIVE END
(1) B. Berry
(2) C. Pace

LEFT OUTSIDE LINEBACKER
(1) K. Dansby
(2) D. Blackstock

MIDDLE LINEBACKER
(1) J. Darling
(2) L. Mitchell

RIGHT OUTSIDE LINEBACKER
(1) O. Huff
(2) G. Hayes

CORNERBACK
(2) D. Macklin
(4) R. Tate

FREE SAFETY
(1) R. Griffith
(2) O. Harris

STRONG SAFETY
(1) A. Wilson
(2) A. Francisco

CORNERBACK
(1) E. Green
(3) R. Walls

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

SPECIAL TEAMS

PUNT RETURNER
R. Swinton

KICK RETURNER
(1) R. Swinton
(2) B. Johnson

LONG SNAPPER
—

PUNTER
S. Player

KICKER
N. Rackers

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

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San Diego Chargers

2006 SCHEDULE

PRE-SEASON

1. Green Bay
2. @ Chicago
3. Seattle
4. @ San Francisco

REGULAR SEASON

1. @ Oakland
2. Tennessee
3. BYE Week
4. @ Baltimore
5. Pittsburgh
6. @ San Francisco
7. @ Kansas City
8. St. Louis
9. Cleveland
10. @ Cincinnati
11. @ Denver
12. Oakland
13. @ Buffalo
14. Denver
15. Kansas City
16. @ Seattle
17. Arizona

SEASON PREVIEW

The San Diego Chargers were just that last year with one of the most explosive running backs in the NFL in La Dainian Tomlinson. The Chargers did not put some teams away last year, and late-game miscues cost them a chance to return to the NFL post-season. The Chargers are deep in most positions; If they can put it all together, they may challenge for the AFC title.

DRAFT NEEDS

Heading into the 2006 season, the Chargers need to take a hard look at these positions:

- Safety
- Offensive Tackle
- Wide Receiver
- Offensive Guard
- Cornerback

TOP DRAFT PROSPECTS

- Offensive Tackle: M. McNeill
- Free Safety: K. Simpson
- Offensive Tackle: E. Winston
- Strong Safety: B. Pollard
- Offensive Guard: A. Stenavich

SALARY CAP ROOM

$34.10 million

COACHING STAFF RATINGS

Offensive Coordinator: 68

Defensive Coordinator: 76

Average of Other Coaches: 65.7

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TEAM DEPTH CHARTS

OFFENSE

HALFBACK
(1) L. Tomlinson
(2) M. Turner

FULLBACK
(1) L. Neal
(2) A. Pinnock

WIDE RECEIVER
(2) E. Parker
(4) R. Caldwell

QUARTERBACK
(1) D. Bress
(2) P. Rivers

WIDE RECEIVER
(1) K. McCardell
(3) V. Jackson

RIGHT TACKLE
(1) S. Olivea
(2) L. Jordan

RIGHT GUARD
(1) M. Goff
(2) D. Binn

CENTER
(1) N. Hardwick
(2) S. Mruczkowshi

LEFT GUARD
(1) K. Dielman
(2) B. Hallen

LEFT TACKLE
(1) R. Oben
(2) C. VanBuren

TIGHT END
(1) A. Gates
(2) J.Peelle

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

DEFENSE

LEFT DEFENSIVE END
(1) L. Castillo
(2) D. Robinson

LEFT DEFENSIVE TACKLE
(1) J. Williams

RIGHT DEFENSIVE TACKLE
(1) J. Cesaire
(2) R. Bingham

RIGHT DEFENSIVE END
(1) I. Olshansky
(2) D. Scott

LEFT OUTSIDE LINEBACKER
(1) S. Merriman
(2) B. Leber

MIDDLE LINEBACKER
(1) D. Edwards
(2) R. Godfrey

RIGHT OUTSIDE LINEBACKER
(1) S. Foley
(2) M. Harris

CORNERBACK
(2) D. Florence
(4) S. Davis

FREE SAFETY
(1) B. Jue
(2) J. Wilson

STRONG SAFETY
(1) C. Hart
(2) T. Kiel

CORNERBACK
(1) Q. Jammer
(3) J. Fletcher

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

SPECIAL TEAMS

PUNT RETURNER
D. Sproles

KICK RETURNER
(1) D. Sproles
(2) M. Turner

LONG SNAPPER
D. Binn

PUNTER
M. Scifres

KICKER
N. Kaeding

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

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Kansas City Chiefs

2006 SCHEDULE

PRE-SEASON

1. @ Houston
2. @ New York Giants
3. St. Louis
4. New Orleans

REGULAR SEASON

1. Cincinnati
2. @ Denver
3. BYE Week
4. San Francisco
5. @ Arizona
6. @ Pittsburgh
7. San Diego
8. Seattle
9. @ St. Louis
10. @ Miami
11. Oakland
12. Denver
13. @ Cleveland
14. Baltimore
15. @ San Diego
16. @ Oakland
17. Jacksonville

SEASON PREVIEW

How do you miss the playoffs with this team? The offense is one of the league's elite; Larry Johnson has established himself as running powerhouse. The wide receivers are consistent, and Tony Gonzalez is one of the best TEs in the league. Dante Hall is the premier return specialist on special teams. Kansas City is loaded with talent and looks to contend for the AFC title this season. The Chiefs will look for a big DL in the draft, which is a trouble spot on the team and needs to be addressed.

DRAFT NEEDS

Heading into the 2006 season, the Chiefs need to strengthen their team in the following positions:

- Defensive Line
- Wide Receiver
- Safety
- Offensive Line
- Cornerback

TOP DRAFT PROSPECTS

- Defensive End: M. Kiwanuka
- Defensive End: T. Hali
- Cornerback: K. Jennings
- Strong Safety: D. Bing
- Cornerback: J. Allen

SALARY CAP ROOM

$23.11 million

COACHING STAFF RATINGS

Offensive Coordinator: 61

Defensive Coordinator: 62

Average of Other Coaches: 72.3

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TEAM DEPTH CHARTS

OFFENSE

HALFBACK
(1) L. Johnson
(2) P. Holmes

FULLBACK
(1) T. Richardson
(2) R. Holcombe

WIDE RECEIVER
(2) S. Parker
(4) D. Hall

QUARTERBACK
(1) T. Green
(2) T. Collins

WIDE RECEIVER
(1) E. Kennison
(3) C. Horn

RIGHT TACKLE
(1) J. Black
(2) K. Sampson

RIGHT GUARD
(1) W. Shields
(2) J. Welbourn

CENTER
(1) C. Wiegmann
(2) C. Bobber

LEFT GUARD
(1) B. Waters
(2) J. Ingram

LEFT TACKLE
(1) W. Roaf
(2) W. Svitek

TIGHT END
(1) T. Gonzalez
(2) J. Dunn

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

DEFENSE

LEFT DEFENSIVE END
(1) E. Hicks
(2) J. Wilkerson

LEFT DEFENSIVE TACKLE
(1) R. Simms
(2) J. Browning

RIGHT DEFENSIVE TACKLE
(1) L. Dalton
(2) J. Siavii

RIGHT DEFENSIVE END
(1) J. Allen
(2) C. Hall

LEFT OUTSIDE LINEBACKER
(1) D. Johnson
(2) G. Stills

MIDDLE LINEBACKER
(1) K. Mitchell
(2) R. Scanlon

RIGHT OUTSIDE LINEBACKER
(1) K. Bell
(2) S. Barber

CORNERBACK
(2) E. Warfield
(4) D. Washington

FREE SAFETY
(1) G. Wesley
(2) J. Woods

STRONG SAFETY
(1) S. Knight
(2) W. Bartee

CORNERBACK
(1) P. Surtain
(3) B. Sapp

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

SPECIAL TEAMS

PUNT RETURNER
D. Hall

KICK RETURNER
(1) D. Hall
(2) L. Johnson

LONG SNAPPER
J. Ingram

PUNTER
D. Colquitt

KICKER
L. Tynes

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

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Indianapolis Colts

2006 SCHEDULE

PRE-SEASON

1. @ St. Louis
2. Seattle
3. @ New Orleans
4. @ Cincinnati

REGULAR SEASON

1. @ New York Giants
2. Houston
3. Jacksonville
4. @ New York Jets
5. Tennessee
6. BYE Week
7. Washington
8. @ Denver
9. @ New England
10. Buffalo
11. @ Dallas
12. Philadelphia
13. @ Tennessee
14. @ Jacksonville
15. Cincinnati
16. @ Houston
17. Miami

SEASON PREVIEW

How do you improve on 14-2? How about making a kick to win the game and host the AFC championship? The running game needs to be addressed if there are any major changes because of free agency. The passing game is still intact with the best QB in the game calling the shots; Payton Manning will try and overcome the label that he's not a clutch QB in the playoffs. The Colts are in great shape with the cap, and will be wheeling and dealing in the free agent market.

DRAFT NEEDS

Heading into the 2006 season, the Colts need to strengthen the following positions:

- Free Safety
- Cornerback
- Defensive End
- Running Back
- Linebacker

TOP DRAFT PROSPECTS

- Running Back: L. Maroney
- Linebacker: D. Ryans
- Defensive End: T. Haralson
- Linebacker: D. Jackson
- Outside Linebacker: J. Alston

SALARY CAP ROOM

$34.18 million

COACHING STAFF RATINGS

Offensive Coordinator: 78

Defensive Coordinator: 73

Average of Other Coaches: 67

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TEAM DEPTH CHARTS

OFFENSE

HALFBACK
(1) E. James
(2) D. Rhodes

FULLBACK
J. Mungro

WIDE RECEIVER
(2) R. Wayne
(4) B. Stokley

QUARTERBACK
(1) P. Manning
(2) J. Sorgi

WIDE RECEIVER
(1) R. Harrison
(3) T. Walters

RIGHT TACKLE
(1) R. Diem
(2) J. Gonzalez

RIGHT GUARD
(1) J. Scott
(2) D. Gandy

CENTER
(1) J. Saturday
(2) M. Freitas

LEFT GUARD
(1) R. Lilja
(2) M. Ulrich

LEFT TACKLE
(1) T. Glenn
(2) K. Vollers

TIGHT END
(1) D. Clark
(2) B. Hartsock

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

DEFENSE

LEFT DEFENSIVE END
(1) R. Brock
(2) J. Thomas

LEFT DEFENSIVE TACKLE
(1) C. Simon
(2) J. Williams

RIGHT DEFENSIVE TACKLE
(1) M. Reagor
(2) L. Tripplett

RIGHT DEFENSIVE END
(1) D. Freeney
(2) R. Mathis

LEFT OUTSIDE LINEBACKER
(1) D. Thornton
(2) R. Calmus

MIDDLE LINEBACKER
(1) G. Brackett
(2) R. Morris

RIGHT OUTSIDE LINEBACKER
(1) C. June
(2) G. Gardner

CORNERBACK
(2) J. David
(4) K. Hayden

FREE SAFETY
(1) B. Sanders
(2) G. Sapp

STRONG SAFETY
(1) N. Doss
(2) M. Giordano

CORNERBACK
(1) N. Harper
(3) M. Jackson

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

SPECIAL TEAMS

PUNT RETURNER
T. Walters

KICK RETURNER
(1) D. Rhodes
(2) T. Walters

LONG SNAPPER
J. Saturday

PUNTER
H. Smith

KICKER
M. Vanderjagt

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

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Dallas Cowboys

2006 SCHEDULE

PRE-SEASON

1. @ Seattle
2. @ New Orleans
3. San Francisco
4. Minnesota

REGULAR SEASON

1. @ Jacksonville
2. Washington
3. BYE Week
4. @ Tennessee
5. @ Philadelphia
6. Houston
7. New York Giants
8. @ Carolina
9. @ Washington
10. @ Arizona
11. Indianapolis
12. Tampa Bay
13. @ New York Giants
14. New Orleans
15. @ Atlanta
16. Philadelphia
17. Detroit

SEASON PREVIEW

How 'bout them Cowboys? The 2005 season had many faces for the team from Big D. The Cowboys will be active in the draft as well as the free agency market. With all the talent the Cowboys now have on both sides of the ball, they are poised to become a contender for the NFC Championship if they can address some of the more pressing issues. The Cowboys also have issues with the OL and WR positions going into the draft. It wouldn't surprise anyone to see Dallas pull off a major trade and move up in the Draft order to get the player they have targeted.

DRAFT NEEDS

As the Cowboys head into the 2006 season, it needs to strengthen the following positions:

- Outside Linebacker
- Wide Receiver
- Linebacker
- Free Safety
- Place Kicker

TOP DRAFT PROSPECTS

- Wide Receiver: S. Holmes
- Offensive Guard: D. Joseph
- Nose Tackle: B. Oshinowo
- Outside Linebacker: B. Carpenter
- Running Back: J. Addai

SALARY CAP ROOM

$32.60 million

COACHING STAFF RATINGS

Offensive Coordinator: 77

Defensive Coordinator: 84

Average of Other Coaches: 68.4

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TEAM DEPTH CHARTS

OFFENSE

HALFBACK
(1) J. Jones
(2) M. Barber

FULLBACK
L. Polite

WIDE RECEIVER
(2) T. Glenn
(4) T. Cooper

QUARTERBACK
(1) D. Bledsoe
(2) T. Romo

WIDE RECEIVER
(1) K. Johnson
(3) P. Crayton

RIGHT TACKLE
(1) R. Petitti
(2) M. Columbo

RIGHT GUARD
(1) M. Rivera
(2) C. Proctor

CENTER
(1) A. Johnson
(2) A. Gurode

LEFT GUARD
(1) L. Allen
(2) S. Peterman

LEFT TACKLE
(1) T. Tucker
(2) M. Price

TIGHT END
(1) J. Witten
(2) D. Campbell

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

DEFENSE

LEFT DEFENSIVE END
(1) M. Spears
(2) K. Coleman

LEFT DEFENSIVE TACKLE
L. Glover

RIGHT DEFENSIVE TACKLE
(1) J. Ferguson
(2) T. Johnson

RIGHT DEFENSIVE END
(1) G. Ellis
(2) C. Canty

LEFT OUTSIDE LINEBACKER
(1) S. Fujita
(2) K. Burnett

MIDDLE LINEBACKER
(1) B. James
(2) S. Shanle

RIGHT OUTSIDE LINEBACKER
(1) D. Ware
(2) E. Ogbogu

CORNERBACK
(2) A. Henry
(4) J. Reeves

FREE SAFETY
(1) K. Davis
(2) W. Pyle

STRONG SAFETY
(1) R. Williams
(2) J. Beriault

CORNERBACK
(1) T. Newman
(3) A. Glenn

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

SPECIAL TEAMS

PUNT RETURNER
P. Crayton

KICK RETURNER
(1) T. Thompson
(2) T. Cooper

LONG SNAPPER
A. Johnson

PUNTER
M. McBriar

KICKER
B. Condiff

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

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Miami Dolphins

2006 SCHEDULE

PRE-SEASON

1. Jacksonville
2. @ Tampa Bay
3. @ Carolina
4. St. Louis

REGULAR SEASON

1. @ Pittsburgh
2. Buffalo
3. Tennessee
4. @ Houston
5. @ New England
6. @ New York Jets
7. Green Bay
8. BYE Week
9. @ Chicago
10. Kansas City
11. Minnesota
12. @ Detroit
13. Jacksonville
14. New England
15. @ Buffalo
16. New York Jets
17. @ Indianapolis

SEASON PREVIEW

The Dolphins came together under Coach Nick Saban last season, but it was too late for the Dolphins to make it to the post-season. The Dolphins' biggest need is at getting a long term QB. The Dolphins will consider a trade-up in draft to get a shot at a high-profile QB.

DRAFT NEEDS

Heading into the 2006 season, the Dolphins need to strengthen the following positions:

- Quarterback
- Outside Linebacker
- Cornerback
- Offensive Guard
- Defensive Tackle

TOP DRAFT PROSPECTS

- Quarterback: J. Cutler
- Defensive End: K. Wimbley
- Cornerback: A. Youboty
- Cornerback: R. Marshall
- Defensive Tackle: G. Watson

SALARY CAP ROOM

$29.22 million

COACHING STAFF RATINGS

Offensive Coordinator: 68

Defensive Coordinator: 58

Average of Other Coaches: 62

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TEAM DEPTH CHARTS

OFFENSE

HALFBACK
(1) R. Brown
(2) R. Williams

FULLBACK
S. Morris

WIDE RECEIVER
(2) M. Booker
(4) W. Welker

QUARTERBACK
(1) G. Frerotte
(2) S. Rosenfels

WIDE RECEIVER
(1) C. Chambers
(3) D. Boston

RIGHT TACKLE
(1) V. Carey
(2) S. McDougle

RIGHT GUARD
(1) W. Smith
(2) R. Hadnot

CENTER
(1) S. McKinney
(2) A. Ephrain

LEFT GUARD
(1) J. James
(2) J. Berger

LEFT TACKLE
(1) D. McIntosh
(2) A. Alabi

TIGHT END
(1) R. McMichael
(2) L. Diamond

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

DEFENSE

LEFT DEFENSIVE END
(1) K. Carter
(2) M. Roth

LEFT DEFENSIVE TACKLE
(1) K. Traylor
(2) M. Wright

RIGHT DEFENSIVE TACKLE
(1) V. Holliday
(2) J. Zgonina

RIGHT DEFENSIVE END
(1) J. Taylor
(2) D. Bowens

LEFT OUTSIDE LINEBACKER
(1) J. Seau
(2) D. Spragen

MIDDLE LINEBACKER
(1) Z. Thomas
(2) J. Glenn

RIGHT OUTSIDE LINEBACKER
(1) C. Crowder
(2) D. Pope

CORNERBACK
(2) T. Daniels
(4) E. Jackson

FREE SAFETY
(1) L. Schulters
(2) Y. Bell

STRONG SAFETY
(1) T. Tillman
(2) N. Lejeune

CORNERBACK
(1) S. Madison
(3) R. Howard

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

SPECIAL TEAMS

PUNT RETURNER
W. Welker

KICK RETURNER
(1) W. Welker
(2) T. Minor

LONG SNAPPER
J. Zgonina

PUNTER
D. Jones

KICKER
O. Mare

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

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Philadelphia Eagles

2006 SCHEDULE

PRE-SEASON

1. Oakland
2. Cleveland
3. @ Baltimore
4. Pittsburgh
5. @ New York Jets

REGULAR SEASON

1. @ Houston
2. New York Giants
3. @ San Francisco
4. Green Bay
5. Dallas
6. @ New Orleans
7. @ Tampa Bay
8. Jacksonville
9. BYE Week
10. Washington
11. Tennessee
12. @ Indianapolis
13. Carolina
14. @ Washington
15. @ New York Giants
16. @ Dallas
17. Atlanta

SEASON PREVIEW

The Philadelphia Eagles have everything in place to make another run at the NFC Championship. The Eagles will be active in the 2006 draft; Head Coach Andy Reid isn't afraid to go shopping on draft day, and has made 15 trades to prove it. The Eagles' biggest areas of need are in the defensive secondary and on the defensive line. They will also need to firm up the wide receiver and running back positions on offense. Look to see them again in the Super Bowl soon.

DRAFT NEEDS

Heading into the 2006 season, the Eagles need to strengthen the following positions:

- Safety
- Cornerback
- Defensive End
- Running Back
- Linebacker

TOP DRAFT PROSPECTS

- Tight End: V. Davis
- Outside Linebacker: E. Sims
- Wide Receiver: C. Johnson
- Defensive Tackle: O. Harris
- Outside Linebacker: T. Howard

SALARY CAP ROOM

$33.84 million

COACHING STAFF RATINGS

Offensive Coordinator: 78

Defensive Coordinator: 88

Average of Other Coaches: 70.9

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TEAM DEPTH CHARTS

OFFENSE

HALFBACK
(1) B. Westbrook
(2) L. Gordon

FULLBACK
J. Parry

WIDE RECEIVER
(2) G. Lewis
(4) B. Mcmullen

QUARTERBACK
(1) D. McNabb
(2) M. Mcmahon

WIDE RECEIVER
(1) T. Owens
(3) R. Brown

RIGHT TACKLE
(1) J. Runyan
(2) C. Armstrong

RIGHT GUARD
(1) S. Andrews
(2) J. Jackson

CENTER
(1) H. Fraley
(2) T. Darilek

LEFT GUARD
(1) A. Clarke
(2) A. Hicks

LEFT TACKLE
(1) T. Thomas
(2) T. Herremans

TIGHT END
(1) L. Smith
(2) S. Spach

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

DEFENSE

LEFT DEFENSIVE END
(1) J. Kearse
(2) J. Thomas

LEFT DEFENSIVE TACKLE
(1) M. Patterson
(2) S. Rayburn

RIGHT DEFENSIVE TACKLE
(1) D. Walker
(2) H. Thomas

RIGHT DEFENSIVE END
(1) T. Cole
(2) N. Kalu

LEFT OUTSIDE LINEBACKER
(1) K. Adams
(2) J. Short

MIDDLE LINEBACKER
J. Trotter

RIGHT OUTSIDE LINEBACKER
(1) D. Jones
(2) M. McCoy

CORNERBACK
(2) S. Brown
(4) M. Ware

FREE SAFETY
(1) B. Dawkins
(2) Q. Mikell

STRONG SAFETY
(1) M. Lewis
(2) S. Considine

CORNERBACK
(1) R. Hood
(3) D. Strickland

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

SPECIAL TEAMS

PUNT RETURNER
D. Wynn

KICK RETURNER
(1) R. Hood
(2) D. Wynn

LONG SNAPPER
M. Bartrum

PUNTER
S. Lendeta

KICKER
D. Akers

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

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Atlanta Falcons

2006 SCHEDULE

PRE-SEASON

1. New England
2. @ Green Bay
3. @ Tennessee
4. Jacksonville

REGULAR SEASON

1. @ Carolina
2. Tampa Bay
3. @ New Orleans
4. Arizona
5. BYE Week
6. New York Giants
7. Pittsburgh
8. @ Cincinnati
9. @ Detroit
10. Cleveland
11. @ Baltimore
12. New Orleans
13. @ Washington
14. @ Tampa Bay
15. Dallas
16. Carolina
17. @ Philadelphia

SEASON PREVIEW

The 2006 version of the Atlanta Falcons will have to rebound and recapture the magic from the 2004 season that saw them come within one game of the of the Super Bowl. They have some issues with the salary cap and will have to get creative in the upcoming draft. Head Coach Jim Mora will have Michael Vick back at the top of his game, but the defense needs some help. The Falcons will be active in the draft and in free agency.

DRAFT NEEDS

Heading into the 2006 season, the Falcons need help at the following positions:

- Strong Safety
- Defensive End
- Wide Receiver
- Outside Linebacker
- Cornerback

TOP DRAFT PROSPECTS

- Left Tackle: W. Justice
- Running Back: L. White
- Defensive End: C. Wroten
- Defensive End: T. Hali
- Defensive Tackle: R. Wright

SALARY CAP ROOM

$37.53 million

COACHING STAFF RATINGS

Offensive Coordinator: 82

Defensive Coordinator: 72

Average of Other Coaches: 59.9

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TEAM DEPTH CHARTS

OFFENSE

HALFBACK
(1) W. Dunn
(2) T. Duckett

FULLBACK
(1) J. Griffith
(2) F. McCrary

WIDE RECEIVER
(2) R. White
(4) J. Pathon

QUARTERBACK
(1) M. Vick
(2) M. Schaub

WIDE RECEIVER
(1) M. Jenkins
(3) B. Finneran

RIGHT TACKLE
(1) T. Weiner
(2) B. Stokes

RIGHT GUARD
(1) K. Forney
(2) T. Clabo

CENTER
(1) T. McClure
(2) A. King

LEFT GUARD
(1) M. Lehr
(2) B. Claxton

LEFT TACKLE
(1) K. Shaffer
(2) F. Omiyale

TIGHT END
(1) A. Crumpler
(2) E. Beverly

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

DEFENSE

LEFT DEFENSIVE END
(1) P. Kerney
(2) E. Flowers

LEFT DEFENSIVE TACKLE
(1) R. Coleman
(2) J. Babineaux

RIGHT DEFENSIVE TACKLE
(1) C. Lavalais
(2) A. Lake

RIGHT DEFENSIVE END
(1) B. Smith
(2) C. Davis

LEFT OUTSIDE LINEBACKER
(1) D. Williams

MIDDLE LINEBACKER
(1) E. Hartwell
(2) J. Beck

RIGHT OUTSIDE LINEBACKER
(1) K. Brooking
(2) I. Reese

CORNERBACK
(2) J. Webster
(4) L. Torrence

FREE SAFETY
(1) B. Scott
(2) R. Heard

STRONG SAFETY
(1) K. Carpenter
(2) A. Edwards

CORNERBACK
(1) D. Hall
(3) A. Rossum

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

SPECIAL TEAMS

PUNT RETURNER
A. Rossum

KICK RETURNER
(1) A. Rossum
(2) R. White

LONG SNAPPER
A. Crumpler

PUNTER
M. Koenen

KICKER
T. Peterson

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

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San Francisco 49ers

2006 SCHEDULE

PRE-SEASON

1. Chicago
2. @ Oakland
3. @ Dallas
4. San Diego

REGULAR SEASON

1. @ Arizona
2. St. Louis
3. Philadelphia
4. @ Kansas City
5. Oakland
6. San Diego
7. BYE Week
8. @ Chicago
9. Minnesota
10. @ Detroit
11. Seattle
12. @ St. Louis
13. @ New Orleans
14. Green Bay
15. @ Seattle
16. Arizona
17. @ Denver

SEASON PREVIEW

If you're looking for a challenge, this is your team. The 49ers finished last in both offense and total defense last year! The draft is key this year if the 49ers have any chance to improve this season. The 49ers have lots of cash to spend in the free agency market, and this might be the fastest route back to .500 for this club. A bright spot for the 49ers last season was the play of their offensive line.

DRAFT NEEDS

Heading into the 2006 season, the 49ers need to look at the following positions:

- Cornerback
- Wide Receiver
- Defensive Line
- Linebacker
- Tight End

TOP DRAFT PROSPECTS

- Cornerback: M. Huff
- Defensive Tackle: H. Ngata
- Center: N. Mangold
- Wide Receiver: C. Jackson
- Outside Linebacker: P. Haralson

SALARY CAP ROOM

$39.32 million

COACHING STAFF RATINGS

Offensive Coordinator: 88

Defensive Coordinator: 68

Average of Other Coaches: 56.9

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TEAM DEPTH CHARTS

OFFENSE

HALFBACK
(1) M. Hicks
(2) K. Barlow

FULLBACK
F. Beasley

WIDE RECEIVER
(2) O. Amey
(4) J. Mcaddley

QUARTERBACK
(1) A. Smith
(2) K. Dorsey

WIDE RECEIVER
(1) B. Lloyd
(3) J. Morton

RIGHT TACKLE
(1) K. Harris
(2) P. Estes

RIGHT GUARD
(1) D. Baas
(2) E. Heitmann

CENTER
(1) J. Newberry
(2) B. Sobieski

LEFT GUARD
(1) J. Smiley
(2) T. Wragge

LEFT TACKLE
(1) A. Snyder
(2) A. Clement

TIGHT END
(1) T. Jones
(2) B. Bajema

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

DEFENSE

LEFT DEFENSIVE END
(1) B. Young
(2) T. Hall

LEFT DEFENSIVE TACKLE
(1) A. Addams

RIGHT DEFENSIVE TACKLE
(1) I. Sopoaga
(2) R. Fields

RIGHT DEFENSIVE END
(1) M. Douglas
(2) T. Hall

LEFT OUTSIDE LINEBACKER
(1) J. Peterson
(2) C. Smith

MIDDLE LINEBACKER
(1) B. Moore
(2) S. Rasheed

RIGHT OUTSIDE LINEBACKER
(1) A. Carter
(2) S. Rasheed

CORNERBACK
(2) S. Spencer
(4) B.J. Tucker

FREE SAFETY
(1) M. Addams
(2) K. Lewis

STRONG SAFETY
(1) B. Emanuel
(2) M. Anderson

CORNERBACK
(1) B. Thornton
(3) D. Johnson

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

SPECIAL TEAMS

PUNT RETURNER
A. Battle

KICK RETURNER
(1) M. Hicks
(2) R. Marshall

LONG SNAPPER
S. Bush

PUNTER
A. Lee

KICKER
J. Nedney

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

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New York Giants

2006 SCHEDULE

PRE-SEASON

1. @ Baltimore
2. Kansas City
3. @ New York Jets
4. New England

REGULAR SEASON

1. Indianapolis
2. @ Philadelphia
3. @ Seattle
4. BYE Week
5. Washington
6. @ Atlanta
7. @ Dallas
8. Tampa Bay
9. Houston
10. Chicago
11. @ Jacksonville
12. @ Tennessee
13. Dallas
14. @ Carolina
15. Philadelphia
16. New Orleans
17. @ Washington

SEASON PREVIEW

The Giants are looking forward to the 2006 campaign. Going 11-5 came as big surprise to Giants fans. The first-year play of Eli Manning combined with that of Shockey and Barber made football fun again in the Big Apple. The salary cap is tight, but the Giants have enough picks to get what they are after in the draft—defense. The Giants will make the NFC East a four-team race until the final week of the season. The only weakness that stands out is team overall depth at position.

DRAFT NEEDS

Heading into the 2006 season, the Giants need to strengthen the following positions:

- Cornerback
- Offensive Line
- Wide Receiver
- Safety
- Defensive Tackle

TOP DRAFT PROSPECTS

- Cornerback: A. Youboty
- Defensive Tackle: B. Oshinowo
- Outside Linebacker: D. Ryans
- Outside Linebacker: T. Howard
- Wide Receiver: D. Williams

SALARY CAP ROOM

$29.89 million

COACHING STAFF RATINGS

Offensive Coordinator: 69

Defensive Coordinator: 83

Average of Other Coaches: 68.3

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TEAM DEPTH CHARTS

OFFENSE

HALFBACK
(1) T. Barber
(2) B. Jacobs

FULLBACK
J. Finn

WIDE RECEIVER
(2) A. Toomer
(4) D. Tyree

QUARTERBACK
(1) E. Manning
(2) T. Hasselbeck

WIDE RECEIVER
(1) P. Burress
(3) T. Carter

RIGHT TACKLE
(1) K. McKenzie
(2) L. Kelly

RIGHT GUARD
(1) C. Snee
(2) M. Smith

CENTER
(1) S. O'Hara
(2) J. Whittle

LEFT GUARD
(1) D. Diehl
(2) R. Seubert

LEFT TACKLE
(1) L. Petitgout
(2) B. Whitfield

TIGHT END
(1) J. Shockey
(2) V. Shaincoe

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

DEFENSE

LEFT DEFENSIVE END
(1) M. Strahan
(2) A. Awasom

LEFT DEFENSIVE TACKLE
(1) K. Allen
(2) K. Clancy

RIGHT DEFENSIVE TACKLE
(1) F. Robbins
(2) W. Joseph

RIGHT DEFENSIVE END
(1) O. Unenyiora
(2) J. Tuck

LEFT OUTSIDE LINEBACKER
(1) R. Torbor
(2) E. Moore

MIDDLE LINEBACKER
(1) K. Lewis
(2) A. Pierce

RIGHT OUTSIDE LINEBACKER
(1) N. Greisen
(2) B. Green

CORNERBACK
(2) C. Deloatch
(4) F. Walker

FREE SAFETY
(1) B. Alexander
(2) J. Butler

STRONG SAFETY
(1) G. Wilson
(2) S. Williams

CORNERBACK
(1) W. Allen
(3) C. Webster

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

SPECIAL TEAMS

PUNT RETURNER
C. Morton

KICK RETURNER
W. Ponder

LONG SNAPPER
J. Whittle

PUNTER
J. Feagles

KICKER
J. Feely

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

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Jacksonville Jaguars

2006 SCHEDULE

PRE-SEASON

1. @ Miami
2. Carolina
3. Tampa Bay
4. @ Atlanta

REGULAR SEASON

1. Dallas
2. Pittsburgh
3. @ Indianapolis
4. @ Washington
5. New York Jets
6. BYE Week
7. @ Houston
8. @ Philadelphia
9. Tennessee
10. Houston
11. New York Giants
12. @ Buffalo
13. @ Miami
14. Indianapolis
15. @ Tennessee
16. New England
17. @ Kansas City

SEASON PREVIEW

The Jacksonville Jaguars have shed the rebuilding label; they are now a full-fledged contender in the AFC's Southern Division. Getting past Indy for the division is the biggest challenge they will face in 2006. The Jaguars' defense is one of the best in the league, and hopefully the offense can play as well. The Jaguars are worth keeping an eye on. The Jaguars have plenty of salary cap room to go after the needed offensive free agents.

DRAFT NEEDS

Heading into the 2006 season, the Jaguars need to strengthen the following positions:

- Tight End
- Outside Linebacker
- Offensive Guard
- Defensive Guard
- Cornerback

TOP DRAFT PROSPECTS

- Outside Linebacker: E. Sims
- Offensive Guard: D. Joseph
- Tight End: M. Lewis
- Outside Linebacker: R. McIntosh
- Tight End: D. Byrd

SALARY CAP ROOM

$33.02 million

COACHING STAFF RATINGS

Offensive Coordinator: 67

Defensive Coordinator: 73

Average of Other Coaches: 68

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TEAM DEPTH CHARTS

OFFENSE

HALFBACK
(1) F. Taylor
(2) A. Pearman

FULLBACK
(1) G. Jones
(2) D. Wimbush

WIDE RECEIVER
(2) R. Williams
(4) E. Wilford

QUARTERBACK
(1) B. Leftwich
(2) D. Garrard

WIDE RECEIVER
(1) J. Smith
(3) M. Jones

RIGHT TACKLE
(1) M. Williams
(2) D. Fletcher

RIGHT GUARD
(1) C. Needle
(2) D. Fletcher

CENTER
(1) D. Norman
(2) B. Meester

LEFT GUARD
(1) V. Manuwai
(2) D. Connolly

LEFT TACKLE
(1) K. Barnes
(2) M. Pearson

TIGHT END
(1) K. Brady
(2) G. Wrighster

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

DEFENSE

LEFT DEFENSIVE END
(1) R. Hayward
(2) M. Wiley

LEFT DEFENSIVE TACKLE
(1) M. Stroud
(2) A. Maddox

RIGHT DEFENSIVE TACKLE
(1) J. Henderson
(2) R. Meier

RIGHT DEFENSIVE END
(1) P. Spicer
(2) B. McCray

LEFT OUTSIDE LINEBACKER
(1) A. Ayodele
(2) P. Thomas

MIDDLE LINEBACKER
(1) M. Peterson
(2) T. Gilbert

RIGHT OUTSIDE LINEBACKER
(1) D. Smith
(2) J. Winborn

CORNERBACK
(2) K. Wright
(4) T. Cousin

FREE SAFETY
(1) D. Grant
(2) N. Sorensen

STRONG SAFETY
(1) G. Sensabaugh
(2) D. Cooper

CORNERBACK
(1) R. Mathis
(3) S. Starks

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

SPECIAL TEAMS

PUNT RETURNER
A. Pearman

KICK RETURNER
(1) D. Wimbush
(2) L. Toefield

LONG SNAPPER
—

PUNTER
C. Hanson

KICKER
J. Scobee

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

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New York Jets

2006 SCHEDULE

PRE-SEASON

1. @ Tampa Bay
2. @ Washington
3. New York Giants
4. Philadelphia

REGULAR SEASON

1. @ Tennessee
2. New England
3. @ Buffalo
4. Indianapolis
5. @ Jacksonville
6. Miami
7. Detroit
8. @ Cleveland
9. BYE Week
10. @ New England
11. Chicago
12. Houston
13. @ Green Bay
14. Buffalo
15. @ Minnesota
16. @ Miami
17. Oakland

SEASON PREVIEW

The Jets are tight against the salary cap; the Head Coach has his work cut out for him as he tries to rebuild not only the team on the field, but also the confidence of the fans. The major question mark is at the QB position; Chad Pennington reinjured his rotator cuff in his throwing shoulder. It was the same shoulder he injured the year before. The jets will be a work in progress for the 2006 season.

DRAFT NEEDS

Heading into the 2006 season, the Jets need to strengthen the following positions:

- Running Back
- Quarterback
- Nose Tackle
- Offensive Tackle
- Center

TOP DRAFT PROSPECTS

- Defensive End: M. Williams
- Offensive Tackle: D. Ferguson
- Defensive Tackle: H. Ngata
- Running Back: J. Addai
- Offensive Tackle: E. Winston

SALARY CAP ROOM

$19.59 million

COACHING STAFF RATINGS

Offensive Coordinator: 71

Defensive Coordinator: 62

Average of Other Coaches: 68.7

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TEAM DEPTH CHARTS

OFFENSE

HALFBACK
(1) C. Houston
(2) D. Blaylock

FULLBACK
(1) J. Sowell
(2) B.J. Askew

WIDE RECEIVER
(2) J. McCareins
(4) D. Ridgeway

QUARTERBACK
(1) B. Bollinger
(2) V. Testaverde

WIDE RECEIVER
(1) L. Coles
(3) J. Cotchery

RIGHT TACKLE
(1) S. Gragg
(2) J. Fabini

RIGHT GUARD
(1) B. Moore
(2) D. Neinhuis

CENTER
(1) J. Goodwin
(2) N. Katnik

LEFT GUARD
(1) P. Kendall
(2) S. Morley

LEFT TACKLE
(1) A. Jones
(2) J. Goodwin

TIGHT END
(1) D. Jolley
(2) J. Dreessen

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

DEFENSE

LEFT DEFENSIVE END
(1) S. Ellis
(2) B. Thomas

LEFT DEFENSIVE TACKLE
(1) D. Robertson
(2) L. Legree

RIGHT DEFENSIVE TACKLE
(1) J. Reed
(2) S. Pouha

RIGHT DEFENSIVE END
(1) J. Abraham
(2) T. Johnson

LEFT OUTSIDE LINEBACKER
(1) V. Hobson
(2) R. Meyers

MIDDLE LINEBACKER
(1) J. Vilma
(2) M. Brown

RIGHT OUTSIDE LINEBACKER
(1) M. Brown
(2) E. Barton

CORNERBACK
(2) D. Barrett
(4) D. Strait

FREE SAFETY
(1) E. Coleman
(2) R. Washington

STRONG SAFETY
(1) K. Rhodes
(2) O. Celestin

CORNERBACK
(1) T. Law
(3) J. Miller

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

SPECIAL TEAMS

PUNT RETURNER
J. Miller

KICK RETURNER
(1) J. Miller
(2) J. Cotchery

LONG SNAPPER
J. Dearth

PUNTER
B. Graham

KICKER
M. Nugent

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

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Detroit Lions

2006 SCHEDULE

PRE-SEASON

1. Denver
2. @ Cleveland
3. @ Oakland
4. Buffalo

REGULAR SEASON

1. Seattle
2. @ Chicago
3. Green Bay
4. @ St. Louis
5. @ Minnesota
6. Buffalo
7. @ New York Jets
8. BYE Week
9. Atlanta
10. San Francisco
11. @ Arizona
12. Miami
13. @ New England
14. Minnesota
15. @ Green Bay
16. Chicago
17. @ Dallas

SEASON PREVIEW

The Lions will convert from a finesse club to a physical team. The draft will reflect the shift in philosophy as the Lions are expected to go after defensive players. The QB position will be addressed through free agency. The Lions are sitting in good shape with the salary cap; this should allow them to attract a quality QB. The Lions also need help in the linebacker and corner back positions; they will use their latter draft picks to improve these positions. The Lions feel they have been on the verge of becoming one of the elite teams in the NFC, and this might be their year.

DRAFT NEEDS

Heading into the 2006 season, the Lions will focus on reinforcing the following positions:

- Quarterback
- Defensive End
- Offensive Tackle
- Linebacker
- Cornerback

TOP DRAFT PROSPECTS

- Quarterback: J. Cutter
- Outside Linebacker: C. Greenway
- Inside Linebacker: D. Jackson
- Defensive End: T. Hall
- Defensive End: P. Haralson

SALARY CAP ROOM

$34.10 million

COACHING STAFF RATINGS

Offensive Coordinator: 93

Defensive Coordinator: 78

Average of Other Coaches: 66.9

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TEAM DEPTH CHARTS

OFFENSE

HALFBACK
(1) K. Jones
(2) S. Bryson

FULLBACK
(1) C. Schlesinger
(2) P. Smith

WIDE RECEIVER
(2) M. Williams
(4) C. Rogers

QUARTERBACK
(1) J. Harrington
(2) S. Orlovsky

WIDE RECEIVER
(1) R. Williams
(3) S. Vines

RIGHT TACKLE
(1) K. Butler
(2) D. Loverne

RIGHT GUARD
(1) D. Woody
(2) D. Pearson

CENTER
(1) D. Raiola
(2) B. Gutierrez

LEFT GUARD
(1) K. Kosier
(2) R. Demulling

LEFT TACKLE
(1) J. Backus
(2) L. Newton

TIGHT END
(1) M. Paullard
(2) C. Fitzsimmons

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

DEFENSE

LEFT DEFENSIVE END
(1) C. Redding
(2) J. Devries

LEFT DEFENSIVE TACKLE
(1) S. Rogers
(2) S. Cody

RIGHT DEFENSIVE TACKLE
(1) D. Wilkinson
(2) M. Bell

RIGHT DEFENSIVE END
(1) J. Hall
(2) K. Edwards

LEFT OUTSIDE LINEBACKER
(1) J. Davis
(2) B. Bailey

MIDDLE LINEBACKER
(1) W. Rainer
(2) E. Holmes

RIGHT OUTSIDE LINEBACKER
(1) D. Curry
(2) T. Lehman

CORNERBACK
(2) D. Bly
(4) K. Smith

FREE SAFETY
(1) J. Mcgraw
(2) V. Fox

STRONG SAFETY
(1) K. Kennedy
(2) B. Walker

CORNERBACK
(1) R.W. McQuarters
(3) A Goodman

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

SPECIAL TEAMS

PUNT RETURNER
E. Drummond

KICK RETURNER
(1) E. Drummond
(2) K. Johnson

LONG SNAPPER
D. Raiola

PUNTER
N. Harris

KICKER
J. Hanson

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

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Green Bay Packers

2006 SCHEDULE

PRE-SEASON

1. @ San Diego
2. Atlanta
3. @ Cincinnati
4. Tennessee

REGULAR SEASON

1. Chicago
2. New Orleans
3. @ Detroit
4. @ Philadelphia
5. St. Louis
6. BYE Week
7. @ Miami
8. Arizona
9. @ Buffalo
10. @ Minnesota
11. New England
12. @ Seattle
13. New York Jets
14. @ San Francisco
15. Detroit
16. Minnesota
17. @ Chicago

SEASON PREVIEW

With Brett Favre, the Packers feel they are ready for one more run at the Super Bowl; the Packers feel they can be back on top for the 2006 season. The Packers will look for help on both sides of the ball in the draft. Drafting in the #5 position should allow the Packers to fill some of the holes, but free agency will be the quick fix needed to get back to the playoffs. If everything comes together, the Cheeseheads will send Brett Favre to the Hall of Fame with another winning season under his belt.

DRAFT NEEDS

Heading into the 2006 season, the Packers need to strengthen the following positions:

- Running Back
- Linebacker
- Defensive Tackle
- Cornerback
- Outside Linebacker

TOP DRAFT PROSPECTS

- Linebacker: A.J. Hawk
- Defensive End: M. Williams
- Running Back: L. Maroney
- Cornerback: J. Williams
- Offensive Tackle: E. Winston

SALARY CAP ROOM

$36.74 million

COACHING STAFF RATINGS

Offensive Coordinator: 65

Defensive Coordinator: 64

Average of Other Coaches: 68.4

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TEAM DEPTH CHARTS

OFFENSE

HALFBACK
(1) S. Gado
(2) T. Fisher

FULLBACK
W. Henderson

WIDE RECEIVER
(2) R. Ferguson
(4) A. Thurman

QUARTERBACK
(1) B. Favre
(2) A. Rodgers

WIDE RECEIVER
(1) D. Driver
(3) R. Gardner

RIGHT TACKLE
(1) M. Tauscher
(2) K. Berry

RIGHT GUARD
(1) W. Whitticker
(2) G. Ruegamer

CENTER
(1) M. Flanagan
(2) C. White

LEFT GUARD
(1) S. Wells
(2) A. Klemm

LEFT TACKLE
(1) C. Clifton
(2) J. Coston

TIGHT END
(1) D. Martin
(2) D. Lee

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

DEFENSE

LEFT DEFENSIVE END
(1) A. Kampman
(2) K. Peterson

LEFT DEFENSIVE TACKLE
(1) G. Jackson
(2) C. Cole

RIGHT DEFENSIVE TACKLE
(1) C. Jenkins
(2) C. Williams

RIGHT DEFENSIVE END
(1) K. Gbaja-Biamila
(2) M. Montgomery

LEFT OUTSIDE LINEBACKER
(1) R. Thomas
(2) P. Lenon

MIDDLE LINEBACKER
(1) N. Barnett
(2) R. Manning

RIGHT OUTSIDE LINEBACKER
(1) N. Diggs
(2) P. Lenon

CORNERBACK
(2) J. Thomas
(4) A. Carroll

FREE SAFETY
(1) N. Collins
(2) M. Underwood

STRONG SAFETY
(1) M. Roman
(2) T. Franz

CORNERBACK
(1) A. Harris
(3) M. Hawkins

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

SPECIAL TEAMS

PUNT RETURNER
A. Thurman

KICK RETURNER
—

LONG SNAPPER
R. Davis

PUNTER
B. Sander

KICKER
R. Longwell

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

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Carolina Panthers

2006 SCHEDULE

PRE-SEASON

1. Buffalo
2. @ Jacksonville
3. Miami
4. @ Pittsburgh

REGULAR SEASON

1. Atlanta
2. @ Minnesota
3. @ Tampa Bay
4. New Orleans
5. Cleveland
6. @ Baltimore
7. @ Cincinnati
8. Dallas
9. BYE Week
10. Tampa Bay
11. St. Louis
12. @ Washington
13. @ Philadelphia
14. New York Giants
15. Pittsburgh
16. @ Atlanta
17. @ New Orleans

SEASON PREVIEW

Since the inception of the franchise, the Carolina Panthers has established itself as a premier organization. Three NFC Championships and one Super Bowl appearance later, the Panthers have staked their claim as one of teams to beat in the NFC. Their needs are simple; add a quality running back, improve the blocking, and add another quality receiver. Carolina could be back for another title run this season.

DRAFT NEEDS

Heading into the 2006 season, the Panthers need to look hard at the following positions:

- Running Back
- Wide Receiver
- Defensive Tackle
- Outside Linebacker
- Place Kicker

TOP DRAFT PROSPECTS

- Offensive Guard: M. Jean-Gilles
- Defensive Tackle: J. McCargo
- Running Back: J. Addai
- Defensive Tackle: G. Watson
- Wide Receiver: M. Stovall

SALARY CAP ROOM

$35.9 million

COACHING STAFF RATINGS

Offensive Coordinator: 69

Defensive Coordinator: 63

Average of Other Coaches: 60.1

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TEAM DEPTH CHARTS

OFFENSE

HALFBACK
(1) D. Foster
(2) R. Smart

FULLBACK
(1) B. Hover
(2) N. Goings

WIDE RECEIVER
(2) K. Colbert
(4) D. Carter

QUARTERBACK
(1) J. Delhomme
(2) C. Winke

WIDE RECEIVER
(1) S. Smith
(3) R. Proehl

RIGHT TACKLE
(1) J. Gross
(2) D. Kadela

RIGHT GUARD
(1) T. Reyes
(2) E. Mathis

CENTER
(1) J. Mitchell
(2) G. Hangartner

LEFT GUARD
(1) M. Wahle
(2) E. Mathis

LEFT TACKLE
(1) T. Wharton
(2) T. Fordham

TIGHT END
(1) K. Magnum
(2) M. Seidman

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

DEFENSE

LEFT DEFENSIVE END
(1) J. Peppers
(2) A. Wallace

LEFT DEFENSIVE TACKLE
(1) B. Buckner
(2) K. Moorehead

RIGHT DEFENSIVE TACKLE
(1) J. Carstens
(2) K. Jenkins

RIGHT DEFENSIVE END
(1) M. Rucker
(2) K. Rasmussen

LEFT OUTSIDE LINEBACKER
(1) W. Witherspoon
(2) V. Ciurciu

MIDDLE LINEBACKER
(1) D. Morgan
(2) C. Draft

RIGHT OUTSIDE LINEBACKER
(1) B. Short
(2) S. Tufts

CORNERBACK
(2) K. Lucas
(4) R. Manning

FREE SAFETY
(1) M. Minter
(2) I. Bashir

STRONG SAFETY
(1) M. McCree
(2) T. Davis

CORNERBACK
(1) C. Gamble
(3) D. Wesley

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

SPECIAL TEAMS

PUNT RETURNER
S. Smith

KICK RETURNER
(1) R. Smart
(2) J. Robertson

LONG SNAPPER
K. Mangum

PUNTER
J. Baker

KICKER
J. Kasey

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

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New England Patriots

2006 SCHEDULE

PRE-SEASON

1. @ Atlanta
2. Arizona
3. Washington
4. @ New York Giants

REGULAR SEASON

1. Buffalo
2. @ New York Jets
3. Denver
4. @ Cincinnati
5. Miami
6. BYE Week
7. @ Buffalo
8. @ Minnesota
9. Indianapolis
10. New York Jets
11. @ Green Bay
12. Chicago
13. Detroit
14. @ Miami
15. Houston
16. @ Jacksonville
17. @ Tennessee

SEASON PREVIEW

Denver ended the Patriots' nine-game playoff streak, but that didn't make the season unsuccessful. The Patriots played their way to their third consecutive AFC East crown while overcoming several major injuries to key players that would have ended most other teams' seasons. The Patriots have several areas to improve on—the running game and defense against the long ball. The salary cap is not a factor for the Patriots.

DRAFT NEEDS

Heading into the 2006 season, the Patriots' greatest needs lie in the following positions:

- Cornerback
- Wide Receiver
- Safety
- Linebacker
- Running Back

TOP DRAFT PROSPECTS

- Safety: D. Whitner
- Linebacker: D. Ryan
- Cornerback: R. Marshall
- Linebacker: B. Carpenter
- Running Back: J. Addai

SALARY CAP ROOM

$38.06 million

COACHING STAFF RATINGS

Offensive Coordinator: 68

Defensive Coordinator: 62

Average of Other Coaches: 68.2

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TEAM DEPTH CHARTS

OFFENSE

HALFBACK
(1) C. Dillon
(2) K. Faulk

FULLBACK
(1) P. Pass
(2) H. Evans

WIDE RECEIVER
(2) D. Givens
(4) T. Brown

QUARTERBACK
(1) T. Brady
(2) D. Flutie

WIDE RECEIVER
(1) D. Branch
(3) T. Dwight

RIGHT TACKLE
(1) B. Goran
(2) M. Light

RIGHT GUARD
(1) S. Neal
(2) B. Yates

CENTER
(1) R. Hochstein
(2) D. Koppen

LEFT GUARD
(1) L. Mankins
(2) G. Mruczkowski

LEFT TACKLE
(1) N. Kaczur
(2) T. Ashworth

TIGHT END
(1) D. Graham
(2) B. Watson

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

DEFENSE

LEFT DEFENSIVE END
(1) T. Warren
(2) M. Hill

LEFT DEFENSIVE TACKLE
(1) V. Wilfork

RIGHT DEFENSIVE TACKLE
(1) M. Wright
(2) D. Klecko

RIGHT DEFENSIVE END
(1) R. Seymour
(2) J. Green

LEFT OUTSIDE LINEBACKER
(1) W. McGinest
(2) M. Chatham

MIDDLE LINEBACKER
(1) C. Brown
(2) M. Beisel

RIGHT OUTSIDE LINEBACKER
(1) R. Colvin
(2) T. Banta-Cain

CORNERBACK
(2) E. Hobbs
(4) T. Poole

FREE SAFETY
(1) E. Wilson
(2) J. Sanders

STRONG SAFETY
(1) R. Harrison
(2) M. Stone

CORNERBACK
(1) A. Samuel
(3) H. Poteat

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

SPECIAL TEAMS

PUNT RETURNER
T. Dwight

KICK RETURNER
(1) B. Johnson
(2) T. Dwight

LONG SNAPPER
D. Koppen

PUNTER
J. Miller

KICKER
A. Vinatieri

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

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Oakland Raiders

2006 SCHEDULE

PRE-SEASON

1. Philadelphia
2. @ Minnesota
3. San Francisco
4. Detroit
5. @ Seattle

REGULAR SEASON

1. San Diego
2. @ Baltimore
3. BYE Week
4. Cleveland
5. @ San Francisco
6. @ Denver
7. Arizona
8. Pittsburgh
9. @ Seattle
10. Denver
11. @ Kansas City
12. @ San Diego
13. Houston
14. @ Cincinnati
15. St. Louis
16. Kansas City
17. @ New York Jets

SEASON PREVIEW

The Silver and Black were a huge disappointment last year after having lofty expectations from the 2004 season. Their head coach has a potentially potent offense with WR Randy Moss and a good running game behind RB Lamont Jordan. A lot depends on what they decide to do with the QB position. The Raiders are masters of manipulating the salary cap and always find room if a impact player becomes available.

DRAFT NEEDS

Heading into the 2006 season, the Raiders need to strengthen the following positions:

- Outside Linebacker
- Strong Safety
- Offensive Guard
- Defensive Tackle
- Quarterback

TOP DRAFT PROSPECTS

- Outside Linebacker: A.J. Hawk
- Defensive Tackle: H. Ngata
- Tight End: V. Davis
- Outside Linebacker: R. McIntosh
- Strong Safety: D. Bing

SALARY CAP ROOM

$21.58 million

COACHING STAFF RATINGS

Offensive Coordinator: 77

Defensive Coordinator: 80

Average of Other Coaches: 58.4

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TEAM DEPTH CHARTS

OFFENSE

HALFBACK
(1) L. Jordan
(2) J. Fargas

FULLBACK
Z. Crockett

WIDE RECEIVER
(2) J. Porter
(4) A. Whitted

QUARTERBACK
(1) K. Collins
(2) N. Tuiasosopo

WIDE RECEIVER
(1) R. Moss
(3) D. Gabriel

RIGHT TACKLE
(1) R. Gallery
(2) B. Lekkerkerker

RIGHT GUARD
(1) R. Stone
(2) B. Badger

CENTER
(1) J. Grove
(2) A. Treu

LEFT GUARD
(1) L. Walker
(2) J. Grove

LEFT TACKLE
(1) B. Sims
(2) C. Slaughter

TIGHT END
(1) C. Anderson
(2) R. Williams

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

DEFENSE

LEFT DEFENSIVE END
(1) B. Hamilton
(2) D. Burgess

LEFT DEFENSIVE TACKLE
(1) T. Sands
(2) T. Washington

RIGHT DEFENSIVE TACKLE
(1) T. Kelly
(2) W. Sapp

RIGHT DEFENSIVE END
(1) D. Burgess
(2) S. Williams

LEFT OUTSIDE LINEBACKER
(1) T. Brayton
(2) D. Grant

MIDDLE LINEBACKER
(1) D. Clark
(2) T. Johnson

RIGHT OUTSIDE LINEBACKER
(1) K. Morrison
(2) G. Irons

CORNERBACK
(2) F. Washington
(4) S. Routt

FREE SAFETY
(1) S. Schweigert
(2) J. Cooper

STRONG SAFETY
(1) D. Gibson
(2) J. Cooper

CORNERBACK
(1) N. Asomugha
(3) R. Hill

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

SPECIAL TEAMS

PUNT RETURNER
C. Carr

KICK RETURNER
(1) A. Whitted
(2) C. Carr

LONG SNAPPER
A. Treu

PUNTER
S. Lechler

KICKER
S. Janikowski

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

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St. Louis Rams

2006 SCHEDULE

PRE-SEASON

1. Indianapolis
2. Houston
3. @ Kansas City
4. @ Miami

REGULAR SEASON

1. Denver
2. @ San Francisco
3. @ Arizona
4. Detroit
5. @ Green Bay
6. Seattle
7. BYE Week
8. @ San Diego
9. Kansas City
10. @ Seattle
11. @ Carolina
12. San Francisco
13. Arizona
14. Chicago
15. @ Oakland
16. Washington
17. @ Minnesota

SEASON PREVIEW

Defense, defense, defense, will be the chant coming out of the Rams draft. Their defense gave up a franchise record 5,602 and 429 points. The running game also needs to be revamped; RB Steven Jackson's style does not work with the stretch running plays the rams used with Faulk. The Rams have tons of cash to spend in the draft, and the free agency market. They will be looking for either a strong safety or a corner back.

DRAFT NEEDS

Heading into the 2006 season, the Rams need to strengthen the following positions:

- Safety
- Cornerback
- Linebacker
- Defensive Line
- Offensive Line

TOP DRAFT PROSPECTS

- Cornerback: A. Cromartie
- Outside Lonebacker: C. Greenway
- Safety: D. Bullocks
- Free Safety J. Williams
- Cornerback: C. Griffin

SALARY CAP ROOM

$42.96 million

COACHING STAFF RATINGS

Offensive Coordinator: 47

Defensive Coordinator: 50

Average of Other Coaches: 67.3

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TEAM DEPTH CHARTS

OFFENSE

HALFBACK
(1) S. Jackson
(2) M. Faulk

FULLBACK
(1) M. Hedgecock
(2) C. Massey

WIDE RECEIVER
(2) I. Bruce
(4) K. Curtis

QUARTERBACK
(1) M. Bulger
(2) R. Fitzpatrick

WIDE RECEIVER
(1) T. Holt
(3) S. McDonald

RIGHT TACKLE
(1) A. Barron
(2) R. Tucker

RIGHT GUARD
(1) A. Timmerman
(2) B. Saipaia

CENTER
(1) A. McCollum
(2) L. Turner

LEFT GUARD
(1) C. Terrell
(2) R. Incognito

LEFT TACKLE
(1) O. Pace
(2) A. Barron

TIGHT END
(1) B. Manumaleuna
(2) C. Cleeland

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

DEFENSE

LEFT DEFENSIVE END
(1) L. Little
(2) T. Jackson

LEFT DEFENSIVE TACKLE
(1) R. Pickett
(2) J. Kennedy

RIGHT DEFENSIVE TACKLE
(1) D. Lewis
(2) B. Howard

RIGHT DEFENSIVE END
(1) T. Hargrove
(2) B. Green

LEFT OUTSIDE LINEBACKER
(1) B. Chillar
(2) J. Loyd

MIDDLE LINEBACKER
(1) C. Clairborne
(2) T. Faulk

RIGHT OUTSIDE LINEBACKER
(1) D. Coakley
(2) J. Loyd

CORNERBACK
(2) D. Groce
(4) C. Johnson

FREE SAFETY
(1) M. Furrey
(2) O. Atogwe

STRONG SAFETY
(1) A. Archuleta
(2) J. Carter

CORNERBACK
(1) T. Fisher
(3) C. Ivey

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

SPECIAL TEAMS

PUNT RETURNER
S. McDonald

KICK RETURNER
(1) A. Harris
(2) A. Cason

LONG SNAPPER
B. Saipaia

PUNTER
B. Barker

KICKER
J. Wilkins

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

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Baltimore Ravens

2006 SCHEDULE

PRE-SEASON

1. New York Giants
2. Philadelphia
3. @ Minnesota
4. @ Washington

REGULAR SEASON

1. Tampa Bay
2. Oakland
3. @ Cleveland
4. San Diego
5. @ Denver
6. Carolina
7. BYE Week
8. @ New Orleans
9. Cincinnati
10. @ Tennessee
11. Atlanta
12. Pittsburgh
13. @ Cincinnati
14. @ Kansas City
15. Cleveland
16. @ Pittsburgh
17. Buffalo

SEASON PREVIEW

The Baltimore Ravens' offense needs to score more points. The Ravens' defense is still one of the best in the league and will keep them in games. On offense, the running game, a staple for the Ravens, could no longer be counted on to carry the load. The QB position will be addressed by either the draft or through free agency. The salary cap will not have any effect in the way the Raven approach the draft or free agency. If the Ravens can get some help on offense, they could return to one of the elite teams in the AFC.

DRAFT NEEDS

Heading into the 2006 season, the Ravens need to improve the following positions:

- Quarterback
- Offensive Tackle
- Offensive Guard
- Defensive Tackle
- Cornerback

TOP DRAFT PROSPECTS

- Cornerback: A. Cromartie
- Linebacker: D. Jackson
- Offensive Tackle: M. McNeill
- Offensive Guard: M. Jean-Gilles
- Offensive Tackle: D. Colledge

SALARY CAP ROOM

$34.24 million

COACHING STAFF RATINGS

Offensive Coordinator: 69

Defensive Coordinator: 80

Average of Other Coaches: 62.4

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TEAM DEPTH CHARTS

OFFENSE

HALFBACK
(1) J. Lewis
(2) C. Taylor

FULLBACK
(1) A. Ricard
(2) O. Mughelli

WIDE RECEIVER
(2) M. Clayton
(4) P. Johnson

QUARTERBACK
(1) K. Boller
(2) A. Wright

WIDE RECEIVER
(1) D. Mason
(3) R. Hynes

RIGHT TACKLE
(1) T. Pashos
(2) O. Brown

RIGHT GUARD
(1) B. Rimpf
(2) T. Szalay

CENTER
(1) M. Flynn
(2) J. Brown

LEFT GUARD
(1) E. Mulitalo
(2) K. Vincent

LEFT TACKLE
(1) J. Ogden
(2) A. Terry

TIGHT END
(1) T. Heap
(2) D. Dinkins

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

DEFENSE

LEFT DEFENSIVE END
(1) A. Weaver
(2) J. Johnson

LEFT DEFENSIVE TACKLE
(1) M. Kemdeatu
(2) A. Franklin

RIGHT DEFENSIVE TACKLE
(1) K. Gregg
(2) D. Edwards

RIGHT DEFENSIVE END
(1) T. Suggs
(2) R. Green

LEFT OUTSIDE LINEBACKER
(1) T. Polley
(2) M. Smith

MIDDLE LINEBACKER
(1) R. Lewis
(2) B. Scott

RIGHT OUTSIDE LINEBACKER
(1) A. Thomas
(2) P. Boulware

CORNERBACK
(2) S. Rolle
(4) D. Carter

FREE SAFETY
(1) C. Williams
(2) B.J. Ward

STRONG SAFETY
(1) E. Reed
(2) W. Demps

CORNERBACK
(1) C. McAlister
(3) D. Sanders

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

SPECIAL TEAMS

PUNT RETURNER
B.J. Sams

KICK RETURNER
(1) J. White
(2) M. Clayton

LONG SNAPPER
—

PUNTER
D. Zastudil

KICKER
M. Stover

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

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Washington Redskins

2006 SCHEDULE

PRE-SEASON

1. @ Cincinnati
2. New York Jets
3. @ New England
4. Baltimore

REGULAR SEASON

1. Minnesota
2. @ Dallas
3. @ Houston
4. Jacksonville
5. @ New York Giants
6. Tennessee
7. @ Indianapolis
8. BYE Week
9. Dallas
10. @ Philadelphia
11. @ Tampa Bay
12. Carolina
13. Atlanta
14. Philadelphia
15. @ New Orleans
16. @ St. Louis
17. New York Giants

SEASON PREVIEW

The Redskins made the playoffs last year, but the offense had trouble in the playoffs. The Redskins may improve at the wide receiver position and move up in the draft by pulling off a trade or through free agency. The Redskins are always active in the draft and could look for the help they need by moving up. The Redskins are looking for a breakout year by RB Clinton Portis, and some help on the OL could be on the way for that to happen. The Redskins could be hurt by the salary cap if they go after high-priced free agents.

DRAFT NEEDS

Heading into the 2006 season, the Redskins need to strengthen the following positions:

- Wide Receiver
- Defensive End
- Tight End
- Punter
- Linebacker

TOP DRAFT PROSPECTS

- Wide Receiver: D. Williams
- Defensive End: T. Hali
- Outside Linebacker: B. Carpenter
- Defensive End: D. Tapp
- Linebacker: G. Wilkinson

SALARY CAP ROOM

$29.47 million

COACHING STAFF RATINGS

Offensive Coordinator: 95

Defensive Coordinator: 53

Average of Other Coaches: 63.8

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TEAM DEPTH CHARTS

OFFENSE

HALFBACK
(1) C. Portis
(2) L. Betts

FULLBACK
(1) C. Cooley
(2) M. Sellers

WIDE RECEIVER
(2) J. Thrash
(4) J. Farris

QUARTERBACK
(1) M. Brunell
(2) P. Ramsey

WIDE RECEIVER
(1) S. Moss
(3) T. Jacobs

RIGHT TACKLE
(1) J. Jansen
(2) J. Molinard

RIGHT GUARD
(1) R. Brown
(2) R. Thomas

CENTER
(1) C. Rabach
(2) C. Raymer

LEFT GUARD
(1) D. Dockery
(2) J. Jones

LEFT TACKLE
(1) C. Samuels
(2) J. Molinaro

TIGHT END
(1) R. Royal
(2) B. Kozlowski

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

DEFENSE

LEFT DEFENSIVE END
(1) D. Evans
(2) N. Clemons

LEFT DEFENSIVE TACKLE
(1) C. Griffin
(2) R. Boschetti

RIGHT DEFENSIVE TACKLE
(1) J. Salave'a
(2) C. Killings

RIGHT DEFENSIVE END
(1) P. Daniels
(2) R. Wynn

LEFT OUTSIDE LINEBACKER
(1) L. Arrington
(2) W. Holdman

MIDDLE LINEBACKER
(1) L. Marshall
(2) K. Campbell

RIGHT OUTSIDE LINEBACKER
(1) M. Washington
(2) C. Clemons

CORNERBACK
(2) S. Springs
(4) A. Jimoh

FREE SAFETY
(1) S. Taylor
(2) O. Stoutmire

STRONG SAFETY
(1) R. Clark
(2) P. Prioleau

CORNERBACK
(1) C. Rogers
(3) W. Harris

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

SPECIAL TEAMS

PUNT RETURNER
S. Moss

KICK RETURNER
(1) L. Betts
(2) J. Thrash

LONG SNAPPER
E. Albright

PUNTER
D. Frost

KICKER
J. Hall

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

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New Orleans Saints

2006 SCHEDULE

PRE-SEASON

1. @ Tennessee
2. Dallas
3. Indianapolis
4. @ Kansas City

REGULAR SEASON

1. @ Cleveland
2. @ Green Bay
3. Atlanta
4. @ Carolina
5. Tampa Bay
6. Philadelphia
7. BYE Week
8. Baltimore
9. @ Tampa Bay
10. @ Pittsburgh
11. Cincinnati
12. @ Atlanta
13. San Francisco
14. @ Dallas
15. Washington
16. @ New York Giants
17. Carolina

SEASON PREVIEW

The New Orleans Saints are looking forward to returning home. The Saints will go after the help they need in the draft and build from youth. The coach's job will be difficult with a club that could only pull off a 3-13 record. The Saints will go after a defensive player with the second pick in the draft. The salary cap will not stand in the way of getting everything this team needs to turn this franchise around.

DRAFT NEEDS

Heading into the 2006 season, the Saints need to improve the following positions:

- Quarterback
- Middle Linebacker
- Offensive Line
- Wide Receiver
- Defensive Tackle

TOP DRAFT PROSPECTS

- Quarterback: M. Leinart
- Defensive Tackle: J. McCargo
- Wide Receiver: S. Moss
- Inside Linebacker: A. Hodge
- Center: C. Chester

SALARY CAP ROOM

$31.87 million

COACHING STAFF RATINGS

Offensive Coordinator: 63

Defensive Coordinator: 57

Average of Other Coaches: 68

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TEAM DEPTH CHARTS

OFFENSE

HALFBACK
(1) A. Smith
(2) A. Steker

FULLBACK
N. Karney

WIDE RECEIVER
(2) D. Stallworth
(4) D. Henderson

QUARTERBACK
(1) T. Bouman
(2) A. Brooks

WIDE RECEIVER
(1) J. Horn
(3) A. Hakim

RIGHT TACKLE
(1) J. Brown
(2) J. Stinchcomb

RIGHT GUARD
(1) M. Holland
(2) J. Mayberry

CENTER
(1) L. Bentley
(2) J. Nesbit

LEFT GUARD
(1) K. Jacox
(2) A. Hoffman

LEFT TACKLE
(1) W. Gandy
(2) B. Archibald

TIGHT END
(1) Z. Hilton
(2) L. Hall

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

DEFENSE

LEFT DEFENSIVE END
(1) W. Smith
(2) D. Howard

LEFT DEFENSIVE TACKLE
(1) B. Young
(2) J. Sullivan

RIGHT DEFENSIVE TACKLE
(1) W. Whitehead
(2) R. Leisle

RIGHT DEFENSIVE END
(1) C. Grant
(2) T. Bryant

LEFT OUTSIDE LINEBACKER
(1) S. Hodge
(2) J. Allen

MIDDLE LINEBACKER
(1) R. McKinnon
(2) A. Fincher

RIGHT OUTSIDE LINEBACKER
(1) C. Bockwoldt
(2) T. Slaughter

CORNERBACK
(2) F. Thomas
(4) F. Brown

FREE SAFETY
(1) D. Smith
(2) S. Gleason

STRONG SAFETY
(1) J. Bullocks
(2) M. Mitchell

CORNERBACK
(1) N. McKenzie
(3) J. Craft

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

SPECIAL TEAMS

PUNT RETURNER
D. Stallworth

KICK RETURNER
(1) A. Stecker
(2) F. McAfee

LONG SNAPPER
E. Conwell

PUNTER
M. Berger

KICKER
J. Carney

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

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Seattle Seahawks

2006 SCHEDULE

PRE-SEASON

1. Dallas
2. @ Indianapolis
3. @ San Diego
4. Oakland

REGULAR SEASON

1. @ Detroit
2. Arizona
3. New York Giants
4. @ Chicago
5. BYE Week
6. @ St. Louis
7. Minnesota
8. @ Kansas City
9. Oakland
10. St. Louis
11. @ San Francisco
12. Green Bay
13. @ Denver
14. Arizona
15. San Francisco
16. San Diego
17. @ Tampa Bay

SEASON PREVIEW

All it took was for the Seahawks to get out of the AFC to finally get to the Super Bowl. Since the 2002 season, the Seahawks have been building toward winning not only their first playoff game in franchise history in the NFL, but also winning their first NFC Championship. The Seahawks came up a little short in Super Bowl 40, but look for a possible return in Super Bowl 41. The Seahawks should be the first team to clinch their division in 2006, playing in the mild West of the NFC.

DRAFT NEEDS

Heading into the 2006 season, the Seahawks need to strengthen their team in the following positions:

- Free Safety
- Cornerback
- Defensive End
- Wide Receiver
- Linebacker

TOP DRAFT PROSPECTS

- Cornerback: R. Marshall
- Strong Safety: D. Bullocks
- Free Safety: K. Simpson
- Defensive End: T. Hali
- Cornerback: A. Zemaitis

SALARY CAP ROOM

$33.16 million

COACHING STAFF RATINGS

Offensive Coordinator: 70

Defensive Coordinator: 74

Average of Other Coaches: 66.9

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TEAM DEPTH CHARTS

OFFENSE

HALFBACK
(1) S. Alexander
(2) M. Morris

FULLBACK
M. Strong

WIDE RECEIVER
(2) B. Engram
(4) P. Warrick

QUARTERBACK
(1) M. Hasselbeck
(2) S. Wallace

WIDE RECEIVER
(1) D. Jackson
(3) J. Jurevicius

RIGHT TACKLE
(1) S. Locklear
(2) F. Womack

RIGHT GUARD
(1) C. Gray
(2) F. Womack

CENTER
(1) R. Tobeck
(2) C. Spencer

LEFT GUARD
(1) S. Hutchinson
(2) J. Wunsch

LEFT TACKLE
(1) W. Jones
(2) W. Hunter

TIGHT END
(1) J. Stevens
(2) R. Hannan

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

DEFENSE

LEFT DEFENSIVE END
(1) B. Fisher
(2) J. Huckeba

LEFT DEFENSIVE TACKLE
(1) C. Darby
(2) R. Bailey

RIGHT DEFENSIVE TACKLE
(1) M. Tubbs
(2) R. Bernard

RIGHT DEFENSIVE END
(1) G. Wistrom
(2) J. Tafoya

LEFT OUTSIDE LINEBACKER
(1) L. Hill
(2) K. Bentley

MIDDLE LINEBACKER
(1) L. Tatupu
(2) N. Koutouvides

RIGHT OUTSIDE LINEBACKER
(1) D. Lewis
(2) I. Kacyvenski

CORNERBACK
(2) M. Trufant
(4) J. Williams

FREE SAFETY
(1) M. Manuel
(2) E. Pruitt

STRONG SAFETY
(1) M. Boulware
(2) J. Howell

CORNERBACK
(1) A. Dyson
(3) K. Herndon

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

SPECIAL TEAMS

PUNT RETURNER
P. Warrick

KICK RETURNER
(1) J. Scobey
(2) M. Strong

LONG SNAPPER
C. Gray

PUNTER
L. Araguz

KICKER
J. Brown

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

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Pittsburgh Steelers

2006 SCHEDULE

PRE-SEASON

1. @ Arizona
2. Minnesota
3. @ Philadelphia
4. Carolina

REGULAR SEASON

1. Miami
2. @ Jacksonville
3. Cincinnati
4. BYE Week
5. @ San Diego
6. Kansas City
7. @ Atlanta
8. @ Oakland
9. Denver
10. New Orleans
11. @ Cleveland
12. @ Baltimore
13. Tampa Bay
14. Cleveland
15. @ Carolina
16. Baltimore
17. @ Cincinnati

SEASON PREVIEW

The defending Super Bowl champs are ready to defend and are primed for another run; they don't have many other areas to fill other than RB. The Steelers prefer to build through the draft and re-sign their own free agents rather then chase other outside free agents. Look for the Steelers to draft offensive players early. The salary cap is in good shape for them to get the help they need to make another run at the Super Bowl. After all they have a whole other hand waiting for rings.

DRAFT NEEDS

Coming off a Super Bowl win, the Steelers look to the 2006 season to strengthen the following positions:

- Running Back
- Wide Receiver
- Center
- Defensive End
- Linebacker

TOP DRAFT PROSPECTS

- Center: N. Mangold
- Wide Receiver: M. Robinson
- Offensive Guard: T. Lutui
- Wide Receiver: B. Smith
- Center: C. Chester

SALARY CAP ROOM

$33.66 million

COACHING STAFF RATINGS

Offensive Coordinator: 76

Defensive Coordinator: 88

Average of Other Coaches: 68.3

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TEAM DEPTH CHARTS

OFFENSE

HALFBACK
(1) W. Parker
(2) J. Bettis

FULLBACK
D. Kreider

WIDE RECEIVER
(2) A. Randle El
(4) C. Wilson

QUARTERBACK
(1) B. Roethlisbergr
(2) C. Batch

WIDE RECEIVER
(1) H. Ward
(3) S. Morey

RIGHT TACKLE
(1) M. Starks
(2) B. Brooks

RIGHT GUARD
(1) K. Simmons
(2) C. Kemoeatu

CENTER
(1) J. Hartings
(2) C. Okobi

LEFT GUARD
(1) L. Faneca
(2) T. Brown

LEFT TACKLE
(1) M. Smith
(2) T. Essex

TIGHT END
(1) H. Miller
(2) J. Tuman

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

DEFENSE

LEFT DEFENSIVE END
(1) A. Smith
(2) B. Keisel

LEFT DEFENSIVE TACKLE
(1) C. Hampton
(2) S. Nua

RIGHT DEFENSIVE TACKLE
(1) C. Hoke

RIGHT DEFENSIVE END
(1) K. Van Oelhoffen
(2) T. Kirschke

LEFT OUTSIDE LINEBACKER
(1) C. Haggans
(2) J. Harrison

MIDDLE LINEBACKER
(1) J. Farrior
(2) L. Foote

RIGHT OUTSIDE LINEBACKER
(1) J. Porter
(2) A. Frazier

CORNERBACK
(2) I. Taylor
(4) R. Colclough

FREE SAFETY
(1) C. Hope
(2) T. Carter

STRONG SAFETY
(1) T. Polamalu
(2) M. Logan

CORNERBACK
(1) D. Townsend
(3) B. McFadden

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

SPECIAL TEAMS

PUNT RETURNER
A. Randle El

KICK RETURNER
(1) R. Colclough
(2) A. Randle El

LONG SNAPPER
G. Warren

PUNTER
C. Gardocki

KICKER
J. Reed

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

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Houston Texans

2006 SCHEDULE

PRE-SEASON

1. Kansas City
2. @ St. Louis
3. @ Denver
4. Tampa Bay

REGULAR SEASON

1. Philadelphia
2. @ Indianapolis
3. Washington
4. Miami
5. BYE Week
6. @ Dallas
7. Jacksonville
8. @ Tennessee
9. @ New York Giants
10. @ Jacksonville
11. Buffalo
12. @ New York Jets
13. @ Oakland
14. Tennessee
15. @ New England
16. Indianapolis
17. Cleveland

SEASON PREVIEW

The Texans will be looking to use the number-one pick in the draft to right the ship. Combine the pick with the hiring of Gary Kubiak as head coach, and the Texans may have turned the corner and be on their way to a winning season. The offense line needs to be addressed at the guard and tackle positions. The Texans need to attract more quality free agents, and a wide receiver might be their first choice.

DRAFT NEEDS

Heading into the 2006 season, the Texans need help at the following positions:

- Offensive Tackle
- Wide Receiver
- Linebacker
- Safety
- Offensive Guard

TOP DRAFT PROSPECTS

- Running Back: R. Bush
- Quarterback: V. Young
- Offensive Tackle: D. Ferguson
- Offensive Guard: D. Joseph
- Wide Receiver: S. Moss

SALARY CAP ROOM

$28.34 million

COACHING STAFF RATINGS

Offensive Coordinator: 68

Defensive Coordinator: 87

Average of Other Coaches: 64.3

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TEAM DEPTH CHARTS

OFFENSE

HALFBACK
(1) D. Davis
(2) J. Wells

FULLBACK
M. Norris

WIDE RECEIVER
(2) C. Bradford
(4) D. Armstrong

QUARTERBACK
(1) D. Carr
(2) T. Banks

WIDE RECEIVER
(1) A. Johnson
(3) J. Gaffney

RIGHT TACKLE
(1) Z. Wiegert
(2) T. Wade

RIGHT GUARD
(1) F. Weary
(2) T. Walter

CENTER
(1) S. McKinney
(2) T. Washington

LEFT GUARD
(1) M. Brown
(2) G. Jones

LEFT TACKLE
(1) C. Pitts
(2) S. Wand

TIGHT END
(1) M. Bruener
(2) M. Murphy

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

DEFENSE

LEFT DEFENSIVE END
(1) G. Walker
(2) T. Johnson

LEFT DEFENSIVE TACKLE
(1) S. Payne

RIGHT DEFENSIVE TACKLE
(1) J. Deloach

RIGHT DEFENSIVE END
(1) R. Smith
(2) J. Idane

LEFT OUTSIDE LINEBACKER
(1) S. Orr
(2) J. Babin

MIDDLE LINEBACKER
(1) D. Polk
(2) M. Greenwood

RIGHT OUTSIDE LINEBACKER
(1) A. Peek
(2) C. Anderson

CORNERBACK
(2) D. Faggins
(4) L. Sanders

FREE SAFETY
(1) C. Brown
(2) M. Coleman

STRONG SAFETY
(1) G. Earl
(2) R. Walker

CORNERBACK
(1) D. Robinson
(3) J. Bell

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

SPECIAL TEAMS

PUNT RETURNER
P. Buchanon

KICK RETURNER
(1) J. Mathis
(2) V. Morency

LONG SNAPPER
B. Pittman

PUNTER
C. Stanley

KICKER
K. Brown

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

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Tennessee Titans

2006 SCHEDULE

PRE-SEASON

1. New Orleans
2. @ Denver
3. Atlanta
4. @ Green Bay

REGULAR SEASON

1. New York Jets
2. @ San Diego
3. @ Miami
4. Dallas
5. @ Indianapolis
6. @ Washington
7. BYE Week
8. Houston
9. @ Jacksonville
10. Baltimore
11. @ Philadelphia
12. New York Giants
13. Indianapolis
14. @ Houston
15. Jacksonville
16. @ Buffalo
17. New England

SEASON PREVIEW

Picking the Titans will test your GM skills from the outset. Their salary cap has plagued them for two seasons, but might be all behind them now. Their position in the draft will ensure an impact player and the free agent market will also help fill some holes from last year. Re-signing DE Kyle Vanden Bosch is a priority and restructuring QB Steve McNair's deal must also be addressed.

DRAFT NEEDS

Heading into the 2006 season, the Titans need to improve the following positions:

- Linebacker
- Quarterback
- Running Back
- Safety
- Wide Receiver

TOP DRAFT PROSPECTS

- Quarterback: V. Young
- Halfback: D. Jackson
- Safety: A. Smith
- Running Back: B. Calhoun
- Offensive Guard: C. Spencer

SALARY CAP ROOM

$54.26 million

COACHING STAFF RATINGS

Offensive Coordinator: 74

Defensive Coordinator: 76

Average of Other Coaches: 65.7

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TEAM DEPTH CHARTS

OFFENSE

HALFBACK
(1) C. Brown
(2) T. Henry

FULLBACK
T. Fleming

WIDE RECEIVER
(2) C. Roby
(4) T. Calico

QUARTERBACK
(1) S. McNair
(2) B. Volek

WIDE RECEIVER
(1) D. Bennett
(3) B. Wade

RIGHT TACKLE
(1) M. Roos
(2) J. Bell

RIGHT GUARD
(1) B. Olson
(2) D. Stewart

CENTER
(1) J. Hartwig
(2) J. Dorenbos

LEFT GUARD
(1) Z. Piller
(2) E. Amano

LEFT TACKLE
(1) B. Hopkins
(2) D. Loper

TIGHT END
(1) E. Kinney
(2) B. Troupe

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

DEFENSE

LEFT DEFENSIVE END
(1) K. Vanden Bosch
(2) B. Schobel

LEFT DEFENSIVE TACKLE
(1) R. Starks
(2) J. Clauss

RIGHT DEFENSIVE TACKLE
(1) A. Haynesworth
(2) R. Long

RIGHT DEFENSIVE END
(1) T. Laboy
(2) A. Odom

LEFT OUTSIDE LINEBACKER
(1) P. Sirmon
(2) R. Boiman

MIDDLE LINEBACKER
(1) B. Castle
(2) R. Reynolds

RIGHT OUTSIDE LINEBACKER
(1) K. Bulluck
(2) C. Spencer

CORNERBACK
(2) A. Jones
(4) T. Beckham

FREE SAFETY
(1) L. Thompson
(2) V. Fuller

STRONG SAFETY
(1) T. Williams
(2) D. Nickey

CORNERBACK
(1) R. Hill
(3) A. Woolfolk

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

SPECIAL TEAMS

PUNT RETURNER
B. Wade

KICK RETURNER
(1) C. Roby
(2) M. Waddell

LONG SNAPPER
E. Amano

PUNTER
C. Hentrich

KICKER
R. Bironas

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

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Minnesota Vikings

2006 SCHEDULE

PRE-SEASON

1. Oakland
2. @ Pittsburgh
3. Baltimore
4. @ Dallas

REGULAR SEASON

1. @ Washington
2. Carolina
3. Chicago
4. @ Buffalo
5. Detroit
6. BYE Week
7. @ Seattle
8. New England
9. @ San Francisco
10. Green Bay
11. @ Miami
12. Arizona
13. @ Chicago
14. @ Detroit
15. New York Jets
16. @ Green Bay
17. St. Louis

SEASON PREVIEW

The Minnesota Vikings are coming off of a tough year, but 2006 brings hope for this veteran team that is loaded with talent. The offensive line could see a complete makeover in the off-season. The salary cap will have little room for many expensive free agents.

DRAFT NEEDS

Heading into the 2006 season, the Vikings need to strengthen the following positions:

- Linebacker
- Running Back
- Offensive Line
- Strong Safety
- Quarterback

TOP DRAFT PROSPECTS

- Outside Linebacker: C. Greenway
- Outside Linebacker: E. Sims
- Offensive Guard: M. Jean-Gilles
- Offensive Guard: R. Sims
- Strong Safety: D. Slay

SALARY CAP ROOM

$27.66 million

COACHING STAFF RATINGS

Offensive Coordinator: 69

Defensive Coordinator: 65

Average of Other Coaches: 66.9

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TEAM DEPTH CHARTS

OFFENSE

HALFBACK
(1) M. Bennett
(2) M. Moore

FULLBACK
(1) J. Wiggins
(2) R. Owens

WIDE RECEIVER
(2) K. Robinson
(4) N. Burleson

QUARTERBACK
(1) D. Culpepper
(2) B. Johnson

WIDE RECEIVER
(1) T. Taylor
(3) M. Robinson

RIGHT TACKLE
(1) M. Johnson
(2) M. Rosenthal

RIGHT GUARD
(1) A. Goldberg
(2) T. Fonoti

CENTER
(1) C. Withrow
(2) M. Fowler

LEFT GUARD
(1) A. Herrera
(2) C. Liwienski

LEFT TACKLE
(1) B. McKinney
(2) S. Bubin

TIGHT END
(1) J. Kleinsasser
(2) J. Dugan

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

DEFENSE

LEFT DEFENSIVE END
(1) K. Udeze
(2) S. Johnson

LEFT DEFENSIVE TACKLE
(1) P. Willaims
(2) C.J. Mosley

RIGHT DEFENSIVE TACKLE
K. Williams

RIGHT DEFENSIVE END
(1) E. James
(2) L. Johnstone

LEFT OUTSIDE LINEBACKER
(1) E.J. Henderson
(2) D. Thomas

MIDDLE LINEBACKER
(1) S. Cowart
(2) R. Davis

RIGHT OUTSIDE LINEBACKER
(1) R. Smith
(2) N. Harris

CORNERBACK
(2) B. Williams
(4) F. Smoot

FREE SAFETY
(1) D. Sharper
(2) D. Fox

STRONG SAFETY
(1) C. Chavous
(2) W. Offord

CORNERBACK
(1) A. Winfield
(3) R. Brown

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

SPECIAL TEAMS

PUNT RETURNER
—

KICK RETURNER
(1) K. Robinson
(2) T. Williamson

LONG SNAPPER
C. Withrow

PUNTER
C. Kluwe

KICKER
P. Edinger

Note - Number in brackets denotes player depth ranking

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THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

Now that you've reviewed the teams, select the team you wish to coach. The team owner asks several questions to determine if you are worthy of leading his team. Here are some areas you will be asked about:

- Name a coach you admire
- Offensive/defensive formations
- Stressful situations
- Player evaluation
- Work ethics
- Five offensive principle questions
- Defensive knowledge

After completing the interview process, you are offered five different coaching positions with different NFL teams. Review each offer based on several factors:

Salary: The salary you're offered is based on the answers you gave during the interview process.

Owner's Goals: Make sure the owner's goals are in line with the direction you want to take the team.

Coaching Staff Rating: The team coaching staff has a rating based on the team's 2005 season performance.

Salary Cap: Check how much money the team has to retain existing players and acquire new ones.

TIP

REVIEW AND COMPARE THE CONTRACT TERMS OF EACH OFFER YOU RECEIVE.

The owner asks you questions, and your answers affect your coaching attributes. If you say you will work long hours to ensure a winning program, this raises your work ethics attributes. If you answer the formation questions correctly, it raises your understanding of the game attributes. Every question affects your attributes. The answers help pinpoint your coaching philosophies and adjust your attributes accordingly.

You're Hired

Congratulations! You've been hired to a fat new contract and given the reins to an NFL franchise. In this section, tour your office and meet the rest of the staff. Get ready for next season and remember, preparation in the spring is the key to success in the fall. The first step is to talk to the team owner. He explains how to use the office tools and how to get around in the game.

TIP

TAKE A FEW MINUTES TO LEARN THE ROPES. FIRST-TIME COACHES SHOULD TAKE THE TOUR. A LITTLE TIME SPENT NOW WILL PAY OFF LATER! THE OWNER INTRODUCES THE ICON THAT HIGHLIGHTS WHAT PARTICULAR THING YOU WANT TO DO. IF IT'S ABOVE SOMEONE, YOU CAN TALK TO HIM. IF YOU HIGHLIGHT THE COMPUTER, YOU CAN ACCESS IT. THIS BRINGS UP YOUR DESKTOP, WHICH CONTAINS YOUR CALENDAR, EMAIL, PLAYBOOK, *NFL.COM*, ROSTER, AND YOUR COACHES ROSTER. WE WILL GO INTO EACH OF THESE AREAS LATER IN THIS SECTION.

OFFICE HEADS-UP DISPLAY (HUD)

OFFICE HUD

The Office HUD in the upper-right corner lists the tasks you should be doing, and what you should be doing in the ticker. The HUD alerts you to unread emails, incoming phone calls, reports in the inbox, and conversations you should address during the current task. The Office HUD also indicates if you are on a running clock, unlimited time, or working with numbered actions. If you are on a running clock, you have a set amount of time. If you don't complete the task before the time is up, it automatically ends the task. Everything in Office Hours is unlimited time. This allows you to use the computer and access the glossary via the TV. You stay in unlimited time until you proceed to the next task. Numbered actions are predetermined

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limits on certain tasks. For example, you are limited to the number of players you may scout in the scout players task. It's not mandatory to do the maximum number of tasks, but you cannot exceed the limit.

The second line of the HUD is separated into four sections. The first is a computer icon with a number to the right of it. The number represents the number of emails waiting to be read. The email screen displays important updates on your current job status. To view an email, highlight it and select it. The second is a phone. This alerts you to receive phone calls during Office Hours. The third section is for reports. This has your scouting report, and at the beginning of the game it has your job offers. The talk bubble represents the number people who want to talk to you or number of times an individual wants to talk to you.

SITTING WITH THE OWNER

Note the icon above the owner's head. This icon indicates that someone wants to talk to you. This first conversation reveals one of the most important tools of your coaching tenure: the Quick NAV display.

THE OFFICE QUICK NAV

The Office Quick NAV is divided into four sections. Press a direction to see a quick view or press the action button to get a detailed view. Moving clockwise, the four areas are: Calendar, Legend Status, Keys to Victory, and Coach Status.

CALENDAR

Press up on the D-pad to view the current task and the next task. Select the next task to end the current task and proceed. This area also allows access to the calendar on the desktop computer for more detailed schedules and a list of events.

LEGEND STATUS

Press right on the D-pad to view Legend Status. This shows your current all-time ranking against the rankings of all other coaches based on four categories.

1. **Playoffs:** All-time playoff win/loss record.
2. **Championships:** Super Bowl win/loss record.
3. **Regular Season:** Regular season win/loss record.
4. **Coaching Lineage:** If a former coordinator moves on to become a head coach, you receive a portion of his legend ranking points.

From the Legend Status area, while in Quick NAV, press the action button to visit the Coach's Corridor and the Hall of Legends.

THE COACH'S CORRIDOR

When entering the Coach's Corridor, you see busts of all the current head coaches organized by division and conference—AFC on the left and NFC on the right. Using the D-pad, highlight any coach and press the action button to view the ranked categories.

- Championships
- Playoff wins
- Regular season wins
- Coach biography

THE PRO FOOTBALL HALL OF FAME

DON SHULA

After visiting the Coach's Corridor, press the Next Task button to enter the Hall of Fame. Enshrined here are the top 25 coaches in NFL history. Again, view their stats by highlighting the coach and pressing the action button.

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KEYS TO VICTORY

Press down on the D-pad to see the Keys to Victory. These are tasks that need to be accomplished in each of the game's nine periods. The Keys to Victory are one of the most important functions of the game. Always check them and stay up to date on where you are in accomplishing them. Don't take them for granted because they can change from period to period and can cost you trust attributes with your owner and coaching staff. Completing them is as important as winning games, so make sure you complete all the Keys to Victory in each period before moving on. If your marquee QB retires, your owner may want to go after another marquee QB to replace him. Be sure you make this a priority. The owner gets what he wants, since he writes the checks.

NOTE

ALWAYS CHECK YOUR KEYS TO VICTORY BY PUSHING DOWN ON THE QUICK NAV CONTROLLER.

The different periods of the game are:

1. Hire Coach
2. Re-Sign Players
3. Restricted Free Agents
4. Unrestricted Free Agents
5. Draft
6. Training Camp
7. Pre-Season
8. Regular Season
9. Post-Season

KEYS TO VICTORY TASKS

Accomplish each of the Keys to Victory in each period to avoid losing the trust of your staff and the team owner.

COACH STATUS

COACHING CATEGORIES

Press left on the D-pad to view your Coach Status. This displays your current statistics and their levels. The three levels are:

1. **Overall:** Your Overall ranking is based on 13 attributes.
2. **Job Security:** Job security is based on your current owner trust level. Meeting your yearly goals raises your trust levels, ensuring job security.
3. **Trust:** Trust among you and your coaching staff increases loyalty and performance. The higher the trust level, the better your chance of retaining key assistant coaches. Trust among the agents in the league grows with each deal you do with them. Negotiations get easier as the trust level rises. Trust levels with other NFL GMs makes trading for other players easier. You are deemed to be fair and not a player raider.

GAME TASKS

Every day is broken up into four tasks. Depending on what day of the week you are currently working on, the daily tasks may vary. For example, let's look at February 13 in the calendar. You see that you have four tasks scheduled for that day. First is Orientation. After completing this task, you sim to the next task, which is Office Hours. After that is the Start of the Year meeting. Keep going through your tasks until you complete them all and finish that day of work, then you sim to the next day. Normal days have four tasks, while special event days have one or two. Special event days are Combine, Draft, and Gameday.

NOTE

THE TERM SIM IS SHORT FOR SIMULATE, I.E., HAVING THE SYSTEM SIMULATE EITHER TO THE NEXT TASK OR SIMULATE REQUESTED ACTIONS MADE BY YOU DURING A PARTICULAR TASK.

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VIEW YOUR CURRENT STATUS BEFORE MOVING TO THE NEXT SECTION.

Alright Coach, let's use Feb 13 as an example of how to go through your tasks for one day. You will need to do them in order before you can sim to the next task or day.

TASK 1: ORIENTATION

1. View status
2. View Legend Status: To view Legend Status, press and hold right on the D-pad. This shows a Legend Status quick view. Displayed is your current legend ranking and how you rank in all four Legend Status categories. New coaches begin unranked, but quickly advance with success. To get a more detailed view of your Legend Status, press the action button to go to the Coach's Corridor. There you can see information on all the current NFL head coaches.
3. View your goals: These are the yearly goals given to you by the owner, which include Draft Marquee Players, Free Agent Signings, and Season Expectation.
4. Sim to next task

TASK 2: OFFICE HOURS

1. Review task: The Office Hours task has nothing for you to do at this time. This task fills up as you get deeper into the calendar. The tasks are explained in more detail further on in this chapter.
2. Sim to next task

TASK 3: START OF THE YEAR MEETING

1. Go over budget with owner
2. Set new yearly goals
3. Review your current coaching philosophies
4. Sim to the next task

TASK 4: OFFICE HOURS

1. Review task: Again, the Office Hours task has nothing for you to do at this time. This task fills up as you get deeper into the calendar. The tasks are explained in more detail further on in the chapter.
2. Sim to next task

What a first day! You will go through the process detailed above as you navigate from day to day within the game. Some days will be lighter, with only two tasks to do, but for the most part, four new tasks per day are what are ahead.

MAN ON A MISSION

At the request of the owner, visit the Hall of Fame and find out who is the greatest coach of all time. After you discover the answer, meet with the owner and tell him.

TIP

HE WAS THE ONLY COACH TO TAKE HIS TEAM UNDEFEATED THROUGH THE ENTIRE NFL REGULAR SEASON, THE PLAYOFFS, AND THE SUPER BOWL.

OFFICE TV

The Office TV offers many different options to increase overall knowledge of the coaching profession. The glossary is one of the most useful tools in the game. The Office TV contains the most complete glossary of terms used in the game as well as in the NFL. Don't know what an IR is? How about a Run N Shoot? Use the Office TV to find out. Soon you will be talking like a real NFL coach and GM. By the way, GM means "general manager," and it's in the glossary.

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OFFICE HOURS

Here are some tips on how to use your office hours to their full potential. When you encounter an Office Hours task, think of it as your organizer for the rest of the game.

The Office Hours task is the place to catch up on emails or to visit *NFL.com*®. If you have any emails you need to read, check them during this time. Anyone in the league who wants to contact you will do it during office hours. Schedule interviews or appointments, or chat with a player's agent. Office hours allow you to perform two numbered action events.

TIP

IF YOU DON'T NEED TO PERFORM ANY TASKS DURING YOUR OFFICE HOURS, SKIP IT, AND GO ON TO YOUR NEXT TASK.

CALENDAR

Checking your calendar is as important as staying up on your office hours. Many of the activities you set up in office hours show up in your calendar. Monitor your calendar every day to see what is ahead for you and your team.

COMPUTER DESKTOP

The calendar is in your desktop computer. It has the most detailed view of the actions in the coming months, offering a more detailed look at the coming events than the version available in the Quick NAV. The weekly calendar allows you to go to the next task or sim ahead to future tasks. The monthly calendar gives a quick view of the current month and allows faster movement through the year than the weekly calendar. Different periods are defined on the monthly calendar in four different colors.

MONTHLY CALENDAR COLOR CODING

COLOR	SEASON
Gray	Off-Season
Blue	Pre-Season
Green	Regular Season
Orange	Post-Season

GRAY CALENDAR

BLUE CALENDAR

GREEN CALENDAR

ORANGE CALENDAR

The period color-coding also appears in the weekly calendar. This is a great visual key to quickly identify what part of the season you are in.

EMAIL

The Email screen displays important updates on your progress. To view an email, highlight, then select that email.

PLAYBOOK

You can access the playbook only during the game plan and play designer tasks. You'll find extensive information on the playbook and how to use it later in this guide. Familiarizing yourself with your team's plays is vital to a successful season.

NFL.COM

NFL.com is the most comprehensive resource available during Office Hours. The league's website sends alerts to stories concerning free agents, history, and many other useful tidbits of information. Want to see who the hottest players in the league are? *NFL.com* covers all the stars. If you are scouting a future opponent, you can see how that team compares to all the teams in league. Did your RB rush for 200 yards? *NFL.com* is where you can

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find the weekly player awards. Want to find out about the 1972 Dolphins and their undefeated season? Many of the NFL greatest moments in history are here for you to read about. If you want to see how your players and team stack up against the rest of the league, now all those stats are at your fingertips.

NFL.COM FRONT PAGE

- View articles from around the league
- Check stats
- Home: News stories and history
- Awards: Players and coaches, view 39 different awards
- Scores: Standings and schedules
- Stats: Individual, team, and rankings

ROSTER

ROSTER MAIN PAGE

PLAYER ROSTER

The Player Roster screen displays the attributes of players in the league. Depending on the specific task you are in, you can also call a player's agent, scout players on other teams, and change a player's position.

DEPTH CHART

The Depth Chart sort allows you to set the starting players on offense, defense, and special teams. To do this, make sure your team is selected, then use the sort by option to order by a specific attribute and the modifier option to filter out players you don't want to see. Confirm the sort and go to the next screen. If a player is not performing well, you can check the depth chart to see if the back up is ready to take the starting position. Also, you can look through the depth chart when you have injuries. The depth chart also alerts you to the need of a position change in case of injury. If your team is lacking depth at OL, you might need to have a DL player fill in at that position. His attributes might be a little shy for the position, but he can cover it.

ROSTER BREAKDOWN

The Roster Breakdown screen gives a big-picture view of the roster. MIN is the minimum number of players needed for the selected position. MAX is the most players allowed for a selected position. The roster cannot be below the MIN or above the MAX when entering game day or practice. If the roster doesn't meet league standards, the owner will get involved, and you don't want that.

INJURY REPORT

The Injury Report screen displays the players who are injured on teams around the league. If an injured player will be out for an extended time, place him on the IR (injured reserve) to open up a roster spot for your team. Place players on injury reserve from this screen by highlighting and selecting the player. Managing your injured players is as important as managing your healthy ones.

SALARY CAP

The Salary Cap screen is similar to the Player Roster, except this screen focuses on the team's budget for the players. The Salary Cap screen shows you the current term of a player contract and how it affects the cap over the term of his contract. You can also view your players by position, which allows you to view how deep you are at a particular position. You can manage your cap through cuts, trades, and re-signings.

SUBSTITUTIONS

The Substitution screen allows selected players to be set as a starter on specific plays. Use the sort by option to order by a specific attribute. Use the modifier option to filter out players you don't want to use. For different situations, such as fourth and inches, you can sub in a particular player who fits the short yardage. You would rather add a big back to the formation than a speedy back. Another example would be if you're in third and long, you want your speed receivers over your possession receivers or tight ends.

COACHES ROSTER

The Coaches Roster screen allows views of detailed information on the coaching staff. This is where you can see what positions need to be filled. During the manage staff task, if there is an open coordinator position, a coach can be promoted to the coordinator level.

COACHES ROSTER SCREEN

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The Off-Season

REVIEWING YOUR STAFF/ START OF THE YEAR MEETING

In this section you are introduced to the various tasks you need to perform over the seven weeks before the draft. As you move from task to task you will be asked to "sim to the next task;" sim is short for simulate. This means the system will simulate the tasks you performed during that day, then start you at the beginning of the next day. You may auto skip all seven weeks and let the system do the work, but what fun would that be? If you auto skip, your coaching attributes will not be affected, but they won't go up either.

At the start of every off-season, you and the owner meet to go over your budgets, set new yearly goals, and review your current philosophies.

OWNER'S EXPECTATIONS

The owner goes over his expectations. Listen carefully because your job is on the line if you don't come through.

Salary Cap: 100.88 million—The salary cap is how much money you can spend on the 53 players who are on your roster for that current year.

Staff Budget: The staff budget is 11.37 million; this is what you pay your coordinators and assistant coaches. It does not count against your team salary cap.

Offensive Philosophies: Vertical, Single Back, Balanced, Spread, West Coast

Defensive Philosophies: The 46, Cover 2, The 3-4, The 4-3

Keep in mind that you are committed to the choices you make here for a full year.

NOTE

OFFENSIVE/DEFENSIVE PHILOSOPHIES AND FORMATIONS ARE DETAILED FURTHER IN THE TRAINING CAMP AND REGULAR SEASON SECTION.

HIRE COACH PERIOD

Start the hiring process for your vacant assistant coaching positions. Either you or the owner can fill these jobs. After meeting with the owner, check your Keys to Victory (Quick NAV).

WEEKLY STAFF MEETING

It's time to meet the rest of your coaching staff: your coordinators and assistant coaches. These weekly meetings give your staff a chance to update you on how their players are doing and share what strategies they think will work for the team. Coaches with icons in front of them have valuable information to share with you. After you talk with everyone, the meeting is over.

In the owner's expectation section, he may have given you a number of coaching positions he wants filled. The only problem is someone still has the job at the first weekly meeting. You must choose, based on the expectation, what coaches you need to let go.

When you interview your assistant coaches, you have to decide whether to retain them or let them go.

Release your unwanted coaching staff during the weekly meetings. This saves on the number of moves you make in an action-based event. After you release a coach, you receive emails from your scouting director about potential new hires. You cannot hire any new members to your coaching staff until you complete the manage staff task.

MANAGE STAFF

If you need to fill a coaching slot, or you want to release one of your coaches, this is one of the times to do it. Go into your coach roster for coordinators or position coaches to review your current staff. You can also use the phone to set up a meeting to interview available free agent coaches. Your scouting director sends you a weekly email about different free agent coaches.

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COACHES ROSTER

The Coaches screen allows you to view detailed information on your coaching staff. From here you can see what positions you need to fill. If you have an open coordinator position, you can promote a position coach to coordinator level.

To fill a position coach, pick up the phone on your desk, go the Hire Coaches tab, and select a coach you wish to interview. When viewing the coach's name, you also see his highest attribute and his last coaching position. After speaking briefly to the coaching prospect, you can either schedule a formal interview or proceed to the next candidate.

If you choose to schedule an interview, your next task within Office Hours will be to interview the prospect.

COACH INTERVIEW

When interviewing a free agent coach, you ask him a series of questions to learn more about his abilities. If you think the coach would be a good fit with your team, negotiate a contract with him. If you are promoting a coach, he needs to sign a new contact for his new title. Sim to the next task when you are ready to begin.

After greeting the prospective new coach, you ask a series of questions that relate to what you are looking for in the new coach. If he fails to impress you, you can thank him and send him packing. If you like what you heard, you can begin the negotiations to hire him. If the price falls within the budget for your staff, you can hire him or continue the negotiations. Make sure anyone you hire has the same coaching philosophies as you; you don't need conflict during the season, this would affect your trust level among your coaching staff. After completing the hiring process for your coaching needs, sim to the next task.

CAUTION

YOU MUST HIRE YOUR STAFF BEFORE COMPLETING THAT WEEK. IF YOU DON'T, THE OWNER WILL COME DOWN ON YOU HARD.

After you complete your goals for the hire coach period, you are asked if you want to sim to the next period, which is the re-sign period. If you choose to do this, you automatically sim the remaining tasks left in the current period. If not, you continue day by day until you get to the next period.

RE-SIGN PERIOD

MANAGEMENT MEETING

Each week, you and the owner get together to go over your yearly goals and important upcoming events.

If you completed your goals, the owner has nothing but praise for you, and your trust level goes up. If you do not complete your goals, the trust level goes down and you get a stern lecture.

He will recap the last period and talk about the current one, including the new goals he has for you. You have the option to sim this to an assistant head coach to do. At this point the restricted free agency period begins.

WEEKLY STAFF MEETING

In the weekly staff meeting, your assistant coaches alert you to the players they feel you should work to re-sign. If you agree that you should re-sign a particular player and you don't, the assistant coach loses trust in you. You won't see eye to eye with every one of your coaches' requests, and that's OK. Every good leader has to go with his gut on some of the calls. You may lose trust in the short term, but if your strategy and guidance pan out, your trust level with the organization is rewarded.

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NOTE

TASKS YOU ARE GIVEN IN MEETINGS ARE YOUR KEYS TO VICTORY.

SCOUT THE PLAYERS

Scouting breaks down the strengths and weaknesses of a potential player for your team and also of an upcoming opponent.

Each week you scout up to eight different players from the NFL or the incoming draft class. The scouting director handles this job. He pinpoints how these players perform. To scout a player, go into the roster program (in the roster folder) on your computer. In the Roster screen, select players in the NFL or the incoming rookies for him to scout. After you scout a player, his attributes are updated next week. The Player Roster screen allows you to view the attributes of players in the league. Depending on the task that you are in, you can also:

- Call a player's agent
- Scout players on other teams
- Change a player's position

After scouting begins, you are brought to the Player Roster screen. You are allowed to scout with the following options:

Teams
- Entire NFL
- Team-by-team basis
- All teams
- Free agents
- Waiver system
- Draft class

Position
- 28 different categories

Sort by
- Different by position

Modifier
- Good
- Average
- Poor
- None

This information is useful when assessing your team's needs against what skills the player has to offer. If your current QB is poor, drafting a QB is a priority. Find one that either already has the skills you need or is capable of learning them in camp or pre-season. After completing the scouting, you are prompted to go to the next task.

RE-SIGN PLAYERS

When a player's contract expires, it's up to you to re-sign him. Call his agent and try to get the player at the price you want. You can call a player's agent either by selecting that player in the Player Roster or Salary Cap sections, or by finding him on your team in the Agents section in the phone. Check your cap room and see how much you have to spend. You need money to sign your draft picks.

After the coaches meeting, proceed to your roster and enter the Salary Cap section. The Salary Cap screen is similar to the player roster, except this screen focuses on the team's budget for the players. The salary cap list allows you to view the cost of a player for each year of his contract. Select the player you want to re-sign, and you're asked if you want to call his agent. The first words out of the agent's mouth will be, "My man wants money." You have three choices:

1. Re-sign him
2. Franchise him
3. Hang up the phone

You can also make offers to players on other teams if they were passed over for re-signing. During the first few weeks of the re-sign period, you can choose one player to franchise. Placing the franchise tag on a player means you can get that player for one more year, but you have to pay a salary worth the average of the top-five players for that position.

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UNRESTRICTED FREE AGENTS

During the unrestricted free agency period you can hire free agents for your team. By the end of this period, you should have a full team. The difference between a UFA (unrestricted free agent) and an RFA (restricted free agent) are defined this way: A UFA can sign with any team at any time during the period, and his former team cannot offer a matching contract to retain his services. With an RFA, the team has a chance to match any offer he gets, and thus retain his services.

To hire a free agent player, go to a sign player task. If you don't have a sign player task available, you can swap it out with a unlocked task in the calendar. Once in the sign player task, go to the player roster and view the free agent team. Select the player you want to sign and choose the call agent option. From here you can negotiate the contract with the agent.

CAUTION

MAKE TOO MANY LOW OFFERS, AND THE AGENT WILL END THE NEGOTIATIONS, MAKING IT IMPOSSIBLE TO NEGOTIATE A CONTRACT WITH THIS PLAYER UNTIL NEXT YEAR.

The player's agent offers the first deal. You can say you are not interested, counter the offer, or agree to terms.

If you counter the offer, both parties structure a deal that encompasses the contract's yearly amount, the term, and the up-front signing bonus.

If you agree to the offer from the player's agent, you have re-signed the player. If you choose to franchise a player, you are agreeing to pay him the average of the top-five highest paid players at that position. Bring your checkbook and check your salary cap because this is only a one-year deal.

RESTRICTED FREE AGENTS

The restricted free agency period starts after the hire coach period and ends three weeks before the start of the rookie draft. It's composed of three parts: the qualifying offer period, the open offer period, and the matching offer period. Any player who has finished his first-year contract in the NFL may receive a qualifying offer, if his current franchise would like to retain him for the upcoming year. This is automatically a one-year contract with a salary level predetermined by the Collective Bargaining Agreement, also known as the CBA. The CBA is an agreement between the players and the owners on how they will conduct business with each other. The player is allowed to negotiate with any of the remaining franchises until the start of the UFA period.

If another franchise is interested in the player, it may extend him an open offer. An open offer is a multiyear contract with a signing bonus. If the player accepts this open offer from a new franchise, his current team can extend a matching offer, which is matching the open offer of the other franchise. In this case the current team retains him because it has the right of first refusal. If the player's current team does not match the open offer, it can receive draft-choice compensation depending on the amount of its qualifying offer.

SELECT COACH'S CLOTHING

Ready to change up the threads on your coach? Just as in coach creation, you can swap out your coach's gear for a new look. Once in the Clothing menu, you can choose between new shirts, pants, and hats.

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THE COMBINE

The draft class performs a series of drills to demonstrate performance levels. Only your scouting director can go to the combine. Selecting this task takes you to the following week.

PRE-COMBINE MEETING

The Player Roster screen allows you to view the attributes of players in the league. Depending on your current tasks, you can call a player's agent, scout players, or change a player position. You'll use this legend:

PS—Poorly Scouted

S—Scouted

WS—Well Scouted

I—Injured

IR—Injured Reserve

F—Fatigued

TIP

CHECK YOUR CURRENT ROSTER TO SEE WHAT POSITIONS YOU ARE WEAKEST AT. ANY RED-COLORED PLAYER IS CONSIDERED POOR.

During the combine, you can scout up to 25 different players who fit your needs. You get the results at the post-combine meeting. Scouting all teams and the draft class helps you fill holes in your team. Scout only players who will be available when you pick. If you're drafting late in the round, don't scout the obvious early first-round draft picks.

THE POST-COMBINE MEETING

After the combine, you are given a copy of the scouting report that covers the 25 players you selected to scout. You can also scout another eight players at this time. You get updated at the next scouting meeting on the following Tuesday. After this is completed, you can sim to the next task.

TRADE PLAYERS

The trade players task allows you to trade your players and draft picks with another team. Trades can take place between the start of the UFA period and sixth week of the regular season. After you are in the trade player task, select the phone, then select the trade option. From here you can call another team with which you want to trade. The trade process is like the sign player menu system. Choose the players or draft picks you want to trade. Negotiate just as in the sign player period. Weigh the value of the trade and what's right for your team.

PLAY DESIGNER

Do you have a defensive play in mind that will wreck offenses? Do you have an offensive play that is a guaranteed touchdown every time? If so, get those plays in the game using the play design feature. Go into your computer, turn to playbook, and select play designer. The Play Designer screen allows you to create new plays and formations. Follow the play guidance to know what your current step is in creating your new play.

Choose offense or defense, create a formation, or use an existing one. You can then either create a play or modify an existing one. On offense you can modify a run or a pass, then move your skill position players into the desired positions.

You can assign the length of route, the blocking scheme, and the side of the ball of which you want to run the play off. Save the play and formation to your playbook to be used in real game situations.

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On defense, choose to create a formation or use an existing one. Use an existing play or create a new one, then choose blitz or man zone. Move your skill position players into place, then select your assignment and sub-route.

DAY-TO-DAY BUSINESS

For the next seven weeks, you repeat the daily tasks you need to perform to complete your Keys to Victory. Repetition and perfection are required to complete the daily grind of the off-season. If you have any questions about a particular task, refer to that section in the task section of the guide. The draft is weeks away, so get your game face on and get ready to pull the trigger on the future of the franchise.

THE DRAFT

After months of scouting the incoming draft class, it's time to get these players on your team. When it's your turn, the scouting director suggests who to draft. You can accept that suggestion or use the draft notebook to make your section. Each round consists of 32 selections. Your team has five minutes to choose a player or trade the pick. When the CPU chooses a player, it has 45 seconds to make its choice. You can sim to the next task if the draft isn't for you. The CPU will make the choices based on your team's greatest needs.

The draft is the best place to fill your key positions and address your team's needs. You have Keys to Victory to complete during the draft, and you should review your coaching status on your Quick NAV to check on your yearly goals. The owner may have given you directions you need to remember for the draft.

To make your selection, talk to your scouting director. He recommends a player. If you decide you want a different player, go to the draft notebook, to the left of your coach. There you can view the draft class by position or the list. After you make your choice, the clock starts on the next pick. The CPU makes the selection. You can auto sim to your next pick or let it run, like a real draft. If you want to trade a pick, you need to contact the team you want to trade with prior to them being the team on the clock. There are seven rounds to fill your team's needs, so use your picks wisely

MANAGEMENT MEETING

You meet with the owner to go over the number of roster positions you need to fill. These are Keys to Victory tasks, so give them your full attention. You get a list of how many players you must have at each position and the percentage you have filled at that position.

The owner reminds you that all draft picks must be signed by the pre-season's start. If you forgot any of the owner's beginning-of-the-year goals, you are told that you let the team down. This negatively affects your trust level.

SIGNING YOUR DRAFT PICKS

Get all those draft picks signed, because pre-season is around the corner. Go into your computer, access your Roster screen, and get ready to cut the checks. In the roster section, click on salary cap. The draft class appears at the end of the player list, in red. The signing works like the UFA and FA signings. The new draftees have NFL logo helmets instead of team helmets in the all-players Roster screen. You have three weeks after the draft to finish signing your UFAs and draft picks. Then you're on mini-break before returning for training camp and preparation for the pre-season.

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Training Camp and Pre-Season

TRAINING CAMP PERIOD

Welcome to training camp! Are you ready for the hard work that lies ahead? You'd better have your coaching hat on, because players develop differently depending on the practice they get. One-on-one drills develop players long term, by shifting their ranges. Offense-vs.-defense drills teach players individual plays and give them attribute boosts for that specific play. The amount of the boost increases with each repetition. The pass skeleton and inside drills shift range and boost attributes, but to a lesser extent. A player's actual rating also increases through practice, making him more prepared for game day.

Check your Quick NAV to view your Keys to Victory. A chart shows percentage ratings of your players and positions. The percentages need to be close to 100 percent by the end of training camp. The owner meets with you to prepare you for the training camp period. He instructs you to have the team ready to play by the start of pre-season. In the weekly staff meeting, the coaches talk to you about players they would like to see start. If you agree with your coach, the trust level of that assistant coach increases. If you agree with his recommendations, the changes are automatically applied to your roster. If you disagree, the coach has a negative reaction to you, your trust level with that coach does not go up, and the roster remains the same.

The training camp period lasts for five weeks. You continue to run practices and do your day-to-day tasks. Here's everything you need to accomplish in this time.

SCOUTING FUTURE TEAMS AND PLAYERS

Look ahead to the teams you will be facing in the pre-season. Pick the players you want to scout and the results are updated on that player. You can scout up to eight players a week in this mode.

PRACTICE QUICK NAV

During practice, the Practice Quick NAV allows access to your players, stats, and more. Left on the NAV takes you to the sidelines, where you can experiment with strategies and motivate your players. These strategies carry over to game day and can be set for specific plays. Right shows the Stats screen and tracks players' progress over the course of the practice. Up shows the pre-snap interface, which allows you to call audibles or hot routes and make other modifications on the field. Down brings up the Roster screens, which include the depth chart and substitutions.

UP: PRE-SNAP CONTROL

Give pre-snap adjustments to your on-field players to take advantage of what the other team is doing. The adjustments are:

1. Wide Receiver Progression
2. Slide Protection
3. Audible
4. QB Strategy
5. Formation Shift
6. Hot Route
7. Motion

RIGHT: GAME STATS

Look at stats to review how your players are performing. Following are the different stat reports available.

Offense:

1. Individual Passing
2. Individual Rushing
3. Individual Receiving
4. Individual Blocking
5. Individual Defensive
6. Individual Kicking
7. Individual Punting
8. Individual Kick Return
9. Individual Punt Return

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Defense:

1. Individual Passing
2. Individual Rushing
3. Individual Receiving
4. Individual Blocking
5. Individual Defensive
6. Individual Kicking
7. Individual Punting
8. Individual Kick Return
9. Individual Punt Return

Team General:

1. Team Offense
2. Team Defense
3. Team Special Teams

LEFT: TALK TO PLAYERS

Go to your sideline to motivate your players or to talk strategy with them. Talk to them as a team, as a position, or as individual players. Select a group of players on-field. Every time you motivate your team, it has either a positive or negative effect on them emotionally. You will see a plus or minus appear above each player's head; this tells you how your motivation affected them. It is important to know when to use aggressive or passive motivation. Aggressive is best used when the team is losing; passive is best used when the team is winning. Some players will only respond to a kick in the pants or a pat on the back. Talking Strategy is best used when you are looking to fine-tune play formations or play execution, or you are trying to pull off an important play.

All Players:

- Motivation: Aggressive/Passive

Individual Players:

- Motivation
- Strategy: Look for in-depth options in this section

PRACTICE DRILLS

The dog days of summer are here, and that means it's time to report to camp. Following are descriptions of the types of training camp drills available. These appear as tasks in your Calendar. It is possible to sim these, but only average bonuses will be awarded if you do. The team performance improves if the drills are used. You get to run 10 reps, so pick an offensive play and defensive play. This works both sides of the ball and improves your players' understanding and skill. You must also choose what string you want to work out: first, second, or third string.

FORMS OF PRACTICE

- Contact: Provides greater value for player development
- Non-contact: Carries less risk of injury

DYNAMIC ATTRIBUTES

Your player's actual rating fluctuates within his range based on his involvement in practice and performance on game day. Keep a player involved in practice, and he'll be more prepared for game day. However, if he still makes a mistake on game day, use motivation to get him back on track.

INSIDE DRILL NON-CONTACT

The inside drill is designed to give your ground game some work. The inside drill develops the attributes for your players in the OL, RB, DL, and LB positions. It also increases your players' understanding of the play you run. It gives the players more of a boost when you call that play on game day. Although you get both bonuses, neither is as much of an increase as doing one-on-one drills or running plays in the offense-vs.-defense practice.

PASS SKELETON

It's time for a little pitch and catch. The pass skeleton develops the attributes for your players in the QB, WR, and DB positions. The players' understanding of the play increases as well. It gives the players more of a boost when you call that play on game day. Although you get both bonuses, neither is as much of an increase as doing one-on-one drills or running plays in the offense-vs.-defense practice.

ONE-ON-ONE: WIDE RECEIVER VS. DEFENSIVE BACK

WR vs. DB increases the attributes for wide receivers and defensive backs. This one-on-one drill increases these players' attributes faster then running the pass skeleton drill. They do not receive a bonus for running pass plays they practice. It gives you a player boost, not a play boost.

OFFENSE VS. DEFENSE

During the offense-vs.-defense practice, run through the plays you want to use on game day. The more proficient the players get at running the play, the better they will execute it on game day.

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ONE-ON-ONE: RUNNING BACK VS. LINEBACKER

RB vs. LB increases the attributes for running backs and linebackers. This one-on-one drill increases these players' attributes faster then running the inside drill, but they do not receive a bonus for running the run plays that they practice. It gives you a player boost, not a play boost.

ONE-ON-ONE: OFFENSIVE LINE VS. DEFENSIVE LINE

OL vs. DL increases the attributes of offensive line and defensive line players. This one-on-one drill increases these players' attributes faster then running the inside drill, but they do not receive a bonus for running the plays they practice.

PLAYER PROGRESSION

Monitor a player's development in the Office Hours task by viewing them in Player Roster. Next to the attribute name is a plus or minus sign with a number. This number represents how much that attribute would go up or down if the player were to get his attribute modification that day. These modifications take effect at the end of the week during training camp, and right before the summary meeting during the pre-season, regular season, and post-season.

MONEY PLAY

The Money Play is the percentage attribute boost your skill position players get when running this play. The more a play is successfully run in practice, the more your available attribute boost increases for that play. This increases for multiple plays that are practiced, giving you more play options to tap on game day. Depending on your team, choose which plays from the team playbook will be included in the game plan. Choose plays that help you in a variety of game situations. Look for plays that help establish field position, down and distance plays, and time left in the half/game. Having the right play in the playbook on game day could be the difference between a win or a loss.

PLAY BOOSTS

Long-term development moves the player's ranges permanently in one direction. This is done primarily in one-on-one drills. Per-play boosts are earned in offense vs. defense, and the player is rewarded for his practice efforts with an attribute boost when that play is called. Inside drill and practice pass skeleton provide both long-term development and per-play boost, but do both to a lesser degree.

CHANGING THE ROSTER

As your team prepares for the pre-season, certain players excel and increase their skill level. Here's how to adjust your starting lineup so the best players take the field on game day.

DEPTH CHART POSITION

The Depth Chart Position screen displays the default starter in a position and allows viewing of the backups. Selecting a position takes you to the Set Depth screen where you can change the starting order.

SUBSTITUTIONS

The Substitution screens, like the depth chart, allow you to set a player as a starter. Whereas the depth chart allows you to globally set who your starters are, the Substitution screens allow you to fine-tune the starting lineup. Modify the starting order by setting specific players for specific plays. If you make no changes using these screens, every play you run will have the same players for every formation and set. You can quickly see if a position is unchanged because the position appears empty.

SUBSTITUTION FORMATION

The Substitution Formation screen allows you to view what positions have a substituted player assigned for a selected play. Selecting a position takes you to the Lineup screen, where you can set or change the substituted player.

SUBSTITUTION LINEUP

The Substitution Lineup screen allows you to change who starts on a given play. Select the currently starting player slot, then select the player you want to set as the sub. This is a action-based task, so you can only sub a couple of players at a time.

TEAM BREAKDOWN

This section gives you a review of plays that worked well for each team on offense and defense. These are called Money Plays. With a lot of practice, these plays will become the cornerstones from which you will create your playbook. The team outlook and recaps will tell you where the work needs to be done during training camp and pre-season. You will also find your team rankings on both offense and defense for the 2005 season. Also, your team's offensive and defensive philosophies are listed.

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Chicago Bears

TEAM OUTLOOK AND RECAP

Offensive Philosophy: West Coast, Rank: 31
Defensive Philosophy: Cover 2, Rank: 2

The Bears take a lot of flak for their offense. Working the offense with strong money plays will allow moving the ball with confidence. The Bears have one of the most dominate defenses in the NFL; they will keep you in every game. They are a well-balanced team on defense; MLB Brian Urlacher is one of the best at his position. Short pass plays are the best plays for the Bears offense as well as counters and misdirections when running.

OFFENSIVE MONEY PLAYS

RAZOR: HB COUNTER

YELLOW: HB DIVE

TWIST: HB INSIDE

RAZOR: WR OPTION

GREEN: POST CORNERS

DEFENSIVE MONEY PLAYS

BASE: COVER 2

DIME/QUARTER: COVER 3

NICKEL: ENGAGE EIGHT

BASE: 2 MAN UNDER

DIME/QUARTER: UNDER SMOKE

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Cincinnati Bengals

TEAM OUTLOOK AND RECAP

The Bengals' offense is better then average on both the run and the pass. They have weapons at every skill position. The Bengals will have their hands full trying to stop the other team's offense. Last season they ranked near the bottom of the league statistically in yards and points. A bright spot on defense is that they forced a lot of turnovers.

Offensive Philosophy: West Coast, Rank: 6

Defensive Philosophy: Cover 2, Rank: 27

OFFENSIVE MONEY PLAYS

RAZOR: HB PITCH

BROWN: HB CUT BACK

RAZOR: PA TE CORNER

FIRE: TEXAS

GREEN: POST CORNERS

DEFENSIVE MONEY PLAYS

BASE: EDGE STING

BASE: MID RUSH

NICKEL: ZONE BLITZ 2

DIME/QUARTER: 4 DEEP MAN SPY

DIME: 3 DEEP MAN

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Buffalo Bills

TEAM OUTLOOK AND RECAP

Offensive Philosophy: Spread, Rank: 27

Defensive Philosophy: 4-6, Rank: 29

Buffalo needs to capitalize on every break this season. Turnovers need to be in the + category, and they must convert points off of them. The Bills defense has a bend-but-don't-break philosophy; they will give up a lot of yards but not points. The interior of the offensive line is solid and the RBs and WRs are also above average. The Bills have a decent ground game, so focus your efforts there in practice. The Bills defense is the key to staying in games; turnovers, turnovers, and more turnovers is the key. The Bills averaged almost 2 takeaways a game last year.

OFFENSIVE MONEY PLAYS

RAZOR: HB STRETCH

BROWN: HB LEAD TOSS

GOAL LINE: HB SMASH

THUNDER: SLANT POSTS

GREEN: HOOK INS

DEFENSIVE MONEY PLAYS

NICKEL: MLB BLITZ

BASE: FIRE MAN

DIME/QUARTER: COVER 2 EDGE

NICKEL: COVER 2 SINK

DIME: 2 DEEP LB BLITZ

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Denver Broncos

TEAM OUTLOOK AND RECAP

Offensive Philosophy: Spread, Rank: 12
Defensive Philosophy: 4-6, Rank: 15

When Denver plays mistake-free football they are tough to beat. They run to set up the pass, and they use the play action fake as well as any team in the league. Their defense is better then their rankings, and made big plays last year at key times. Denver produces 1,000 rushers out of average backs; practice your running plays, and it will make them contenders for the AFC this season. Start with the run, then move QB Plummer out of the pocket; this opens up the stretch on the defensive backs and helps the long passing attack.

OFFENSIVE MONEY PLAYS

RAZOR: HB BLAST

TWIST: STRONG STRETCH

THUNDER: PA PIN DEEP

RAZOR: HB SWEEP

THUNDER: STUTTER POST

DEFENSIVE MONEY PLAYS

BASE: SAM BLITZ

BASE: DOUBLE X BRACKET

DIME: 4 ACROSS

DIME: DE CONTAIN

BASE: 2 DEEP GAP SHOOT

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Cleveland Browns

TEAM OUTLOOK AND RECAP

Romeo Crennel probably wants nothing to do with moral victories, but a 6-10 record for the Browns is definitely a step in the right direction. He had the Browns playing tough down the stretch last year and hopes the progress will continue in '06. RB Rueben Droughns is ready to be the key back on offense, so give him lots of reps in practice.

Offensive Philosophy: West Coast, Rank: 25
Defensive Philosophy: Cover 2, Rank: 16

OFFENSIVE MONEY PLAYS

RAZOR: HB LEAD DIVE

YELLOW: QUICK PITCH

GREEN: SLANTS

RAZOR: PA HB CURL

THUNDER: PA TE LEAK

DEFENSIVE MONEY PLAYS

GOAL LINE: JAM MIDDLE

BASE: SS SNAKE 3 STAY

DIME: DOUBLE Z

NICKEL: UNDER SMOKE

DIME: QUARTER HALVES

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Tampa Bay Buccaneers

TEAM OUTLOOK AND RECAP

Offensive Philosophy: Spread, Rank: 28

Defensive Philosophy: 4-6, Rank: 1

They say defense wins championships; this year the Bucs will have their chance to prove it. Armed with the #1 defense last year, the Bucs need to improve their offense and their medium passing game and continue to not give up key turnovers on their side of the field. QB Simms came off the bench last year in his rookie year to lead the Bucs to the playoffs. Give him plenty of reps in practice; if he and the offense play half as well as the Bucs' defense, they are a sleeper for the Super Bowl this season.

OFFENSIVE MONEY PLAYS

YELLOW: STRONG STRETCH

RAZOR: HB DIVE

CRUSH: HB LEAD DIVE

LION: PA WAGGLE

FIRE: TE OPTION

DEFENSIVE MONEY PLAYS

DIME/QUARTER: COV 1 FS ROBBER

BASE: 2 MAN UNDER

DIME/QUARTER: DOUBLE X

DIME/QUARTER: COVER 3

NICKEL: CB FOX BLITZ

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Arizona Cardinals

TEAM OUTLOOK AND RECAP

Offensive Philosophy: Spread, Rank: 3

Defensive Philosophy: 4-6, Rank: 8

This will be an important off-season for the Cardinals. You need to work the WRs to get them to peak performance; the QB Warner has won the big one before and has worked with high flying WRs before with the Rams. The defense had break-out player of the year in RE Berry; try to improve the other side of the line to match him. The Cardinals have a playoff caliber defense, and are close to becoming dominant.

OFFENSIVE MONEY PLAYS

RAZOR: HB BLAST

BROWN: PA FB FLAT

ECHO: SLOT Z OUT

RAZOR: WR OPTION

GREEN: WR DRAG

DEFENSIVE MONEY PLAYS

DIME/QUARTER: DOUBLE WIDE

NICKEL: STRIKE 2 DEEP

DIME/QUARTER: 3 DEEP MAN

NICKEL: COVER 1

BASE: QB CONTAIN

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San Diego Chargers

TEAM OUTLOOK AND RECAP

Offensive Philosophy: Spread, Rank: 5

Defensive Philosophy: 4-6, Rank: 13

The Chargers need the offensive line to continue their dominance. RB Tomlinson has all the skill to be the best back in the league. The Chargers' defense needs the major work; get the DL a lot of reps in training camp and pre-season. QB Rivers is ready to step into the starting roll if he is needed; with TE Gates the passing game is potent. The Chargers defense is the only area that needs some definitive work.

OFFENSIVE MONEY PLAYS

RAZOR: HB BLAST

YELLOW: HB STRETCH

TWIST: HB SWEEP

ECHO: WR CROSS

TWIST: PA BOOT LT

DEFENSIVE MONEY PLAYS

DIME/QUARTER: 3 DEEP

BASE: ZONE BLITZ

NICKEL: ENGAGE EIGHT

NICKEL: SILVER SHOOT PINCH

BASE: MLB CROSS FIRE

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Kansas City Chiefs

TEAM OUTLOOK AND RECAP

The Kansas City Chiefs have offense to win any game. Start with the defense in spring training and give them lots of reps on the DL and OLB. RB Johnson had a break-out season last year, and he will continue this year. The Chiefs need to improve before the start of the regular season. KR Hall is one of the premier players at that position.

Offensive Philosophy: Spread, Rank: 1

Defensive Philosophy: 4-6, Rank: 25

OFFENSIVE MONEY PLAYS

YELLOW: HB BLAST

BROWN: HB SWEEP

YELLOW: PA BOOT LT

YELLOW: TE OPTION

THUNDER: SLOT CURL

DEFENSIVE MONEY PLAYS

DIME/QUARTER: MAN SHORT ZONE

BASE: RAY SMOKE

GOAL LINE: GAPS FIRE

NICKEL: ZONE BLITZ 2

DIME/QUARTER: QUARTER HALVES

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Indianapolis Colts

TEAM OUTLOOK AND RECAP

Offensive Philosophy: West Coast, Rank: 14
Defensive Philosophy: Cover 2, Rank: 11

Let QB Payton Manning show you the way. The Colts have what it takes to score and score a lot. The defense had a better-than-expected regular season. The special teams have been upgraded and should be ready to win the big game when on. QB Manning, WR Harrison, and WR Wayne are some of the most potent scoring machines in NFL history. The Colts need to work the running backs into shape quickly; it was the one part of the offense that sputtered last season. Don't be fooled by the 14 ranking on offense for the Colts; that's because the running game didn't contribute much. The passing rank was third in the league.

OFFENSIVE MONEY PLAYS

RED: HB STRETCH

LION: WR SLANT

LION: WR CROSS

THUNDER: SLOT CROSS

LION: POST DRAG

DEFENSIVE MONEY PLAYS

DIME/QUARTER: DB CONTAIN

BASE: SAFETY BLITZ

NICKEL: ZONE BLITZ 1

DIME/QUARTER: 3 DEEP MAN

NICKEL: 2 DEEP

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Dallas Cowboys

TEAM OUTLOOK AND RECAP

The Cowboys' coach has a tradition of motivation, both passive and aggressive, but mainly aggressive. Do not alienate your players by being too hard on them. SS Williams is a top player at his position on defense and TE Witten is key to the offense. Give them the reps they need in training camp and pre-season to build momentum going into the regular season.

Offensive Philosophy: Spread, Rank: 13
Defensive Philosophy: 4-6, Rank: 10

OFFENSIVE MONEY PLAYS

YELLOW: HB OFF TACKLE

RAZOR: HB DIVE

FIRE: SLOT COMEBACKS

TWIST: WR OPTION

THUNDER: SLOT QUICK FLAT

DEFENSIVE MONEY PLAYS

DIME QUARTER: ZERO BLITZ

NICKEL: INSIDE LB FIRE

BASE: COVER 3

DIME/QUARTER: 2 DEEP LB BLITZ

BASE: STRONG BLITZ

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Miami Dolphins

TEAM OUTLOOK AND RECAP

The Miami Dolphins have one of the best linebacking cores in the league. The Dolphins offense will need the majority of your attention in training camp and in the pre-season. The OL will be the key to the success that the Dolphins see in the regular season, so get them early.

Offensive Philosophy: Spread, Rank: 11
Defensive Philosophy: 4-6, Rank: 18

OFFENSIVE MONEY PLAYS

RAZOR: HB STRETCH

YELLOW: HB DIVE

BROWN: STRONG FLOOD

LION: HARD SLANTS

THUNDER: FL MIDDLE

DEFENSIVE MONEY PLAYS

BASE: COVER 1

DIME/QUARTER: COVER 3

NICKEL: UNDER SMOKE

NICKEL: 4 DEEP SAFE

DIME/QUARTER: 2 DEEP LB FIRE

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Philadelphia Eagles

TEAM OUTLOOK AND RECAP

Offensive Philosophy: West Coast, Rank: 10
Defensive Philosophy: Cover 2, Rank: 23

For every Eagles fan, passion outweighs patience. The Philadelphia Eagles have everything in place to make another run at the NFC Championship. The Eagles will be active in the 2006 draft; head coach Andy Reid isn't afraid to go shopping on draft day, and has made 15 trades to prove it. The Eagles' biggest areas of need are in the defensive secondary and on the defensive line. For the ball to bounce their way again, the Eagles must focus on the draft and free agency. Focus on the WR in the pre-season, and also the OL; they will need as many reps as you can get for them.

OFFENSIVE MONEY PLAYS

RAZOR: HB OFF TACKLE

YELLOW: WR OPTION

FIRE: PA READ

FIRE: SLOT ANGLE POST

THUNDER: TE POST

DEFENSIVE MONEY PLAYS

DIME/QUARTER: OVERLOAD BLITZ

NICKEL: THUNDER SMOKE

BASE: 2 MAN UNDER

BASE: COVER 4

NICKEL: DOUBLE WIDE

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Atlanta Falcons

TEAM OUTLOOK AND RECAP

There are two questions for the Falcons, and both have to do with Vick. First, does Vick have a grasp of the West Coast offense? Second, can Vick stay healthy? The Falcons revolve around Vick. Work the Falcons' QB relentlessly in training camp and in the preseason. Get him the reps he needs to lead the Falcons to the playoffs.

Offensive Philosophy: West Coast, Rank: 16
Defensive Philosophy: 4-6, Rank: 22

OFFENSIVE MONEY PLAYS

RED: HB COUNTER

FIRE: HB SCREEN

YELLOW: HB STRETCH

TWIST: PA BOOT SLIDE

LION: PA BRONCO SLIDE

DEFENSIVE MONEY PLAYS

DIME/QUARTER: 2 DEEP LB FIRE

BASE: MAN FLATS

NICKEL: STRONG ZONE

GOAL LINE: ZONE BLITZ 1

DIME/QUARTER: DB CONTAIN

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San Francisco 49ers

TEAM OUTLOOK AND RECAP

Offensive Philosophy: Spread, Rank: 32

Defensive Philosophy: 4-6, Rank: 32

The 49ers have weak spots; their offense and defense ranked at the bottom of the NFL. A lot of practice time is need to make this team competitive; stick with the fundamentals and work on plays that can get you 4 to 5 yards at a time. The 49ers have a few bright spots in LE Bryant Young, K Joe Nedney, and ILB Derek Smith. The defense is the anchor that the rest of the team should be built around.

OFFENSIVE MONEY PLAYS

RAZOR: COUNTER WEAK

FIRE: CLEAR SE OPTION

THUNDER: SLOT CORNERS

GREEN: HB SCREEN

ECHO: FL FLY

DEFENSIVE MONEY PLAYS

GOAL LINE: 2 DEEP ZONE

BASE: 2 MAN UNDER

NICKEL: DOUBLE X

DIME/QUARTER: QUARTERS MAN

DIME/QUARTER: COVER 3

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New York Giants

TEAM OUTLOOK AND RECAP

Offensive Philosophy: Spread, Rank: 2

Defensive Philosophy: 4-6, Rank: 24

Getting Eli Manning was the biggest trades in Giants history; it cost them some high draft picks, but he led them to a division title in his first year. Use plays that will confuse the defense at the line of scrimmage. This will buy Manning the time he needs and help get some guys open across the middle. WR Plaxico Burress, TE Jeremy Shockey, and RB Tiki Barber provided the offense last year, and with another year under his belt, Manning should make this team contend for the NFC Championship.

OFFENSIVE MONEY PLAYS

RAZOR: HB SLAM

YELLOW: HB SCREEN

RAZOR: PA TE CORNER

GREEN: PA TE DRAG

THUNDER: SLOT CROSS

DEFENSIVE MONEY PLAYS

DIME/QUARTER: 2 MAN UNDER

GOAL LINE: ZONE BLITZ 1

BASE: 2 MAN UNDER

NICKEL: ENGAGE EIGHT

BASE: DOUBLE Z

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Jacksonville Jaguars

TEAM OUTLOOK AND RECAP

Offensive Philosophy: West Coast, Rank: 21
Defensive Philosophy: Cover 2, Rank: 6

A surprising 12-4 season last year has the Jaguars feeling like their future is bright, but they still have Indianapolis in their division. The Jags' defense kept them in every game last year, and is getting better this year. The Offense is where you need to put a lot of time in practice. QB Byron Leftwich is solid, if he can stay healthy. Work on your short game; this will keep you in almost any game.

OFFENSIVE MONEY PLAYS

RAZOR: HB DIVE

YELLOW: FB POWER

FIRE: FL Z CLEAROUT

LION: TE SLANT IN

ECHO: SLOT CROSS

DEFENSIVE MONEY PLAYS

GOAL LINE: BLITZ A

DIME/QUARTER: QUARTERS SAFE

NICKEL: OLB FIRE

DIME/QUARTER: DOUBLE X

BASE: COVER 2 PINCH

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New York Jets

TEAM OUTLOOK AND RECAP

Offensive Philosophy: Spread, Rank: 30
Defensive Philosophy: 4-6, Rank: 12

It's a good thing the Jets have a good defense. QB Chad Pennington is still on the mend, so work extra hard on the offensive line; bringing them to the peak of their game will give him more time. C. Kevin Mawae and Jonathan Vilma are the anchors on offense and defense. The Jets offense is going to need a lot of help in training camp and the pre-season. Keep the plays short and play for field position.

OFFENSIVE MONEY PLAYS

RAZOR: HB SWING

RAZOR: HB BLUNT DIVE

YELLOW: PA CURL DRAG

GREEN: WR DRAG

ECHO: TE OPTION IN

DEFENSIVE MONEY PLAYS

DIME/QUARTER: ZONE BLITZ

BASE: FREE FIRE

NICKEL: COVER 1

NICKEL: FIRE BLITZ

DIME/QUARTER: OVERLOAD BLITZ

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Detroit Lions

TEAM OUTLOOK AND RECAP

Offensive Philosophy: Spread, Rank: 29
Defensive Philosophy: 4-6, Rank: 20

The Lions are loaded with players like CB Dre Bly, WR Roy Williams, and ORG Damien Woody. They are blue chippers, and capable of leading a prompt turnaround for the franchise. The Lions also need help in the linebacker position; they will use their latter draft picks to improve this position. The Lions feel they have been on the verge of becoming one of the elite teams in the NFC, and this might be their year. Work with the QB position and MLBs in practice; these are the trouble spots for the team.

OFFENSIVE MONEY PLAYS

RAZOR: HB SPRINT

YELLOW: QUICK PITCH

LION: SLOT OUT

GREEN: POST CORNERS

ECHO: SLOT OUTS

DEFENSIVE MONEY PLAYS

THUNDER: OVER 2

NICKEL: ROLB BLITZ

BASE: DOUBLE X

NICKEL: STRONG MAN

NICKEL: FREE FIRE

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Green Bay Packers

TEAM OUTLOOK AND RECAP

Offensive Philosophy: West Coast, Rank: 17
Defensive Philosophy: Cover 2, Rank: 7

Do they have enough on the defensive side of the ball to make a run? This team is based on its offense, despite the more pressing defensive needs. Quarterback Brett Favre needs this defense to make some stops so that the pressure isn't always on him and running back Ahman Green. Work the defense overtime during training camp and pre-season. If the OL doesn't get its game on, the Packers might have to make the move to Rodgers to keep the fans happy and Favre healthy.

OFFENSIVE MONEY PLAYS

RAZOR: HB SPRINT

YELLOW: PA FB FLAT

LION: HB SCREEN

THUNDER: PA PIN DEEP

LION: PA FL STRETCH

DEFENSIVE MONEY PLAYS

BASE: 2 DEEP GAP SHOOT

NICKEL: COVER 1

DIME/QUARTER: DB BLITZ

YELLOW: COVER 3 MAX

DIME/QUARTER: OVER 4

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Carolina Panthers

TEAM OUTLOOK AND RECAP

Offensive Philosophy: West Coast, Rank: 23
Defensive Philosophy: Cover 2, Rank: 3

The Panthers run the ball, are sound defensively, and try to keep every game close into the fourth quarter. It's a formula that has worked in the past, and which should be successful again if the Panthers can keep their key players healthy. The Panthers' biggest question is whether Steve Smith is going to be the same player he was at the end of the '05 season. If yes, look for the Panthers to make another run. RB Smith needs to carry the ball, so give the OL plenty of work before the season starts and keep the motivation positive. QB Delhomme is steady and healthy for the start of the season.

OFFENSIVE MONEY PLAYS

RAZOR: HB DIVE

GREEN: HB PITCH

LION: PA DEEP IN

THUNDER: SLOT OUTS

THUNDER: CROSS UPS

DEFENSIVE MONEY PLAYS

BASE: ZONE READ

BASE: MIKE BLITZ

NICKEL: ENGAGE EIGHT

NICKEL: SILVER SHOOT PINCH

DIME/QUARTER: DOUBLE WIDE

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New England Patriots

TEAM OUTLOOK AND RECAP

Offensive Philosophy: West Coast, Rank: 4
Defensive Philosophy: Cover 2, Rank: 26

The biggest question facing the Patriots this season is how they will handle critical situations without Charlie Weis and Romeo Crennel leading them. A slow start last year had everyone wondering it then and now. The Patriots' dynasty suffered last season because of the changes on the sidelines, not on the field. New England has always been successful passing out of their two–tight end sets. Give the TE position a lot of your time during the pre-season. It will need as many reps as possible to keep them sharp and have them ready for the regular season.

OFFENSIVE MONEY PLAYS

RAZOR: HB DIVE WEAK

CRUSH: FB TRAP

CRUSH PA DEEP IN

THUNDER: SHALLOW CROSS

ECHO: SLOT OUT

DEFENSIVE MONEY PLAYS

BASE: FIRE BLITZ

NICKEL: MAN ZONE 3 DEEP

NICKEL: DBL X BRACKET

BASE: COVER 2

DIME/QUARTER: SAFE

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Oakland Raiders

TEAM OUTLOOK AND RECAP

Offensive Philosophy: West Coast, Rank: 15
Defensive Philosophy: Cover 2, Rank: 27

Can their offense be consistent? This team has a lot of playmakers, but they need offensive balance. QB Kerry Collins has never had a potent pair of receivers like Randy Moss and Jerry Porter. Work this pair of receivers heavy in the pre-season and design your playbook to feature them. The Raiders have an offense capable of keeping up with the other high-flying acts in the AFC West. The defense, though, is another question. Keep the defense working overtime in pre-season, this is the only way they will be able to stay in games and rebuild this team into a contender during the regular season.

OFFENSIVE MONEY PLAYS

RAZOR: HB LEAD DIVE

CRUSH: PA BOOT LT

FIRE: POST CORNERS

TWIST: WR OPTION

GREEN: WR DRAG

DEFENSIVE MONEY PLAYS

DIME/QUARTER: DOUBLE X

GOAL LINE: 3 DEEP MAN

NICKEL: WHAM LURK

DIME/QUARTER: COVER 1 LB SPY

BASE: COVER 2

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St. Louis Rams

TEAM OUTLOOK AND RECAP

Offensive Philosophy: West Coast, Rank: 8

Defensive Philosophy: Cover 2, Rank: 30

The Rams might not be back to the 500-point days of 1999–2001, but they are smoking on offense. The reason for the excitement is young talents such as halfback Steven Jackson and wide receiver Kevin Curtis. Can this team find offensive balance? This is another team that can rely too heavily on the pass to the detriment of the rest of the offense. It's time the Rams got more balance to keep defenses on their toes. Work the DB and DL in training camp and in the pre-season; these are the weakest areas on the team.

OFFENSIVE MONEY PLAYS

TWIST: HB POWER

GREEN: HB COUNTER

RAZOR: PA COMEBACK

ECHO: SLOT Z OUT

THUNDER: WR OPTION

DEFENSIVE MONEY PLAYS

GOAL LINE: JAM COVER 1

NICKEL: ENGAGE EIGHT

BASE: DOUBLE Z

DIME/QUARTER: FLAT FOUR

DIME/QUARTER: OLB FIRE

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Baltimore Ravens

TEAM OUTLOOK AND RECAP

Offensive Philosophy: West Coast, Rank: 26
Defensive Philosophy: Cover 2, Rank: 5

Five years ago, the Ravens employed a simple formula in capturing a Super Bowl title: Play great suffocating defense, one that batters opponents into submission. Run the ball between the tackles. Only throw when necessary. This team's success is all about quarterback Kyle Boller; he's the big question mark for the Ravens because they are set defensively and have a great running game. Work him and the WR in pre-season and play them into shape.

OFFENSIVE MONEY PLAYS

RAZOR: HB DIVE

RAZOR: HB DELAY

YELLOW: PA WAGGLE

TWIST: WR OPTION

GREEN: SLOT OUT

DEFENSIVE MONEY PLAYS

GOAL LINE: BUZZ WEAK

NICKEL: DOUBLE X

BASE: 2 MAN UNDER

BASE: THUNDER SMOKE

DIME/QUARTER: DOUBLE WIDE

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Washington Redskins

TEAM OUTLOOK AND RECAP

Offensive Philosophy: Spread, Rank: 18

Defensive Philosophy: 4-6, Rank: 9

The Washington Redskins have always been known for their rushing game. They expect RB Clinton Portis to have a breakout season for them this year. QB Brunnell is considered one of the comeback players of last season, but will need to get more consistent game to game. Give the offense most of your attention during the off-season. The OL needs to step it up if they want to get Portis back to his pre-Redskins form. Coach Gibbs got the Redskins back into the playoffs; if everything comes together, look for the Hogs to challenge for the NFC East title.

OFFENSIVE MONEY PLAYS

RAZOR: HB SWEEP

RAZOR: HB LEAD DIVE

LION: PA BOOT SLIDE

THUNDER: WR OPTION

GREEN: CURL FLAT

DEFENSIVE MONEY PLAYS

DIME/QUARTER: 2 DEEP LB BLITZ

BASE: ENGAGE EIGHT

NICKEL: SS GUT BLITZ

NICKEL: COVER 2 QB SPY

DIME/QUARTER: 3 DEEP MAN

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New Orleans Saints

TEAM OUTLOOK AND RECAP

Offensive Philosophy: West Coast, Rank: 19
Defensive Philosophy: Cover 2, Rank: 14

The Saints are looking for consistency. On paper they have all the weapons necessary to contend for a Super Bowl. This season the Saints were handed a gift; they get to draft the second player in the draft. The greatest need is to strengthen the OL and the DL. If the Saints are going to make a run for the playoffs, they need to improve on both sides of the ball. Work, work, work those lines in the training camp and in pre-season, and get them as many reps as you can.

OFFENSIVE MONEY PLAYS

RAZOR: HB SWEEP

CRUSH: HB DIVE

TWIST: HB LEAD

LION: FL CURL

GREEN: PA SLOT POST

DEFENSIVE MONEY PLAYS

NICKEL: ENGAGE EIGHT

BASE: COVER 1

DIME/QUARTER: COVER 4

NICKEL: MAN ZONE 3 DEEP

DIME/QUARTER: COVER 3

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Seattle Seahawks

TEAM OUTLOOK AND RECAP

Offensive Philosophy: West Coast, Rank: 7
Defensive Philosophy: Cover 2, Rank: 17

Can the Seahawks play better with the high expectations that have been with them the past two seasons? This team does play well when everyone thinks they should and the proof was last season when they were in Super Bowl XL. Things didn't work out for them in the big game, but they may make a return trip this season. Seattle needs to work the WR position in training camp and preseason. The defense needs fine-tuning, but concentrate manly on the offense.

OFFENSIVE MONEY PLAYS

RAZOR: FK FB HB CNTR

YELLOW: QUICK PITCH

CRUSH: PA DEEP IN

BROWN: HB LEAD

GREEN: SLOT POST

DEFENSIVE MONEY PLAYS

GOAL LINE: FLAT SLIDE

NICKEL: 2 MAN UNDER

BASE: MIKE BLITZ

NICKEL: COVER 3

DIME/QUARTER: DB DOGS 1

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Pittsburgh Steelers

TEAM OUTLOOK AND RECAP

Offensive Philosophy: West Coast, Rank: 20
Defensive Philosophy: Cover 2, Rank: 4

In one of the greatest runs in sports history, the Pittsburgh Steelers went from being an afterthought to Super Bowl Champions. The Steelers only need to work on their short running game. How free agency will affect them at the wide receiver position is a big question. In training camp, work the OL to increase the blocking skills. Everything points for Big Ben and Terrible Towel to return to Super Bowl 41 next season.

OFFENSIVE MONEY PLAYS

BROWN: COUNTER WEAK

GREEN: HB SCREEN

RED: HB DIVE

LION: PA BOOT RT

YELLOW: WR OPTION

DEFENSIVE MONEY PLAYS

DIME: ZERO BLITZ

NICKEL: WEAK 2 DEEP

BASE: DOUBLE X

NICKEL: DOUBLE WIDE

DIME/QUARTER: 2 MAN UNDER

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Houston Texans

TEAM OUTLOOK AND RECAP

Offensive Philosophy: West Coast, Rank: 24
Defensive Philosophy: Cover 2, Rank: 31

The defense is the key for the Texans. Houston will have to make more plays and be more consistent on the defensive side of the ball. It's about getting opposing offenses into third- and long-situations and getting them off the field. The offense will remain centered around QB David Carr, RB Domanick Davis, and WR Andre Johnson. Their success will depend on an offensive line that will need work in the pre-season.

OFFENSIVE MONEY PLAYS

RAZOR: HB BLAST

RAZOR: HB COUNTER

CRUSH: PA TE OPTION

YELLOW: CURLS

GREEN: SLANTS

DEFENSIVE MONEY PLAYS

DIME/QUARTER: 2 MAN UNDER

GOAL LINE: GAPS FIRE

NICKEL: 4 DEEP MAN SPY

BASE: COVER 3

NICKEL: CB BLITZ

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Tennessee Titans

TEAM OUTLOOK AND RECAP

Offensive Philosophy: West Coast, Rank: 9
Defensive Philosophy: Cover 2, Rank: 19

The Titans have big plans for a rapid rebuild, and they have enough good young talent that they could boomerang back into contention in 2006. The Titans need to address the QB position either in the draft or in free agency. Give the RB and QB positions a lot of work in the pre-season. The running game, which was once a Titan trademark, is back to square one and needs work.

OFFENSIVE MONEY PLAYS

RAZOR: HB DELAY

FIRE: HB DRAW

TWIST: PA FB FLAT

LION: SHALLOW CROSS

GREEN: POST FLAGS

DEFENSIVE MONEY PLAYS

GOAL LINE: BUZZ WEAK

NICKEL: ENGAGE EIGHT

BASE: COVER 3

DIME/QUARTER : COVER 4

DIME/QUARTER: STRIKE

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Minnesota Vikings

TEAM OUTLOOK AND RECAP

Offensive Philosophy: Spread, Rank: 22

Defensive Philosophy: Cover 2, Rank: 21

Can the Vikings maintain offensive balance? That's the question you need to get answered in the pre-season. Give the starting QB plenty of reps in training camp and pre-season. The Vikings need to have a season where the attention is focused on the field, and they will be back as a force in the NFC Central. The OL will under go significant changes, so give them some attention in the preseason.

OFFENSIVE MONEY PLAYS

RAZOR: FK FB HB CNTR

FIRE: PA Z COMEBACK

TWIST: BUCS COUNTER WEAK

LION: WR OPTION

LION: WR MIDDLE

DEFENSIVE MONEY PLAYS

DIME/QUARTER: MAN QUARTERS

BASE: COVER 1

NICKEL: WHAM LURK

NICKEL: SAM SNAKE

BASE: RUSH OUTSIDE

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GAME PLAN MEETING

Your offensive and defense coordinators will review your playbook and assemble a game plan for game day. Check it out and feel free to modify the plan during your game plan administration task. It's your butt on the line if you lose…not theirs.

SCOUTING REPORT MEETING

Your staff has stayed up all night analyzing your opponent this week to compile an in-depth scouting report. This report breaks down your opponent's strengths and weaknesses and identifies your goals for the weekend practice. Check your notebook, to the left, to read the scouting report. The sections are as follows:

1. **Team Summary:** A look at the players and their strengths and weaknesses
2. **Offensive Breakdown Season Stats:** Team Stats, Scoring, Players
3. **Offensive Breakdown Week Stats:** Same as Offensive Breakdown Season Stats, but only the prior week
4. **Keys to Victory:** 10 goals for the upcoming game

WEEKLY SUMMARY MEETING

See what your coaching staff has to say about the team's preparation for this week's game. Use this time wisely and listen to what your coaches are telling you. Their report will state which players are performing well and which ones are not. Make any changes necessary to ensure the best overall performance from the team.

PREGAME REVIEW

During this time you can make final adjustments to your depth chart and game plan. When you are satisfied with your line-up and game plan, continue to the start of your game. This is your last chance to get it right before the game, so take your time in this area.

WELCOME TO GAME DAY

A good coach needs to be aware of a few tools on game day. The first are your coordinators. They take over play calling duties if you aren't in a position to call a play. The play they intend to call is displayed in the scoreboard. The scoreboard is the primary source of information. It keeps you updated about what's going on in a game at any time.

Don't forget to instruct your players on the sidelines. It can mean the difference between winning and losing. All teams have talent, but as the head coach, you are the one who can make a difference on the sidelines. Before kickoff, learn about the Game Day NAV and the Game Day HUD. Mastering both these tools is as important as running well-coached plays.

GAME DAY QUICK NAV CONTROL

During game day, you can use your Quick NAV to access your players, stats, and more. Left on the Quick NAV takes you to the sidelines, where you can talk to your players and provide motivation or strategy. Right takes you to the Staff screen where you can review how your players have been doing. Up brings up the presnap interface, which allows you to call audibles and hot routes, and make other modifications on the field. Down bring up the Roster screens, where you can make depth chart changes or substitutions.

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THE GAME DAY HUD

The game day scoreboard keeps you informed on the current state of the game. When your coordinator is going to call a play for you, you see this in the HUD. Look to the top of the screen for information about penalties or injuries, or if you want to know what happened on the previous play. The HUD is also the place to find the play clock, score, time-outs remaining, and other useful information.

THE COIN TOSS

You need to decide if you want to kick or receive if you win the coin toss. The visiting team calls the flip. After the coin toss you have two minutes to motivate your players. Use it wisely.

Depending on the style of team you are playing against, you might choose to motivate your key unit in the game. If you are playing the Colts, a team that's going to pass a lot, you should motivate your defensive backs. If you're an offensive running team such as the Broncos, you would motivate your running backs and offensive line. Players are more responsive to motivation before the game starts rather then during the game.

PLAYING STRATEGY BY POSITION

You can oversee many different strategies for each position. When employing a particular strategy during the game, you are asked when to use it. Following are examples of common game situations in which to use a particular strategy.

IMPLEMENTATION TIMING

- Do this for the next play: Do this for a special play or special circumstances.
- Do this for the next drive: Use this if you want to try something different in the game plan for more than a single play.
- Do this for the entire game: If you have a strategy that you have complete confidence in, lock it in for the entire game.

QUARTERBACK STRATEGY

Depth

- Look to throw deep down the field: when you need yards, less accurate.
- Focus on shorter routes: higher rate of completion, fewer yards.

Location

- Look to throw along the sidelines: great for last minute drives and stopping the clock.
- Focus on the middle of the field: receiver has more room to make the catch.

Pocket

- Step up into the pocket: gives greater protection and longer time to find a receiver.
- Take a deep drop: gives the QB greater mobility.

Run

- Stay inside the pocket: Wait till a receiver comes open.
- Scramble if you feel pressure: Don't wait for a receiver; pull it down and run.

Pump Fake

- Pump fake to hold the safeties: locks defenders into the coverages.
- Forget about the pump fake.

Force the Ball

- Protect the ball, don't force it: If the receivers are covered, take the sack.
- Force the ball: Even though the receiver is covered, try to fire it in anyway.

Release

- Get rid of the ball quickly: Pass it quickly to avoid the sack.
- Be patient; let the play develop: Holding the ball longer allows your receiver time to get open.

Air It Out

- Put some touch on the ball: The play requires precise execution.
- Use your arm strength: Throw the ball with great speed.

Height

- Throw the ball high.
- Keep the pass low.

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Receiver

- Focus on your number-1 receiver: Look for the money player.
- Spread the ball around: Keep all your skill players involved.

First Down

- Throw beyond the first down marker.
- Take the open receiver: Pass to an open receiver, even if the play doesn't result in a first down.

THE STRATEGY SCREEN

HALFBACK/FULLBACK GROUP

Hole

- Run between the tackles: Run straight up the middle.
- Look to bounce the run outside: If the middle is packed, take it around the corner.

Power

- Stay low and run with power.
- Use your moves to gain extra yards.

Patience

- Let the O-line open a hole for you.
- Power your way through the line.

WIDE RECEIVER/TIGHT END GROUP

Release

- Gain inside position at the line.
- Keep the DB on the inside of your arm: use to create position downfield.

Fake

- Create space with your agility.
- Use speed to get open.

Jump

- Cut off the ball: Come back to the QB for it.
- Don't break your route off early: Let the ball come to you.

OFFENSIVE LINE GROUP

Step In/Out

- Force the defender outside.
- Push the defender inside.

Push

- Engage the defender.
- Let the defender come to you.

Cut Block

- Cut the defender to the ground.
- Stay high and slow down the rush.

LINEBACKER GROUP

Big Hit

- Force a turnover with a big hit.
- Just don't let anyone get by you.

Pick the Ball

- Just bat the pass down: incomplete.
- Jump the route: interception!

Pass/Run

- Defend against the pass play.
- Focus on stopping the run.

DEFENSIVE BACK GROUP

Big Hit

- Force a turnover with a big hit.
- Just don't let anyone get by you.

Defend

- Stay to the inside of the wide receiver.
- Stay to the outside of the wide receiver.

Jam

- Force the wide receiver to the inside.
- Force the wide receiver to the outside.

Pick the Ball

- Jump the route: interception!
- Just bat the pass down: incomplete.

Press

- Give the wide receiver a cushion at the line.
- Slow him down at the line.

DEFENSIVE LINE GROUP

Hit

- Force a turnover with a big hit.
- Just don't let anyone get by you.

Inside/Outside

- Make your move to the inside.
- Make your move to outside.

Pass/Run

- Focus on stopping the run.
- Defend against the pass play.

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During game day, you can use your Quick NAV to access your players, stats, and more.

PRESNAP CONTROL

This brings up the presnap control, which allows you to call audibles and hot routes, and make other modifications on the field.

WIDE RECEIVER PROGRESSION

SLIDE PROTECTION

This tells your OL which direction to move the blocking assignments and the direction of the play.

Slide left

Slide right

Pinch line

Spread line

AUDIBLE

Change the huddle-called play after the QB sees the defensive alignment.

QB STRATEGY

Refer to "QB Strategy" in this section.

Formation Shift: Change your formation. Differs from team to team based on their offensive philosophies.

Hot Routes: Choose one of your backs or receivers to run a route of your choice, based on what formation the defense is running.

Motion: You can select any of your backs or receivers to go in motion left or right behind the line of scrimmage and before the snap of the ball. Motion makes the defense declare whether it's in a man or zone defense.

STATS

Right takes you to Stats screen where you can review how your players have been doing. This is a quick overview of performance on both sides of ball. The viewable stats are:

- Passing Yards For
- Rushing Yards For
- Passing Yards Against
- Rushing Yards Against

ROSTER

Down brings up the Roster screen. Here you can make depth chart changes or substitutions.

Depth Chart: Allows a in-game look at strengths and weaknesses of your team by position during the actual game. This helps if you have an injury to a player and need to choose a replacement to fill the position.

Substitutions: Make the appropriate changes to your on-field roster from here. If a player is having a off day, give his backup a chance.

MOTIVATION AND STRATEGY

Left on the Quick NAV takes you to the sidelines, where you can talk to your players and provide motivation or strategy.

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Motivation: You can motivate players either aggressively or passively. This is a fine line. Players respond differently to the same type of motivation. Some players need a kick in the pants, while others need to have their hand held.

Strategy: As in the practice Quick NAV, you can give strategy by position or by player. If the team performance is struggling, approach it by position. If the team is excelling, narrow it down and approach it by player.

IN GAME: PRE-SEASON, REGULAR SEASON, AND PLAYOFFS

It's time to hit someone other than practice dummies and your own teammates. Use the pre-season to perfect your offensive and defensive philosophies so that when you get to the regular season, where the games count, you and your team will be ready. Every game played is unique, yet every game played has certain constants. Whether you're playing a pre-season game, a regular season game, a playoff game, or even the Super Bowl, a game is still 60 minutes long. You get four downs to get a first down and a touchdown is worth six points. Develop your skill every game to achieve the highest possible coaching attributes.

WEEKLY STAFF MEETING POST-GAME

After every game of the season, you meet with your coaching staff to review the positives and negatives from the last game. Depending on the game's outcome, you can criticize or praise the efforts made by your assistant coaches and coordinators. They respond with a plus or minus after you finish with them. If the effort is bad, you can kick them out of the meeting.

THE NEXT 24 WEEKS

If you are fortunate enough to make it to the Super Bowl, that's how many weeks are in front of you. Every week the actions are the same but stakes are higher. The weekly tasks are the same from here through the end of the season. Basic tasks always need to be done, just like a real job. At the end of the season, you meet with the owner to do a quick review of the season and the results. If you have any questions about a task, refer to the tasks section of the guide.

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Football 101*

OFFENSIVE STRATEGY

The team that has possession of the football is on offense. Each team's time on offense is also referred to as a drive. On taking possession of the football, the team on offense has four tries (or "downs") to advance the ball and achieve one of the following outcomes:

1. Move at least 10 yards closer to the opposing team's end zone, thereby gaining a first down and beginning a new series of downs—in other words, allowing at least four more chances to advance the ball farther or attempt to score.
2. Run the ball into the opposing team's end zone, or throw the ball to a player standing in the opposing team's end zone, thus scoring a touchdown (six points, plus an attempt to score a point after touchdown or two point conversion).
3. Move close enough to the opposing team's goal so that the team on offense can send in its kicking team and attempt to score a field goal (three points).
4. If none of the above three happen, the team on offense will choose to punt—kick the ball away—on fourth down. (See Special Teams Strategy.)

While scoring points is the overall objective, coaches and players may choose to execute certain type of plays based on a variety of factors, which may include: the type of defensive strategy the opposing team is employing, the health and experience of the players on both the offensive and defensive teams, the amount of time remaining before halftime or the end of the game, and the number of points that either team would need to score in order to take the lead and win the game.

TIME MANAGEMENT

Choosing plays based on the amount of time remaining on the game clock is a key element of offensive strategy. For example, a team that is behind in points late in the game will go on offense wanting not only to score, but to score quickly. Passing the ball is a quicker way of moving toward the goal and scoring than running the ball, and passing plays also allow more chances to stop the game clock (e.g., on an incomplete pass).

Conversely, a team that goes on offense while leading in points toward the end of a game wants to keep the game clock running, giving the opposing team less time to attempt a comeback. In such a case, the team will choose running plays on offense, as these make it more likely that the clock will continue to run between plays, allowing less time for the opposing team to score if and when it regains possession of the ball.

One example of time management contributing to a win is the November 21, 2005 NFL game between the Green Bay Packers and the Minnesota Vikings. With the score tied at 17 in the closing seconds of the game, the Vikings on offense made a first down well within field goal kicking range. On first down and second down, the Vikings' quarterback knelt down (see "Downing a Knee"), forcing the Packers to use their two remaining time-outs to stop the clock. On third down, the Vikings allowed the clock to run down to three seconds remaining before using their own time-out and sending in their kicker, Paul Edinger. Thus the Vikings ensured their survival: If the field goal try was unsuccessful, the game would continue into overtime and they would still have a chance to win the game. As it happened, the kick was made successfully just as the clock expired, and the final score was Minnesota 20, Green Bay 17.

OFFENSIVE PLAYERS

On offense, there are three type of players: linemen, backs, and receivers. The players' abilities combined with the coach's philosophy determine out of what formations a team will run their plays. Also, in many cases a coach will choose players with abilities that complement certain offensive formations and plays he likes. The basic offensive positions and those players' duties, however, do not vary from team to team.

The position name (as well as the initial abbreviations recognized by coaches, players, and fans) may vary from one team's playbook to another, but these are the ones most commonly used:

LINEMEN

Center: The center (C) is the player who snaps the ball to the quarterback (QB). Like the other four linemen, his job is blocking—run blocking means pushing the defenders away from the ball carrier

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on a running play, pass blocking means stopping the defenders from disrupting or tackling the QB. The center is also responsible for calling the blocking schemes on the line, directing the other linemen on who blocks whom.

Guard: Guards (G) line up on both sides of the center. The guards are bigger than the center and are better run blockers than pass blockers.

Tackle: Tackles (T) are the "bookends" of the offensive line. They are the biggest offensive linemen, but they also must be agile enough to thwart any outside pass rush. If a team has a right-handed QB, the left tackle is the best pass blocker on the line to prevent a "blindside" pass rush the QB might not see.

BACKS

Quarterback: The quarterback (QB) is the leader of the offense, making sure the team knows which plays are being run. The QB must take the ball from the C (in a motion called the "snap") and put it into play. In most offenses, his primary duty is either passing (throwing) the ball or making the opposing team believe he is going to pass the ball while handing it off to the RB who carries the ball downfield. Because passing the ball is an offense's quickest way to advance the ball, a team must have a QB who can throw the ball accurately and make quick correct decisions as to which player is in the best position to receive the throw. In some offenses, the QB is often called upon to run the ball downfield as part of the play, and a QB might have to take the ball and run if his screen of protective players breaks down and there are no open receivers.

Halfback: The halfback (HB) is traditionally only used in the Wing T and Stack I formations. In the Stack I, he lines up behind the QB and behind the FB and runs the ball. He may also line up outside and behind the TE, or the Wingback (WB) position, and be used to either block on the outside or run a pass route.

Fullback: The Fullback (FB) is also a running back, but in recent years, the FB position has developed into more of a blocking back, and in some schemes a receiver. The FB is usually the bigger more physical of the two running backs, and so the QB often hands the ball to his FB in short yardage situations where every inch must be earned the hard way.

Tailback: The tailback (TB), or running back (RB), is on the field for one major purpose: to run the ball. If a team is to have an effective running game, it falls on the TB's shoulders. He may have blocking duties in some offenses and on some plays he may become a receiver, but in most offenses, the TB is there to run the ball.

RECEIVERS

Wide receiver: Depending on the formation, an offense may have anywhere from one to five wide receivers (WRs). Most base formations feature two WRs, though three-WR formations are common as well. WRs are fastest and most agile players on the team, and their job is to get "open" (create separation between themselves and defenders), catch the ball when thrown to them, and run after the catch. Well-rounded receivers are also effective downfield blockers, though effectiveness in that regard is secondary to their pass-catching role.

Tight end: The tight end (TE) was traditionally a blocking position but is now considered a hybrid wide receiver/lineman. TEs are the most well-rounded athletes on the field, as they must be strong enough to run block and pass block, and agile enough to run pass routes and catch the football. A TE's size presents matchup problems for smaller defenders, such as cornerbacks, while his speed gives him an advantage versus larger but slower defenders such as linebackers. In the 1980s, Washington Redskins coach Joe Gibbs developed a hybrid TE/fullback position called H-Back; this player is TE-sized and replaces the fullback on the field, but has more pass-catching responsibility and less running unless "flexed" to the usual FB alignment. The H-Back may line up as a second TE on the opposite side from the first, but most commonly he lines up behind the first TE.

OFFENSIVE FORMATIONS

Before the ball is snapped, the offensive team lines up in a formation. Most teams have a "base" formation they prefer to line up in, while other teams leave the defense guessing. Teams often have "special formations" they use only in obvious passing situations, short yardage or goal line situations, or formations they have developed for that game to confuse the defense. Because there are a nearly unlimited number of possible formations, only a few of the more common ones are listed here.

- Pro set
- Wishbone formation
- Goal line formation
- Shotgun formation
- I formation
- Single set back

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OFFENSIVE PLAYS

Offensive nomenclature: In calling a play, just as on defense, condensed play calls are translated into more complicated plays in each player's heads. An example of a running play the quarterback would call in the huddle would be: Pro Left 35 Power.

The first word denotes the formation of the offense; in this case, it is the I formation, where the fullback and running back line up in line with the quarterback and center. The second word is the strong side: The tight end or slot receiver and wide out line up to the strong side in most formations and the split end receiver lines up on the weak side, on the line of scrimmage. The tailback also lines up on the weak side. Some formations feature exceptions, such as the I-form, where the tailback is lined up neither left nor right because the tailback is in line with the fullback and quarterback, or trips, where all three receivers are on the same side. The first digit denotes who the ball is going to:

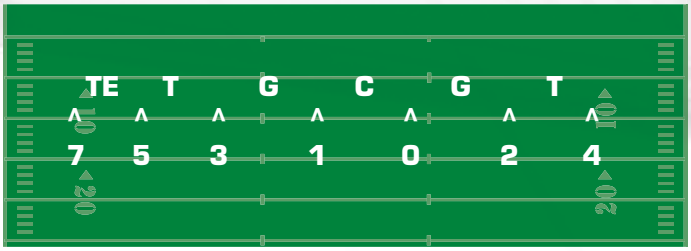
- 10—Quarterback
- 20—Fullback
- 30—Tailback
- 40—Third running back or slotback (rarely used in American football, generally used in Canadian football in wishbone formation because of the 12th player available)

The receivers have their own designations too:

- X—Split End
- Y—Tight End/Slot Receiver
- Z—Wide Out

The "power" indicates the type of play. In this case, the fullback would be leading the running back through the hole called the 5 hole. But what is the 5 hole? Here is a diagram of how the formation would look based on the play called:

The holes are even to the right of the center and odd to the left of the center. In this case:



Were this to be the Base I formation, with the tight end on the right, then there would be a 6 hole, which would be outside the tight end. As it is, this play would be a run between the tackle and the tight end.

Passing uses a different type of naming. Because it is not always certain who the ball is going to, each receiver has a route. An example is the I Y-Motion 245 H-Swing.

Again, the I is the formation, and there is no formation modifier word this time. However, there is the "Y-Motion" call (this is an arbitrary name, there are different ways of calling motion for every coach.). In this case it refers to the Y receiver, and calls for him to motion across the formation to the other side before the snap is called. This time the digits correspond to three different receivers, and each digit represents a number on the passing tree. The first digit is the X receiver, the second is the Y receiver, and the last is the Z receiver.

0—Quick hitch

1—Quick out

2—Slant

3—Deep out

4—Drag

5—Corner

6—Curl

7—Wheel

8—Post

9—Fly

In this case, the split end is running a slant, the tight end is running a drag, and the wide out is running a corner. The H-Swing call is a route for the backfield, in this case a swing route for the halfback

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(tailback). This call is optional, the absence of which calls for the halfback to block.

In both running and passing plays, blocking schemes are tacit and rehearsed. Different types of plays call for different schemes. Passing plays call for the linemen to step back and protect against the pass rush, with the backs and tight ends occasionally helping. There is variation to this, in the form of sprint outs, rollouts, play action passes, and screen passes. Running plays call for the linemen to get a push against the defense, moving forward to help the running back gain yardage by opening holes and blocking would-be tacklers. Variations may be pulling guards (often used on trap, counter, and other plays to the outside) and draw plays.

RUNNING PLAYS

Often the choice of running play depends on the strengths of an offensive team, and the weaknesses of the defense they are opposing. For example, plays to the outside of the offensive tackles are often advantageous for a team fielding a fast running back, because it would reduce the effectiveness of the slower defensive linemen, whereas inside runs would be favored by a slower "power" running back, because the back is easier to tackle running to a side rather than straight ahead. Some plays also offer better cutback lanes to better allow an agile running back to make defenders miss and thereby increase yardage.

Similarly, run strategy can be decided by the weaknesses of the defense. A weakness of the interior defensive linemen, the tackles, may be targeted by running a lot of runs inside, because theoretically the offensive guards could be moving the tackles at will, creating wide open holes for the back to run through. A team with weak defensive ends may have trouble containing the runner inside, and the offense would therefore look to get outside and break off some big runs.

- Plunge/Dive
- Sweep
- Reverse
- Off Tackle
- Student Body Right
- Draw
- Counter Trey
- Quarterback Sneak
- QB Sweep
- Option
- Counter
- Power
- Zone

SPECIAL OFFENSIVE PLAYS

"Spiking" the Football

Because an incomplete pass stops the game clock, a team's quarterback will sometimes "spike" the ball (throw it at the ground) to stop the clock without using a time-out. This is done when a team is trying to score points late in the second or fourth quarter and/or when the team has run out of time-outs.

Downing a Knee

This play is the opposite of spiking the ball. Because the game clock does not stop after a player is tackled in bounds (except after a change of possession or an injury) a team's quarterback will sometimes kneel after the ball is snapped to him to use up time on the clock. By using up time at the end of the game in this manner, a team can deny its opponent the opportunity to score, or can hasten the end of the half (halftime) or the end of the game when the score is tied, sending the game into overtime. The process in college football is different than in the NFL. In college, the quarterback takes two to three steps back before kneeling, whereas in the NFL, the quarterback kneels immediately. This play is sometimes referred to as "victory formation," as a team that has the lead and possession of the ball in the final seconds of a game typically uses this play.

SPECIFIC OFFENSIVE STRATEGIES

Several offensive strategies have evolved over the years, especially after the NFL outlawed most downfield contact on receivers (that is, past the five-yard "chuck" zone, where most contact is allowed). Thus, recent strategies attempt to use the passing game to open up the defense, as it is less predictable and carries the possibility for greater gain.

West Coast Offense

The "West Coast" offense was originated by Paul Brown but made famous by Bill Walsh during his coaching days at Stanford and his successful application of it with the San Francisco 49ers during the 1980s, resulting in three Super Bowl wins. The West Coast offense is characterized by short high-percentage-completion passes such as screens,

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flares, and quick slants. It depends on an accurate quick-thinking quarterback and excellent timing between him and his receivers. Teams that use this offense in the NFL have coaches who were Bill Walsh disciples or assistants of those disciples. The Green Bay Packers, Tampa Bay Buccaneers, Detroit Lions, Seattle Seahawks, and the Philadelphia Eagles use the West Coast offense.

Run and Gun Offense

The "Run and Gun" offense relies heavily on the deep or "vertical" passing game. It features a quarterback with an excellent arm and a bevy of fast wide receivers who can stretch the defensive alignment vertically. This offensive scheme also demands excellent pass blocking from its offensive lineman. Although running the football is common, unlike in other schemes the "pass sets up the run." Run and Gun offenses use halfback draws and halfback delays to keep the defense from pass rushing and keeping five or six defensive backs in the game every down. Teams that use this offense are the Indianapolis Colts, the St. Louis Rams, and the Cincinnati Bengals.

Power Football Offense

The "Power Football" (colloquially, "Smashmouth Football") offense is a traditional scheme referred to as "three yards and a cloud of dust." It depends on large powerful running backs running straight ahead and gaining yards after contact (YAC). This offense uses "the run to set up the pass" via play-action. This offense is patient and is most effective when matched with a dominating defense that keeps the opponent from scoring. Power Football allows the team to control the ball for longer periods of time, denying the opposing offense time with the ball. Few teams use this offense; in recent years only the Washington Redskins, the Baltimore Ravens, and the Pittsburgh Steelers have been true Power Football teams.

DEFENSIVE STRATEGY

The general goal of defensive strategy is to prevent the opposing team's offense from scoring. While doing so, the defensive players may also attempt to gain control of the football and score points. There are many different defensive strategies.

DEFENSIVE FORMATIONS

3-4 Defense

The 3-4 defense declined in popularity over the years, but has found renewed use by modern professional and college football teams. The 3-4 defense is so named because it involves three down linemen and four linebackers. There are four defensive backs.

The three down linemen attempt to break into the backfield to sack or rush the quarterback or to stop running backs and other players behind the line of scrimmage. The defensive line is made up of a nose tackle (NT), who lines up in front of the opposing team's center and two defensive ends (DEs), who flank the nose tackle on both sides. Linemen in 3-4 schemes tend to be more massive than their 4-3 counterparts to take up more space and guard more territory along the defensive front.

Four linebackers line up behind the defensive line. In a 3-4 defense, the linebacker unit is made up of two middle or inside linebackers (MLBs/ILBs), who are flanked on both sides by outside linebackers (OLBs).

The strength of the 3-4 is its ability by its design to confuse the quarterback during passing plays. Most teams generate a pass rush by sending at least four defensive men at the quarterback. In a standard 4-3 alignment, these four rushers are the four down linemen. But in a 3-4, the fourth rusher is a linebacker. Because there are four linebackers, the fourth potential rusher can come from a variety of spots on the field, thus influencing and sometimes confusing the quarterback's pre-snap defensive read.

A drawback of the 3-4 is that without a fourth lineman to take on the offensive blockers and close the running lane, blocking schemes in the running game can overwhelm both the defensive linemen and the linebackers; thus a 3-4 defense requires a large and strong nose tackle able to routinely tie up two or more blockers, freeing the middle linebackers to make the tackle. The 3-4 linebackers must be athletic and strong enough to shed blocks by fullbacks, tight ends, and offensive linemen to get to the running back.

4-3 Defense

The 4-3 defense is the most commonly used defense in modern American football. The 4-3 defense is so named because it involves 4 down linemen and 3 linebackers. There are also 4 defensive backs.

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The defensive line is made up of two defensive tackles (DTs) and two defensive ends (DEs). The two defensive tackles line up in the middle of the line, in front of the opposing team's center. The two defensive ends flank the defensive tackles. DEs in 4-3 schemes are smaller and quicker than their 3-4 counterparts because the fourth lineman provides additional leverage to close running lanes. These smaller DEs allow defenses to collapse the quarterback pocket quickly, at worst disturbing his timing and at best causing a fumble, sack, or interception.

Three linebackers line up behind the defensive line. In a 4-3 defense, the linebacker unit is made up of a middle or inside linebacker (MLB/ILB) code-named Mike, who is flanked by the weakside (Will) and strongside (Sam) linebackers.

The 4-3 is widely used because of its balance in stopping both runs and passes as well as being personnel-friendly because smaller players can be used effectively along the defensive line.

The original version of the 4-3 lined up the tackles over the offensive guards and the end over the offensive tackles, with the middle linebacker over the center and the other linebackers outside the ends. In the mid-1960s Hank Stram developed a popular variation, the "Kansas City Stack," which shifted the strong side defensive end over the tight end, stacked the strongside linebacker over the tackle, and shifted the weakside tackle over center. At the same time, the Cleveland Browns frequently used a weakside shift. Now every team has its own variations.

Nickel Defense

The nickel defense is employed in obvious passing situations, or against a team that frequently uses four-wide-receiver sets on offense. The defense has five defensive backs, and has four down linemen and two linebackers. A lineup of three down linemen and three linebackers is sometimes used, but this is often called a "3-3-5" defense instead of a "nickel" defense.

In most defenses, the secondary consists of two cornerbacks (CBs), a free safety (FS) and a strong safety (SS). The nickel defense adds an extra defensive back, known as the "nickel back" (NB), to defend against the pass. A nickel back is also employed in the "dime" defense and is usually a cornerback, although safeties can be used as well. The term "nickel" comes from the five-cent value of a United States nickel, in reference to the fifth defensive back.

Dime Defense

The dime defense is employed in obvious passing situations. The formation consists of six defensive backs, and has either four down linemen and one linebacker, or three down linemen and two linebackers.

A dime defense differs from the nickel in that it adds another defensive back to the secondary. The sixth defensive back is called a "dime back" (DB). The defense gets its name because a dime is two nickels.

Prevent Defense

Prevent defenses are geared toward stopping a long pass. They are used in obvious passing situations, such as a third-and-very-long situation, or to prevent a long score on the last play of a half, or when the defense believes that the offense must pass (for example, if the offense is trailing late in a game). The defense trades size for speed and tries to ensure that no receiver can get behind the defense. A prevent defense often gives up long yardage, but it makes scoring a touchdown in a single play difficult.

Quarter and Half Dollar

The quarter defense has three down linemen, one linebacker, and seven defensive backs. The quarter defense gets its name as the next coin after nickel and dime in the sequence of defenses.

Half dollar defenses, with eight defensive backs, are rare and are often used to prevent a Hail Mary pass. Professional teams may not have enough defensive backs on the roster to play the quarter or half dollar, so wide receivers are sometimes used to fill the extra positions, particularly in late game situations where the receiver's offensive skills can be put to good defensive use.

Quarter or quarters can also be used to describe a type of zone pass coverage, in which four defensive backs divide the field into vertical quarters for zone coverage. This coverage may be combined with a 4-3 or 3-4, and it's used to take away deep routes but maintain a good pass rush and run coverage.

The prevent defense is rarely used on consecutive downs, or with a significant amount of time remaining, because a team with time to move downfield would be able to gain plenty of intermediate yardage. A standing joke in the NFL says that playing a prevent defense for a prolonged period of time prevents you from winning.

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Eight in the Box

The defensive linemen and linebackers collectively or, more properly, the area of the field between the OT on the defensive side, is often referred to as "in the box" and thus normally numbers seven players; on occasion, however, circumstances call for an additional man to be placed therein (generally a linebacker if the team uses the 4-3 as its base alignment, or a defensive lineman in cases where the 3-4 is ordinarily utilized), whereupon one player in the secondary (most commonly the free safety) is removed from the lineup. Sometimes a player in the secondary (the strong safety) acts as an additional linebacker and no actual lineup change ensues. Some teams use a defensive system in which one of the players is a cross between a linebacker and a strong safety and is called a "rover."

Teams most often put "eight in the box" or "stack the box" when the opposing team has a strong running game. By having more players closer to the line of scrimmage, the defense can more effectively contain the opposing team's running game.

46/Bear

A variation of "8 in the box" in the NFL is called the 46 or "Bear" defense. It is designed to put pressure on the QB by lining up the defense with three defensive linemen covering the center and guards, and the fourth defensive linemen lined up either "wide" outside the TE or wide off the weakside tackle. The linebackers and strong safety are lined up behind the defensive line to put pressure on the QB as well.

This defense earned its name from the team that employed it to near-perfection, the Chicago Bears. The 46 was their base defense when the Monsters of the Midway dominated the 1985 season.

COVERAGE SHELLS

In the following, "cover" refers to the "shell" that the defense rolls into after the snap of the ball, more specifically the number of defenders guarding the deep portion of the field.

Cover 2

In traditional Cover 2 schemes, the free safety (FS) and strong safety (SS) have deep responsibilities, each guarding half of the field.

Cover 2 can be run from any number of defensive fronts such as the 46, the 3-4, and the 4-3. Various "underneath" coverage played by cornerbacks and linebackers may also be implemented. For example, Cover 2 Man means two safeties have deep responsibility while the cornerbacks and linebackers follow their offensive assignment in one-on-one coverage. Cover 2 can also be paired with underneath zone schemes: Cover 2 Zone refers to two safeties with deep responsibility but now the CBs and LBs drop back into specific coverage zones where they defend passes only in their assigned area.

Teams that play Cover 2 shells ascribe to the "bend-but-don't-break" philosophy, preferring to keep offensive players in front of them for short gains while limiting long passes. This is in stark contrast to a more aggressive Cover 1 type scheme, which leaves the offensive team's wide receivers in single man-to-man coverage with only one deep helper. By splitting the deep field between two defenders, the defense can reduce the number of long gains.

The main weakness of the Cover 2 shell occurs in the middle of the field between the safeties. The safeties attempt to gain width upon the snap of the ball to cover any long passes to quick wide receivers down the sideline. This movement creates a natural hole between the safeties that can be attacked. By sending a receiver (usually a tight end) into the hole, the offense forces the safety to make a decision: play the vulnerable hole in the middle of the field or help out on the wide receiver. The quarterback reads the safety's decision and decides on the best matchup (which mismatch is better—TE vs. S or WR vs. CB).

Cover 1

Cover 1 schemes employ one deep defender, usually a safety. Many underneath coverages paired with Cover 1 shells are man-to-man with LBs and defensive backs each assigned a different offensive player to cover. By using only one deep defender in Cover 1, the other deep defender is free to blitz the quarterback or provide man-to-man pass coverage help.

Cover 1 schemes are aggressive, preferring to proactively disrupt the offense by giving the quarterback little time to make a decision while collapsing the pocket quickly. This is the main advantage of Cover 1 schemes—the ability to blitz from various pre-snap formations while engaging in

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complex man-to-man coverage schemes post-snap. For example, a safety may blitz while a CB is locked in man coverage with a WR. Or the CB may blitz with the safety rotating into man coverage on the WR post-snap.

The main weakness of Cover 1 schemes is the lone deep defender that must cover a large amount of field and provide help on any deep threats. Offenses can attack Cover 1 schemes with a vertical stretch by sending two receivers on deep routes, provided that the quarterback has enough time for his receivers to get open. The deep defender must decide which receiver to help out on, leaving the other in man coverage that may be a mismatch.

A secondary weakness is by its design: The use of man coverage opens up yards after catch lanes. Man coverage is attacked by offenses in various ways that try to isolate their best athletes on defenders by passing them the ball quickly before the defender can react, or designing plays that clear defenders from certain areas, thus opening yards after catch lanes.

Cover 3

Cover 3 refers to three deep defenders each guarding one-third of the deep zone. Cover 3 schemes are used to defend against passes, mainly those toward the deep middle of the field. Unlike Cover 2 schemes that create a natural hole between safeties, Cover 3's extra deep defender is able to patrol the middle area effectively.

The most basic Cover 3 scheme involves two CBs and a safety. Upon snap, the CBs work for depth, backpedaling into their assigned zone. One safety moves toward the center of the field. The other safety is free to rotate into the flat area (about two to four yards beyond the line of scrimmage), provide pass coverage help, or blitz.

As with other coverage shells, Cover 3 is paired with underneath man or zone coverage in its most basic form. The main weakness of Cover 3 shells is the two retreating CBs. Because the CBs are working for depth, short pass routes underneath the CB can isolate him on a wide receiver near the sideline with little help.

Cover 4

Cover 4 refers to four deep defenders each guarding one-fourth of the deep zone. Cover 4 schemes are used to defend against deep passes.

The most basic Cover 4 scheme involves two CBs and two safeties. Upon snap, the CBs work for depth, backpedaling into their assigned zones. Both safeties backpedal toward their assigned zones.

As with other coverage shells, Cover 4 is paired with underneath man or zone coverage in its most basic form. The main weakness of Cover 4 shells is the retreating defensive backs. Because the DBs are working for depth, short pass routes underneath can isolate them on a wide receiver near the sideline with little help.

Cover 0

Cover 0 refers to pure man coverage with no deep defender. Similar to Cover 1, Cover 0 has the same strengths and weaknesses.

Tampa 2

Tampa 2 refers to a style of defense played by the Tampa Bay Buccaneers and implemented by its coaches in recent years. Because of its success, it has become popular with many professional and college teams. It blends the Cover 2 and Cover 3 defenses by having two defensive backs, usually the safeties, in deep coverage on either side of the field, and a middle linebacker covering the medium to deep middle. Its benefit over the Cover 2 is that the sidelines and middle of the field are better protected against deep threats, with the drawback being a larger open area in the short middle of the field underneath the middle linebacker. Its benefit over the Cover 3 is that it dedicates only two defensive backs to deep coverage rather than three, allowing for better protection against short outside routes.

SPECIAL TEAMS STRATEGY

Special teams is the term used to describe the specialized group of players who take the field during kickoffs, free kicks, punts, and field goal attempts. Most football teams' special teams include one or more kickers, a long snapper (who specializes in accurate snaps over long distances), kick returners who catch and carry the ball after it is kicked by the opposing team, and blockers who defend during kicks and returns.

Some players may take the field as members of the offense or defense as well as the special teams; one notable example is Steven Smith, wide receiver for the NFL's Carolina Panthers, who also played as a kick returner during the 2005 NFL season, and was drafted primarily as a special teams player.

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Although these are risky, a variety of strategic plays can be attempted during kickoffs, punts, and field goals, which can be used to surprise the opposition and (hopefully) score points.

KICKOFF STRATEGY

A kickoff occurs at the beginning of each half and each overtime period, and after a successful field goal or touchdown. A coin toss determines which team kicks the ball away and which team receives the ball. After a field goal or a touchdown, the team that scored the points kicks the ball to the opposing team, which in most cases catches the ball and may attempt to "return" it up the field.

Strategically, the coach of the kicking team may choose to have his players kick the ball in one of several ways:

- Standard kickoff: The kicker attempts a high kick meant to travel the greatest possible distance upfield without rolling into the end zone. The primary goal is to stop the opposing team's ball returner as soon as possible, or to down the ball as close as possible to the opposing team's end zone, thus forcing that team to advance the ball a longer distance to have a chance to score.
- Onside kick: This is attempted in the closing minutes of play when a team needs to score again quickly to have a chance of winning the game.
- "Squib kick" or "pooch kick": The squib kick is a low kick that may hit the ground and bounce or roll sooner than a standard kickoff; it is thus less predictable. A squib kick is used when trying to avoid a run-back, although this outcome is not guaranteed. A pooch kick is used for a similar purpose, except it's a short high kick that the kickoff team can get to before there is a return.
- Kickoff out-of-bounds: If a kickoff travels over the sidelines in the air, or bounces in the field of play then rolls out-of-bounds without being touched by a player on the receiving team, the play results in an illegal procedure penalty. The receiving team may choose to either have the ball re-kicked, or to have it placed for play 30 yards in advance of the kickoff spot or where the ball went over the sideline, whichever is closer to the opposing team's end zone. Generally, the receiving team chooses the latter option, as good starting field position is guaranteed, whereas a re-kick could result in any number of less desirable options.

FIELD GOAL STRATEGY

Field goals are often viewed as a way for teams to turn a disappointing drive into a small victory. However, many football games are decided by field goals in the final minutes or seconds of play, making the ability to kick an accurate field goal vital for any football team.

The strategy for a field goal is straightforward. The team on offense forms a protective semicircle behind the line of scrimmage on either side of the center, who snaps the ball to the holder. The holder positions the ball so that the kicker—moving from a short distance away—can quickly get into position and accurately kick the ball through the goalposts. The remaining players block the opposing team, whose members are trying to break through the protective circle to block the kick or bat it aside for a chance to intercept the ball. If a team misses the field goal, the opposing team takes possession of the ball without a kickoff.

Distance, the amounts of wind and noise within the stadium, and the amount of experience the kicker has are all determining factors in the success or failure of a field goal attempt. The majority of successful field goal attempts are kicked within 50 yards of the goalposts.

However, some kickers can—and often do—make good kicks from farther away.

Modern kickers use a soccer style kick, which involves taking a diagonal approach to the ball and kicking with the inside of the foot. Many kickers in the 1950's and earlier kicked the ball by lining up directly behind it and approaching straight ahead. This is still seen today in a limited capacity in high school and college football.

In some situations, a coach may choose to have his team fake a field goal attempt. The players line up as normal, but instead of holding the ball for a kick, the player receiving the snap may run with the ball, hand it off to another player, or attempt to throw it downfield. This play is risky and therefore not used often.

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It is possible for the defensive team to return a missed field goal, although this is attempted rarely. If a field goal attempt is short of the goalposts and the ball is caught by a defensive player before it hits the ground, the player may return the ball as on a punt. Teams try a return only when a long field goal is attempted at the end of the first half, because in all other cases it is more advantageous for the defense to let the ball fall short.

Recently, a return of this type has happened in both 2002 (Chris McAlister of the Baltimore Ravens, for 107 yards versus the Denver Broncos) and 2005 (Nathan Vasher of the Chicago Bears, for 108 yards versus the San Francisco 49ers; this holds the record for longest play in NFL history).

PUNTING STRATEGY

Most teams punt on fourth down when the chances of gaining enough yards for a first down are slim and when the ball is too far from the goalposts to allow a field goal try. A member of the opposing team moves into position to catch the ball. He may try to gain yards by running the ball downfield, or he may signal a fair catch by waving his arms, thus agreeing that he will not attempt to return the ball downfield. A player who has signaled a fair catch may not be tackled after catching the ball.

In some cases, a coach may attempt trickery by switching between his offense and special teams players between plays. A coach may call a time-out, send the kicking team onto the field, then when the play clock resumes run his offense back on and his kicking team off, hopefully disorienting the defending team enough to advance on the ensuing play or cause a penalty if the defending team cannot switch personnel quickly enough. However, this trickery can also result in penalties against the offense if the play takes too long (delay of game) or if too many players remain on the field when the ball is snapped.

Occasionally a coach will line his team up in a shotgun formation and have the quarterback "quick kick" or "pooch punt"—using the element of surprise to cause the defense not to have a receiver ready.

Downing the Ball

If the receiving team does not catch the ball, the kicking team may move into position and try to down it as close as possible to the opposing team's end zone. This is achieved by surrounding the ball and allowing it to roll or bounce, without touching it, as close as possible to the end zone. If the ball appears to be rolling or bouncing into the end zone, a player may run in front of the goal line and attempt to bat it down or catch it. If a member of the kicking team touches or catches the ball before a member of the receiving team does so, the ball is dead and the receiving team takes possession at the spot the ball was contacted.

Thus it is strategically important for kicking teams to get as close to the ball as possible after a punt, so that they may quickly tackle a returner, down the ball as close to the opposing team's end zone as possible, and (if possible) recover the ball after a fumble and regain possession of the ball.

Fake Punts

In the same way as a fake field goal, a fake punt is an effort to trick the opposition and either score or gain enough yards for a first down. Fake punts are risky for the same reasons as fake field goals and are thus rarely attempted.

In 2005 the opposite of this play became increasingly popular, with teams lining up in a shotgun offensive alignment or field goal attempt alignment. The ball is snapped to the QB/holder/kicker, who punts the ball. This is done in situations where a full length punt would result in a touchback and allows the punting team a better chance of getting downfield to prevent the punt from entering the end zone (the reasoning being that the defensive backs will not jam the receivers off the line as they would the gunners in a punting alignment).

Punts Out-of-Bounds

Skilled punters may try to punt a ball past the return team so that the ball touches the playing field in bounds, then rolls out of bounds close to the opposing team's end zone. The drawback to such a punt is that the ball may roll into the end zone (touchback), giving the receiving team decent field position. The best punters are highly regarded for their ability to put the ball out of bounds within five yards of the goal line. These punts are also known as "coffin corner punts" due to their ability to act as a "coffin nail" to an opposing offense.

RECEIVING KICKS

The biggest choice facing a kick returner is whether or not to attempt to run the ball back. A returner who catches a kickoff or punt in the "red zone" between the receiving team's own end zone and 20 yard line will attempt some sort of return, if only to gain a few

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yards. If the receiving team's players can get into position quickly, they may be able to allow the returner to gain further yardage or break away from the pack and score a touchdown.

In extreme cases—during kickoff returns in the closing seconds of play—the returner may attempt a lateral pass to avoid the ball being downed in a tackle. The return team may throw as many lateral passes as they choose, and this is done in a desperate attempt to keep the ball alive. Perhaps the most famous (or infamous) use of lateral passes during a kickoff return came in the closing seconds of the 1982 Stanford vs. Cal game, in which five laterals during a kickoff return allowed the U.C. Berkeley Bears to score a controversial winning touchdown.

If a punted ball is touched, even inadvertently, by a member of the receiving team, it becomes a live ball and may be recovered as if a fumble by the kicking team. All place kicked balls, kickoffs, and field goal attempts are live balls that may be played by either team.

A kick returner may signal a fair catch if the ball will be caught with good field position, or if the kicking team's members are advancing so quickly that a return is impossible. However, he will be penalized if he attempts a return after signaling a fair catch; likewise, players who tackle a returner who has signaled a fair catch will be penalized. If a player waves for a fair catch, then fails to touch the ball, it may be downed as normal by the kicking team or recovered and returned by the receiving team. However, if any member of the receiving team catches a ball, then drops it, it becomes a live ball and either side may recover it.

GLOSSARY

0-9

N-M DEFENSE

A defense with "n" down linemen and "m" linebackers, such as:

3-3

A defense with three lineman, three linebackers, and five defensive backs. Often called a 3-3 stack.

3-4

A defensive formation with three linemen and four linebackers. A professional derivative in the 1970s of the earlier Oklahoma or "50" defense, which had five linemen and two linebackers. The 3-4 outside linebackers resemble "stand-up ends" in the older defense.

4-3

A defensive formation with four linemen and three linebackers. Several variations are employed.

4-4-4

Infamous defense, coined by coach and color commentator John Madden when referring to a penalty having 12 men on the field.

4-6 defense

A defense with four down linemen and six linebackers. Pronounced "four-six defense."

46

A formation of the 4-3 defense (four linemen and three linebackers) in which three defensive backs (the two cornerbacks and the strong safety) crowd the line of scrimmage. The remaining safety, who is the free safety, stays in the backfield. Not to be confused with the 4-6 (four-six) defense. Pronounced "forty-six defense."

50

A once popular college defense with five defensive linemen and two linebackers.

A

audible

From the Latin "audire" (to hear, to listen to), a play called by the quarterback at the line of scrimmage to change the play that was called in the huddle.

automatic

See *audible*.

automatic first down

For several of the most severe penalties, including pass interference and all personal fouls, a first down is rewarded to the offensive team even if the yardage of that penalty is less than the yardage needed for a first down.

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B

back

A position behind the offensive line, or behind the linebackers on defense.

blitz

A defensive maneuver in which one or more linebackers or defensive backs, who normally remain behind the line of scrimmage, instead charge into the opponents' backfield. However, in the 3-4 defense, one linebacker rushes the passer with the three down linemen. This is not a blitz. If an additional linebacker is sent, bringing the total number of rushers to five, it is a blitz.

blocking

When a player obstructs another player's path with his body.

bootleg

An offensive play predicated upon misdirection in which the quarterback pretends to hand the ball to another player, then carries the ball in the opposite direction of the supposed ball carrier with the intent of either passing or running (sometimes the quarterback has the option of doing either). A naked bootleg is a risky variation of this play when the quarterback has no blockers pulling out with him. Contrast with scramble, sneak, and draw.

the box

An area on the defensive side of the ball, opposite the offensive linemen and about five yards deep; having eight players in the box means bringing in a defensive back, normally the strong safety, to help stop the offensive team's running game.

C

center

A player position on offense. The center snaps the ball.

chains

The 10-yard-long chain that is used by the chain crew to measure for a new series of downs.

check-off

See *audible*.

chuck and duck

A style of offense with minimal pass protection requiring the quarterback to "chuck" the ball, then "duck" to avoid a defensive lineman.

clipping

An illegal block in which the victim is blocked from the back and below the waist; the penalty is 15 yards. Originally, clipping was defined as any block from the back, but is now restricted to blocks below the waist. Other blocks from the back are now punished with 10-yard penalties.

coffin corner

The corner of the field of play. A punter, if he is close enough, will often attempt to kick the ball out of bounds close to the receiving team's goal line and pin them back near their own end zone.

contain

A defensive assignment. On outside runs such as the sweep, one defensive player (usually a cornerback or outside linebacker) is assigned to keep the rusher from getting to the edge of the play and turning upfield. If executed properly, the rusher will have to turn upfield before the play calls for it, giving the linebackers a better chance of stopping the play for little or no gain.

cornerback (CB)

A defensive back who lines up near the line of scrimmage across from a wide receiver. His primary job is to disrupt passing routes and to defend against short and medium passes in the passing game, and to contain the rusher on rushing plays.

counter

A running play in which the running back takes a step in the apparent direction of the play (i.e., the direction the line is moving), only to get the handoff in the other direction. Weak side linemen sometimes pull and lead the back downfield (sometimes called a counter trap), but not necessarily. The play is designed to get the defense to flow away from the action for a few steps as they follow the linemen, allowing more room for the running back.

crackback block

1. An illegal block delivered below the opponent's waist by an offensive player who had left the area of close line play, then returned to it, or was not within it at the snap.

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2. The term is also used to describe a legal block (delivered from the front, or from the side with the offensive player's helmet in front of the blocked player) by a wide receiver on a player who lined up inside of him.

cut

A sharp change of direction by a running player. Also called a cutback. See *cut blocking*, below.

cut blocking

A blocking technique in which offensive linemen, and sometimes other blockers, block legally below the waist (i.e., from the front of the defensive player) in an attempt to bring the defenders to ground, making them unable to pursue a running back for the short time needed for the back to find a gap in the defense. The technique is controversial, as it carries a risk of serious leg injuries to the blocked defenders. The NFL's Denver Broncos are famous (or infamous) for using this technique.

D

dead ball

A ball that is no longer in play.

defensive back

A cornerback or safety position on the defensive team; commonly defends against wide receivers on passing plays. There are four defensive backs playing at a time; see *nickel back* and *dime back*.

defensive end (DE)

A player position on defense who lines up on the outside of the defensive line.

defensive tackle (DT)

A player position on defense on the inside of the defensive line. When a defensive tackle lines up across from the center, he is known as a nose tackle.

defensive team

The team that begins a play from scrimmage not in possession of the ball.

dime back

The second extra, or sixth total, defensive back. Named because a dime has the same value as two nickels.

double reverse

A play in which the ball reverses direction twice behind the line of scrimmage. This is accomplished by means of two or three handoffs, each handoff going in an opposite direction as the previous one. Such a play is infrequent in football. Some people confuse the double reverse with a reverse, which is a play with two handoffs instead of three.

down

One of a series of plays in which the offensive team must advance at least 10 yards or lose possession. First down is the first of the plays; fourth is the last down in American football. A first down occurs after a change of possession of the ball, after advancing the ball 10 yards following a previous first down, or after certain penalties.

down lineman

A player stationed in front of his line of scrimmage and who has either one (three-point stance) or two (four-point stance) hands on the ground.

draw play

A play in which the quarterback drops back as if to pass, then hands off to a running back or runs with the ball himself. Contrast with scramble.

drive

1. A continuous set of offensive plays gaining substantial yardage and several first downs, leading to a scoring opportunity.
2. A blocking technique—"drive block"—in which an offensive player through an advantaged angle or with assistance drives a defensive player out of position, creating a hole for the ball carrier.

drop kick

A kick in which the ball is dropped and kicked after it hits the ground and before it hits it again; a half-volley kick.

E

eligible receivers

Players who may legally touch a forward pass. On the passer's team, these are: the end, the backs, and (except in the NFL), one player in position to take a hand-to-hand snap, i.e., a T quarterback; provided the

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player's shirt displays a number in the ranges allowed for eligible receivers. All players of the opposing team are eligible receivers, and after the ball is touched by a player of the opposing team (anywhere in American football), all players become eligible.

encroachment

An illegal action by a player: to cross the line of scrimmage and make contact with an opponent before the ball is snapped, or to line up offside and remain there when the ball is put in play.

end

A player position, either on offense or defense—see *linemen*.

end zone

The area between the end line and the goal line, bounded by the sidelines.

extra point

A single point scored in a conversion attempt by making what would be a field goal or a safety during general play.

F

fair catch

An unhindered catch of an opponent's kick. The player wanting to make one must signal for a fair catch by waving an arm overhead while the ball is in the air. After that signal, if he gains possession of the ball, it is dead immediately and opponents receive a 15-yard penalty for hitting him.

fantasy football (American)

A game in which the participants (called "owners") each draft (on their own or with the aid of software) a team of real-life NFL players, then score points based on those players' statistical performance on the field.

field of play

The area between both the goal lines and the sidelines, and in some contexts the space vertically above it.

field goal

Score of three points made by place or drop kicking the ball through the opponent's goal other than via a kickoff or free kick following a safety; formerly, "goal from the field."

flanker

A player position on offense. A wide receiver who lines up one or more yards off the line of scrimmage outside of another receiver. The term is used infrequently in American football, having been replaced by the wide receiver or wide out, with no distinction between whether the receiver is on the line or not.

flat

An area on the field between the line of scrimmage and 10 yards into the defensive backfield, and within 15 yards of the sideline. Running backs often run pass routes to the flat when they are the safety valve receivers.

flea flicker

A trick play in which a running back laterals the ball to the quarterback, who then throws a pass to a wide receiver or tight end.

formation

An arrangement of the offensive skill players. A formation is described in terms of how the running backs line up (e.g., I formation, in which the halfback is lined up about seven yards deep, and the fullback is lined up about five yards deep, both behind the quarterback) or how the wide receivers line up (e.g., Trips Left, in which three wide receivers line up to the left of the linemen). Frequently, the formation alludes to both, such as with Strong I Slot Right, in which the halfback is lined up seven yards deep behind the quarterback, the fullback is five yards deep behind the guard or tackle on the strong side, and both wide receivers are lined up on the right side of the offensive line. Rules limit what is legal in a formation. All five offensive linemen must be on the line of scrimmage (a small amount of leeway is given to tackles when lined up for pass protection). Also, there must be one receiver (usually one tight end and one wide receiver) lined up on the line on either side of the offensive line (it doesn't matter how close they are to the tackles, as long as they are on the line). A receiver who is on the line may not go in motion.

forward pass

A pass that touches a person, object, or the ground closer to the opponent's end line than where it was released from, or is accidentally lost during a forward throwing motion.

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four-point stance

A down lineman's stance with four points (his two feet and his two hands) on the ground.

free kick

A kick made to put the ball in play as a kickoff or following a safety (the score) or fair catch.

free safety (FS)

A player position on defense. Free safeties play deep, or "center field," and often have the pass defense responsibility of assisting other defensive backs in deep coverage (compared to strong safeties, who usually have an assigned receiver and run support responsibilities).

fullback (FB)

A player position on offense. Originally, lined up deep behind the quarterback in the T formation. In modern formations this position may be varied, and this player has more blocking responsibilities in comparison with the halfback or tailback.

fumble

A ball that a player accidentally lost possession of.

G

goal

A surface in space marked by a structure of two upright posts 18 feet 6 inches apart extending above a horizontal crossbar whose top edge is 10 feet off the ground. The goal is the surface above the bar and between the lines of the inner edges of the posts, extending infinitely upward, centered above each end line in American football.

goal line

The front of the end zone.

gridiron

A football field, so called for its markings.

guard

One of two player positions on offense—see *linemen*. A five-player defensive line has one guard, a defensive line of six or more players has two guards, and a defensive line of fewer than five players has no guard.

H

Hail Mary

A long pass play, thrown toward a group of receivers near the end zone in hope of a touchdown. Used by a team as a last resort as time is running out in either of two halves (usually by a team trailing in the second half). Refers to the Catholic prayer.

halfback

A player position on offense. Also known as a tailback.

halfback option play

A trick play in which the halfback throws a pass.

halo violation

From 1983 until the end of the 2002 season, in the NCAA (college football) the halo rule was a penalty for interference with the opportunity to catch a kick. The so-called halo rule stated that no player of the kicking team may be within two yards of a receiving team player positioned to catch a punt or kickoff (before that person has touched the ball). The rule was abolished beginning in the 2003 season.

handoff

A player's handing of a live ball to another player. The handoff goes either backward or laterally, as opposed to a forward pass. Sometimes called a "switch" in touch football. (Note different usage of term from its rugby meaning. Also known as backward pass.)

hash marks

Lines between which the ball begins each play. The lines are parallel to and a distance in from the side lines and marked as broken lines.

H-back

A player listed in a roster or depth chart as a fullback and playing as a hybrid of a fullback and a tight end.

holder

A player who holds the ball upright for a place kick. Often backup quarterbacks are used for their superior ball-handling ability.

holding

There are two kinds of holding: offensive holding, illegally blocking a player from the opposing team by grabbing and holding his uniform or body; and defensive holding, called against defensive players

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who impede receivers who are more than five yards from the line of scrimmage, but who are not actively making an attempt to catch the ball (if the defensive player were to impede an offensive player in the act of catching the ball, that would be the more severe penalty of pass interference).

huddle

An on-field gathering of members of a team in order to secretly communicate instructions for the upcoming play.

I

I formation

A formation that includes a fullback and tailback lined up with the fullback directly in front of the tailback. If a third back is in line, this is referred to as a "Full House I." If the third back is lined up alongside the fullback, it is referred to as a "Power I."

incomplete pass

A forward pass of the ball that no player legally caught.

inbounds lines

The hash marks.

inside

1. Of a player's path: relatively close (in reference to the sides of the field) to where the ball was snapped from. Thus, a ball carrier's path in crossing the neutral zone may be said to be "inside" of an opponent, or an "inside run" in general, and a rushing defensive player may be said to put on an "inside move" or "inside rush."
2. Of the movement of the ball between players: directed toward a player who cuts between a player in the backfield who throws or hands the ball and the place from which it was snapped. Thus, an "inside pass" or "inside handoff." An "inside reverse" (sometimes called a "scissors play") is a reverse play via an inside handoff.

intentional grounding

An illegal forward pass thrown beyond the line of scrimmage without an intended receiver and no chance of completion to any offensive player. Intentional grounding is not called in the case of a spike or if the quarterback was outside the tackle box at the time of the pass.

interception

The legal catching of a forward pass thrown by an opposing player.

J

Jumbo

An offensive package that includes two tight ends, a fullback, and a halfback. Similar to heavy jumbo, in which either the halfback or the fullback is replaced by another tight end. Often one (or more) "tight end" is actually a linebacker (the New England Patriots use Mike Vrabel this way—he has six career regular season TDs) or offensive linemen. In these cases, the player must report in as an eligible receiver, whereas a tight end is assumed to be one.

K

kick

As a verb, to strike the ball deliberately with the foot; as a noun, such an action producing a punt, place kick, or drop kick.

kickoff

A free kick that starts each half, or restarts the game following a touchdown or field goal. The kickoff may be a place kick in American football, or a drop kick in American football.

kick returner

A player on the receiving team who specializes in fielding kicks and running them back.

kneel-down

A low-risk play in which the quarterback kneels down after receiving the snap, ending the play. Used to run out the clock.

L

lateral

A pass thrown to the side or backward. Also called "backward pass" in American football, and "onside pass."

line of scrimmage/scrimmage line

One of two vertical planes parallel to the goal line when the ball is to be put in play by scrimmage. For each team in American football, the line of scrimmage is through the point of the ball closest to their end line. The two lines of scrimmage are called offensive line of scrimmage and defensive line of scrimmage.

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line to gain

A line parallel to the goal lines, such that having the ball dead beyond it entitles the offense to a new series of downs, i.e., a new "first down." The line is 10 yards in advance of where the ball was to be snapped for the previous first down.

linebacker

A player position on defense. The linebackers typically play one to three yards behind the defensive linemen and have both run and pass defense responsibilities. However they are often called on to blitz, and in some formations a linebacker may be designated as a "rush linebacker," rushing the passer on almost every play.

lineman

A defensive or offensive position on the line of scrimmage.

1. On offense, the player snapping the ball is the center. The players on either side of him are the guards, and the players to the outside of him are the tackles. The players on the end of the line are the ends. This may be varied in an unbalanced line.
2. On defense, the outside linemen are ends, and those inside are tackles. If there are five or six linemen, the innermost linemen are known as guards. This is rare in professional football except for goal-line defense, but it's sometimes seen in high school or college.

live ball

Any ball that is in play, whether it is a player's possession or not. The ball is live during plays from scrimmage and free kicks, including kickoffs.

long snapper

A center who specializes in the long, accurate snaps required for punts and field goal attempts. Most teams employ a specialist long snapper instead of requiring the normal center to perform this duty.

loose ball

Any ball that is in play and not in a player's possession. This includes a ball in flight during a lateral or forward pass.

M

man coverage

Same as man-to-man coverage

man-in-motion

A player on offense who is moving backward or parallel to the line of scrimmage just before the snap. In American football, only one offensive player can be in motion at a time, cannot be moving toward the line of scrimmage at the snap, and may not be a player who is on the line of scrimmage.

man-to-man coverage

A defense in which all players in pass coverage, typically linebackers and defensive backs, cover a specific player. Pure man coverage is very rare; defenses typically mix man and zone coverage.

mike

The middle linebacker.

mo

The other middle linebacker in a 3-4 formation.

muff

A loose ball that is dropped or mishandled while the player is attempting to gain possession.

N

National Football League

The largest professional American football league.

neutral zone

The region between the lines of scrimmage or between the free kick restraining lines.

NFL

The National Football League.

nickel back

An extra, or fifth, defensive back. Named after the coin. Popularized by the Miami Dolphins in the 1970s, now common.

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no-huddle offense

A tactic wherein the offense quickly forms near the line of scrimmage without huddling before the next play.

nose tackle

A tackle in a three-man defensive line who lines up "opposite the center's nose."

O

offensive team

The team with possession of the ball.

offside

An infraction of the rule that requires both teams to be on their own side of their restraining line as or before the ball is put into play. Offside is normally called on the defensive team.

one back formation

A formation where the offensive team has one running back in the backfield with the quarterback. Other eligible receivers are near the line of scrimmage.

onside kick

A play in which the kicking team tries to recover the kicked ball.

option

Usually, a type of play in which the quarterback has the option of handing off, keeping, or laterally passing to one or more backs. Often described by a type of formation or play action, such as triple option, veer option, or counter option. Teams running option plays often specialize in them. Less often, a play in which a back may either pass or run.

outside

Opposite of inside.

P

package

The group of players on the field for a given play. For example, the nickel package substitutes a cornerback for either a linebacker or a defensive lineman (the latter is referred to as a 3-3-5 nickel), or the jumbo package substitutes a wide receiver with a tight end.

pass interference

When a player illegally hinders an eligible receiver's opportunity to catch a forward pass.

passing play

A play in which a forward pass is made.

place kick

Kicking the ball from where it has been placed stationary on the ground or, where legal, on a tee.

play

The action between the snap of the ball and the end of play signaled by the official's whistle for a tackle or out of bounds. The plan of action the offensive team has for each snap, for example a running play or pass play.

play action

A tactic in which the quarterback fakes either a handoff or a throw in order to draw the defense away from the intended offensive method.

play clock

A timer used to increase the pace of the game between plays. The offensive team must snap the ball before the time expires. Currently, the NFL uses 40 seconds (25 seconds after a time out).

playing field

See *field of play*.

pocket

An area on the offensive side of the line of scrimmage, where the offensive linemen attempt to prevent the defensive players from reaching the quarterback during passing plays.

position

A place where a player plays relative to teammates, and/or a role filled by that player.

prevent defense

A defensive strategy that uses deep zone coverage to prevent a big pass play from happening downfield, at the expense of giving up yards at shorter distances. Often used against Hail Mary plays, or at the end of the game when the defending team is protecting a lead. Disparaged by many fans. John Madden, legendary player, coach, and commentator, has been quoted as saying, "The only thing a prevent defense prevents is a win."

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pulling

A term used to describe an offensive lineman who, instead of blocking the player in front of him, steps back and moves down the line ("pulls") to block another player, in a "trap" or "sweep."

punt

A kick in which the ball is dropped and kicked before it reaches the ground. Used to give up the ball to the opposition after offensive downs have been used, as far down the field as possible.

punter

A kicker who specializes in punting as opposed to place kicking.

Q

quarter defense

Defensive formation with seven defensive backs, three down linemen, and one linebacker.

quarterback (QB)

An offensive player who lines up behind the center, from whom he takes the snap.

quick kick

An unexpected punt.

R

receiver

A wide receiver.

reception

When a player catches (receives) the ball.

red dog

A blitz.

red zone

The area between the 20 yard line and the goal of the defensive team.

referee (R)

The official who directs the other officials on the field. He is one of seven officials.

restraining line

A team's respective line of scrimmage. At a free kick, the line the ball is to be kicked from (for the kicking team), or a line 10 yards in advance of that (for the receiving team).

reverse

An offensive play in which a ball carrier going toward one side of the field hands or tosses the ball to a teammate who is running in the opposite direction (if the second ball carrier is an end, it is an "end around").

run and shoot

An offensive philosophy designed to force the defense to show its hand prior to the snap of the ball by splitting up receivers and sending them in motion. Receivers run patterns based on the play of the defenders, rather than a predetermined plan.

running back

A player position on offense. Although the term usually refers to the halfback or tailback, fullbacks are also considered running backs.

running play

A play where the offense attempts to advance the ball without passing.

rush

1. Trying to tackle or hurry a player before he can throw a pass or make a kick.
2. A running play.

S

sack

Tackling a ball carrier who intends to throw a forward pass. A sack is also awarded if a player forces a fumble of the ball, or the ball carrier to go out of bounds, behind the line of scrimmage on an apparent intended forward pass play. The term gained currency ca. 1970.

safety

1. A player position on defense, see *free safety* and *strong safety*.

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2. A method of scoring (worth two points) by downing an opposing ball carrier in his own end zone, forcing the opposing ball carrier out of his own end zone and out of bounds, or forcing the offensive team to fumble the ball so that it exits the end zone. A safety is also awarded if the offensive team commits a penalty within its own end zone. After a safety, the team that was scored upon must kick the ball to the scoring team from its own 20-yard line. A safety scored during a try scores one point and is followed by a kickoff as for any other try.

safety valve

A receiver whose job it is to get open for a short pass in case all other receivers are covered.

sam

The strongside outside linebacker.

scramble

On a called passing play, when the quarterback runs from the pocket in an attempt to avoid being sacked, giving the receivers more time to get open or attempting to gain positive yards by running himself.

screen pass

A short forward pass to a receiver who has blockers in front of him. The receiver in this play is usually a running back, although wide receiver and tight end screens are also used. Although they are both called screen passes, the wide receiver screen and the running back screen are used for different reasons. In the case of a running back screen, the play is designed to allow the pass rushers by the offensive linemen, leaving the defender out of position to make a play. The play is employed to defuse the pass rush in the case of a running back screen. The wide receiver screen is a faster-developing play, designed to catch the defense off guard.

scrimmage

See *play from scrimmage*.

shift

When two or more offensive players move at the same time before the snap. All players who move in a shift must come to a complete stop prior to the snap.

shooting

The action of a linebacker or defensive back to blitz.

shotgun formation

Formation in which offensive teams may line up at the start of a play. In this formation, the quarterback receives the snap five to eight yards behind the center.

sideline

One of the lines marking each side of the field. As adjective: on the field near a sideline.

side zone

The area between a hash mark and a sideline.

single wing

A formation, now out of fashion, most popular about 1920–50, with an overload and wingback on one side and two backs about five yards deep to receive the snap.

slobber-knocker

A particularly gruesome tackle or hit.

slot

The area between a split end and the offensive line. A pass receiver lined up in the slot at the snap of the ball may be called a slotback or slot receiver.

snap

The handoff or pass from the center that begins a play from scrimmage.

sneak

An offensive play in which the quarterback, on receiving the snap, dives forward with the ball. The play is used when a team needs a short gain to reach either the goal line or the line to gain.

special teams

The units that handle kickoffs, punts, free kicks, and field goal attempts.

spike

A play in which the quarterback throws the ball at the ground after the snap. An incomplete pass, it stops the clock. A spike is not considered intentional grounding.

splits

The distance between the feet of adjacent offensive linemen. Said to be wide, if there is a large gap between players, or narrow, if the gap is small.

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split end

A player position on offense. A receiver who lines up on the line of scrimmage, several yards outside the offensive linemen. The term is no longer used in American football, having been long since replaced by the wide receiver or wide out, with no distinction between whether the receiver is on the line or not.

squib kick

A type of kickoff in which the ball is intentionally kicked low to the ground, bouncing on the ground a few times before being picked up. This is done in the hopes of preventing a long return, as the ball is picked up by one of the upmen as opposed to the designated kickoff returner.

sticks

The pole attached to the end of the 10-yard chain that is used by the chain crew to measure for a new series of downs, i.e., the line to gain a new "first down."

stiff-arm or straight-arm

A ball carrier warding off a would-be tackler by pushing them away with a straight arm.

strong I

A formation wherein the tailback is lined up deep directly behind the quarterback, and the fullback is lined up offset to the strong side of the formation.

strong safety (SS)

A kind of safety on defense, as opposed to a free safety. This is a central defensive back; originally, the term indicated that he lined up on the strong side of the field and covered the tight end. However, the modern usage of the term now indicates a central defensive back with responsibility for run and pass support, slightly favoring run support.

strong side

The side of the field (left or right) that has the most players, but it depends on the formations of the teams. When a team uses one tight end, the strong side is the side of the field where the tight end lines up. If the offensive package uses no tight end, or more than one tight end, the strong side is the side of the field with the most offensive players on or behind the line of scrimmage.

stunt

A tactic used by defensive linemen in which they switch roles in an attempt to get past the blockers. Both defenders start with power rushes, with the stunting defender getting more of a push. The other lineman then goes around him, ideally using him as a pick to get free from his blocker.

sweep

A running play in which several blockers lead a running back on a designed play to the outside. Depending on the number of blockers and the design of the play this is sometimes referred to as a "power sweep" or "student-body-right" (or left).

T

T formation

A classic offensive formation with the quarterback behind the center and three running backs behind the quarterback, forming a "T." Numerous variations have been developed including the split-T, wing-T, and wishbone-T.

tackle

1. The act of forcing a ball carrier to the ground.
2. A player position on the line, either an offensive tackle or a defensive tackle—see *linemen*.

tackle box

The area between where the two offensive tackles line up prior to the snap.

tailback

Player position on offense farthest ("deepest") back, except in kicking formations. Often referred to as the running back, particularly in a one-back offense.

three-and-out

When an offensive team fails to gain a first down on the first three plays of a drive, and thus is forced to punt on fourth down.

three-point stance

A down lineman's stance with three points (his two feet and one of his hands) on the ground.

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tight end

A player position on offense, an eligible receiver lined up on the line of scrimmage, next to the offensive tackle. Tight ends are used as blockers during running plays, and either run a route or stay in to block during passing plays.

touchback

The act of downing the ball behind one's own goal line after the ball had been propelled over the goal by the opposing team. After a touchback, the team that downed it gets the ball at its own 20-yard line.

touchdown

A play worth six points, accomplished by gaining legal possession of the ball in the opponent's end zone. It also allows the team a chance for one extra point by kicking the ball or a two point conversion; see *try*.

trap

A basic blocking pattern in which a defensive lineman is allowed past the line of scrimmage, only to be blocked at an angle by a "pulling" lineman. Designed to gain a preferred blocking angle and larger hole in the line.

trips

A formation in which three wide receivers are lined up close to one another on the same side of the field. Also refers to those receivers. Used to create potential for confusion or collision between defenders as these receivers split up.

two-point conversion

A play worth two points accomplished by gaining legal possession of the ball in the opponent's end zone after a touchdown has been made; see *try*.

try

A scrimmage play, from close to their opponent's goal line, awarded to a team that has scored a touchdown, allowing them (and in some codes, their opponents) to score an additional one or two points; also called "try-for-point," "conversion," "extra point(s)," "point(s) after (touchdown)" or "PAT."

U

unbalanced line

Refers to an offensive formation that does not have an equal number of linemen on each side of the ball. Done to gain a blocking advantage on one side of the formation; typically one tackle or guard lines up on the other side of the ball. For example, a common alignment would be E-G-C-G-T-T-E.

upman

During a kickoff, every player on the return team is called an "upman" with the exception of the one or two designated kickoff returners, who stand farthest away from the starting point of the kicking team.

V

Veer

A type of option offense using two backs in the backfield, one behind each guard or tackle (referred to as split backs), allowing a triple option play (give to either back or quarterback keep).

W

weak I

A formation wherein the tailback is lined up deep directly behind the quarterback, and the fullback is lined up offset to the weak side of the formation.

weak side

When one tight end is used, the side of the field opposite the tight end. In other offensive packages, the side of the field with the fewest offensive players on or behind the line of scrimmage.

West Coast offense

An offensive philosophy that uses short high-percentage passes as the core of a ball-control offense. Widely used but originally made popular by San Francisco 49ers coach Bill Walsh. A main component of the West Coast offense is use of all the eligible receivers in the short passing game.

wide receiver

A player position on offense. He is split wide (about 10 yards) from the formation and plays on the line of scrimmage as a split end or one yard off as a flanker.

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will

The weak side linebacker.

wing back

A player position in some offensive formations. Lines up outside the tight end and one yard off the line of scrimmage. May be a receiver but is more typically used as a blocking back.

wishbone

A formation involving three running backs lined up behind the quarterback in the shape of a Y, similar to the shape of a wishbone.

X

X receiver

Term used in play calling that refers to the split end, or the wide receiver that lines up on the line of scrimmage. For example, "Split Right Jet 529 X Post" tells the X receiver to run a post route.

Y

Y receiver

Term used in offensive play calling to refer to the tight end. For example, "Buffalo Right 534 Boot Y Corner" tells the Y receiver to run a corner route.

Z

Z receiver

A term used in offensive play calling that refers to the flanker, or the wide receiver that lines up off the line of scrimmage. For example, "Panther Gun 85 Slant Z Go" tells the Z receiver to run a go (also called a fly or streak) route.

zone defense

A defense in which players who are in pass coverage cover zones of the field, instead of individual players. Pure zone packages are seldom used; most defenses employ some combination of zone and man coverage.

zone blitz

A defensive package combining a blitz with zone pass coverage. Allows the defense to choose the blitzer after the offense shows formation and pass coverage requirements, and features unpredictable blitzes from different linebackers and defensive backs. Invented by coach Dick LeBeau.

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