

John Elway's approach to free agency, draft provides clues to Broncos' offseason plans

By Nicki Jhabvala

Denver Post

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In February 2014, two weeks after the Broncos were thrashed in Super Bowl XLVIII, general manager John Elway stood inside Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis and tipped his cards to his next move.

His Broncos were just mauled by a Seattle defense Elway knew he had to match. So, as more than 300 draft prospects prepared to take the field for an array of drills and media meet-and-greets at the NFL combine, Elway began to look ahead to the first step of his offseason makeover.

He talked about the need for "those strong safeties that also have the ability to cover." He addressed the need for speed on the defensive side to handle mobile quarterbacks. He spoke of his plan to make his biggest moves on the open market.

"With free agency, we're always trying to get ourselves in a position where when we go into the draft — we don't have a glaring weakness where we are reaching for somebody in the draft," Elway said. "So I think it's important for free agency, in my opinion, to try to pick up the places where you think you have glaring holes and fill those holes and then when you go to the draft be able to draft the best players that you hope are going to have great careers in the NFL."

A month later, Elway was back in Colorado introducing the fruits of his free-agent spending spree: safety T.J. Ward, cornerback Aqib Talib and outside linebacker DeMarcus Ware.

Over the years, Elway has held the same approach and offered the same reasoning (almost verbatim) as he balances free agency and the draft.

When he retained Vance Joseph for a second season, Elway said he didn't feel like he gave his rookie head coach "the best opportunity to be successful" with the roster and staff constructed as it was. So, at the Senior Bowl in Alabama last month, while Elway spoke of "the process" of evaluating both prospects and his own veteran players, he also laid out a loose plan for addressing the Broncos' roster needs.

And there are many after a 5-11 season.

"There are a lot more unknowns going into the draft than there is in free agency," he said. "We'll look at all of the holes that we do have, see what's available and also how everything fits with what we want to do and the value that's there. Trying to manipulate everything to where we get the best bang for our buck when it comes down to cap dollars as well as the best football team."

Though the Broncos are considering nearly every option available — they can with the No. 5 overall pick, an expected 10 picks total and enough cap space to be a major player on the open market — Elway's words offer clues to his plans.

Or at least his hope.

Much can change when the free agent market opens, however. Consider 2017, when the Broncos lost out to the Jaguars in a bidding war for defensive end Calais Campbell. Consider the dearth of top tackle talent in free agency last year that led the Broncos to fill their biggest roster hole in the draft, with the selection of Garrett Bolles in the first round.

And consider the league-wide need for elite quarterbacks. The Broncos have needed one for two years now, as attempts to find one in the draft haven't panned out.

"The No. 1 goal is we know we have to get better at that position," Elway said at the season ending news conference.

All the more reason Elway's approach to the next phase of the offseason will be especially important to the Broncos — for now and years to come. Though the combine will garner attention in the coming weeks, the 2018 Broncos will begin to take form in mid-March when the free agency market opens, when the trading period officially begins and when Elway will look to fill his team's biggest holes.

Like it or not, Broncos now know price of admission in QB derby

By Jeff Legwold

ESPN.com

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On the sideline of a football stadium in southern Alabama a few weeks ago, they were just two former Stanford guys chatting in the sun. Two friends, football executives, talking about whatever crossed their minds.

But when John Elway and John Lynch had those conversations before and during some of the Senior Bowl practices, in full view of the rest of their peers, they knew, even as they tried to keep their own secrets, each was going to have a lot to say about how the other's offseason was going to go.

And the Broncos have now had a few days to mull over the contract Lynch, the San Francisco 49ers' general manager, dropped on the rest of the NFL when he signed quarterback Jimmy Garoppolo to the richest deal in league history. Garoppolo, with seven career starts, turned the intersection of age (26), performance and impeccable timing in a quarterback-starved league into a five-year, \$137.5 million deal.

With that, the Broncos confirmed just how much they'll have to spend in free agency to sign the quarterback expected to be on the open market who also happens to reside of the intersection of age (29), performance and impeccable timing in a quarterback-starved league -- one Kirk Cousins.

Elway, now in his eighth offseason as the Broncos' chief football decision-maker, promised at the Senior Bowl that where the Broncos were "budget-wise and cap-wise" would get a long look in these days before the scouting combine opens later this month.

"As we gather information ... we'll start putting the plan together with all of those considerations going into the decision," Elway said.

Well, they know, exactly, what those considerations for Cousins will be. Like anyone else who wants to sign Cousins now, the bar has been set, and Elway and his confidants will have to wrap an organization's collective head around where that bar is.

To sign Cousins, the Broncos will have to make him the highest-paid player in the NFL with a contract that is -- in average value per season or total or guarantees or all of the above -- the biggest in NFL history. It is the bottom line of bottom lines.

No escape from it because if the Broncos want to fix their quarterback problem in free agency, they will be required -- as in absolutely required -- to write the biggest of checks to do it. And Elway, a negotiator who has often shown a hard-edged, the-number-is-the-number approach much of the time, might not have that luxury if Cousins is indeed the choice.

Yes, if the Broncos want Cousins, it will take a contract that averages more than \$27.5 million -- Garoppolo's average -- to do it. And if the Jets, the Browns or anybody else with a lot more salary-cap space than the Broncos want Cousins, too, his deal could move beyond \$30 million per year.

Like it or not on any front, argue "worth" at your leisure, but that is the price to do business in Cousins' aisle of free agency. Don't want to do it, then don't do it, but if there is no Plan B and Cousins is Plan A, then that's the price tag. But it also sets the bar for other quarterbacks in free agency, given Garoppolo's deal has likely, say, moved Case Keenum's asking price north of \$20 million per year because that is what the market will bear.

Elway has negotiated those kind of deals with two contracts -- Peyton Manning and Von Miller -- that were for more than \$90 million (with Miller's at \$114.5 million). But Elway played hard ball with both at times, and Miller's negotiations, especially, got more than a little testy along the way (i.e., Miller carved Elway out of a picture from the White House).

Lynch knew at the Senior Bowl he was likely going to have to set the market to keep Garoppolo but was willing to do it having already seen Garoppolo work in his time with the team after the in-season trade with the New England Patriots. The 49ers looked at the draft, they looked at the possibilities in free agency, and they went all-in on Garoppolo.

Elway will show his cards at some point and will say free agency, the draft or a little of both will solve the Broncos' quarterback woes. But if they come away from their closed-door evaluations in the coming weeks with the idea Cousins is the guy, it means the Broncos are willing to do what that will take.

To pay him more than they have ever paid anybody else.

John Elway's approach to free agency, draft provides clues to Broncos' offseason plans

By Mike Florio
Pro Football Talk
Feb. 12, 2018

The Broncos don't have a great quarterback, but they have a couple of expensive receivers. One of them may be gone in 2018.

Demaryius Thomas, who signed a five-year deal as a franchise-tagged player in 2015, has a base salary of \$8.5 million and a cap charge in excess of \$12 million. Emmanuel Sanders has a salary of \$8.25 million and a cap charge of nearly \$11 million. Without someone to throw the passes, it arguably doesn't make sense to invest that much money in the receiver position.

So who goes? Injuries limited Sanders to 12 games in 2017, when he had only 555 receiving yards. Thomas started all 16, and he finished with 949.

The prior year, when the Broncos were transitioning from Peyton Manning and Brock Osweiler, both had over 1,000 receiving yards. Both are 30; Sanders turns 31 in March, and Thomas has his next birthday in December.

Thomas has been a Broncos for his entire career, arriving via the first round of the draft only one year before G.M. John Elway returned to the team. Moving Sanders would result in less of a cap charge, resulting on more of a cap savings.

However it plays out, Elway's evaluation of Thomas and Sanders will go a long way toward determine who stays and who goes.

Mason's Mailbag: What is the ceiling for a rookie QB?

By Andrew Mason
DenverBroncos.com
Feb. 12, 2018

You can tweet questions to me with the hashtag #AskMase or use the submission form to your right (if you're viewing on a standard browser) or at the bottom of the page if you're on the mobile site.

Did Brian Dawkins play in Denver long enough to count as a Hall of Famer for the Broncos?

-- Don Evans

It depends how you define "count." The text by his bust in the Hall of Fame will note his years with Philadelphia and the Broncos, and there is no official designation stating that a player goes into the Hall as a part of only one team even if he played for multiple clubs.

That said, Hall of Fame cornerback Willie Brown, who played 48 games over four seasons for the Broncos in the 1960s before being traded to the Oakland Raiders, is generally not considered to be a Bronco, since his years with the Raiders were largely what pushed him to the Hall of Fame.

Befitting this, Brown does not have a banner up in the Pat Bowlen Fieldhouse, unlike John Elway, Gary Zimmerman, Shannon Sharpe and Terrell Davis. Dawkins played three seasons and seven fewer games with the Broncos than Brown, so if Brown isn't considered a Bronco in the Hall of Fame, Dawkins will not be.

Based on historical precedence, how realistic is it to expect the Broncos to expect to ride into the Super Bowl, the playoffs, or even a winning season on the back of an unproven rookie quarterback drafted in 2018? How often has that been done?

-- Doug B.

Most of those expectations are realistic.

Historically, the Broncos would be on new ground if they rode a rookie quarterback to the Super Bowl. No rookie passer has ever started the big game at the end of his rookie season. But improvement and the playoffs would be reasonable expectations. Of the 18 teams to have a rookie quarterback throw more than 250 passes in a season since 2012, 13 saw improved win-loss totals. On average, teams with rookie quarterbacks surpassing the 250-pass mark improved by an average of 1.55 wins.

The Super Bowl might be a step too far, but there is reason to believe that a new quarterback can be the galvanizing force for improved form.

A memory-related question: Remember when the Broncos won Super Bowl 50? When do you think it will be possible to find Super Bowl 50 on a DVD/Blu-Ray? I'm writing this to celebrate that historic game.

-- Lloyd McNutt

There is a Super Bowl 50 DVD/Blu-Ray available at the on-line store hosted by this site, but it does not include the entire game broadcast. At the current time, the league does not have a DVD/Blu-Ray of the game broadcast for public sale.

Colts hire Frank Reich as new head coach

By Michael Marot
Associated Press
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The Indianapolis Colts' second choice for head coach could turn out to be even better than the first.

And Frank Reich has the Super Bowl championship gear to prove it.

Five days after New England Patriots offensive coordinator Josh McDaniels reneged on a deal to take the Colts' job, Ballard hired Reich, the man who outwitted McDaniels last week and helped lead the Philadelphia Eagles to their first NFL title since 1960.

"Frank is a leader of men who will demand excellence from our players on and off the field," Ballard said in a statement released Sunday. "I look forward to working with Frank to deliver a championship-caliber team to the city of Indianapolis."

Terms of the deal were not immediately available, but Reich is expected to be introduced at a news conference Tuesday.

Colts officials posted a photo of Reich signing the deal on the team's website.

The move ends a search that spanned 41 days, included two coaching announcements and the embarrassment of McDaniels changing his mind Tuesday night just eight hours after telling the Colts he'd take the job.

On Wednesday, Ballard answered questions for nearly 20 minutes before finishing with "the rivalry is back on."

By hiring Reich, another touted offensive coordinator and a potential leading candidate next season, only added another chapter to the long and bitter series.

Exactly one week after backup quarterback Nick Foles executed an exquisite game plan to beat Tom Brady and the favored Patriots, the Colts brought back a longtime assistant who spent two seasons working with Peyton Manning.

But this wasn't just about sending a message.

"Frank has all the ingredients of a successful head coach: intelligence, innovation, character, organizational and leadership skills, and a commanding presence," team owner Jim Irsay said. "He also has a stellar reputation, and his myriad of life experiences and the people he has worked with make him the perfect fit for us and our fans. I feel extremely fortunate and could not be more excited for Colts Nation and the future of our franchise."

It sure didn't take long to make the decision.

Ballard interviewed the 56-year-old Reich on Friday, the day after Philadelphia held its victory celebration.

He replaces Chuck Pagano, who was fired hours after finishing the season with a 4-12 record and missing the playoffs for the third consecutive year.

Reich takes over a franchise that appears to have some key pieces in place — especially if Andrew Luck is healthy.

Luck missed the entire 2017 season after having surgery for a partially torn labrum in his throwing shoulder. He went on injured reserve in November because of lingering pain in his right shoulder after he had started throwing a football.

On Wednesday, Ballard said Luck still hasn't thrown a football since October.

"He's going to do everything right to get himself ready to play and I'm very confident, he's very confident, that he's going to come back and prove a lot of people wrong," Ballard said.

The Colts also have a defense that showed steady improvement throughout the season, the No. 3 overall draft pick in April, nearly \$80 million to spend in free agency and a promising backup quarterback in Jacoby Brissett, who started 15 games in 2017.

And the Colts already have three assistants on Reich's staff — probable defensive coordinator Matt Eberflus, Mike Phair and Dave DeGuglielmo. All three agreed to join McDaniels' staff in Indy and have been promised by Ballard that they will remain on the staff.

Reich, meanwhile, returns to the franchise where he started his coaching career as an intern in 2006. He was named an offensive assistant in 2008, succeeded Jim Caldwell as quarterbacks coach the next season and became receivers coach in 2011.

In 2012, he coached the receivers in Arizona and then was hired as San Diego's quarterbacks coach in 2013. The Chargers promoted him to offensive coordinator in 2014 where he stayed until joining the Eagles in 2016.

Reich may be best known, however, for rallying the Buffalo Bills from a 35-3 deficit to a 41-38 overtime victory over the Houston Oilers in January 1993 — the biggest comeback in playoff history.

Now, in his first head coaching job, he will be paired with the architect of the second-biggest playoff comeback, Luck.

"Frank Reich was with me at the end of my tenure with the Colts," Hall of Fame coach Tony Dungy wrote on Twitter. "He has a creative offensive mind. He's a great communicator and a high quality person. The Colts are in great hands."

Reich graduated from the University of Maryland where he was a backup to Boomer Esiason. He won the starting quarterback job as a senior and spent 14 seasons in the NFL playing for Buffalo, Carolina, the New York Jets and Detroit.

49ers' Reuben Foster faces domestic violence, assault weapon charges

By Nick Wagoner

ESPN.com

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For the second time in less than a month, San Francisco 49ers linebacker Reuben Foster has been arrested.

The Los Gatos-Monte Sereno police confirmed Sunday night that Foster was arrested earlier in the day on charges related to domestic violence, threats and possession of an assault weapon.

Police responded to a disturbance call placed at approximately 9:15 a.m. Sunday at a Los Gatos residence. Upon arrival, officers spoke to Foster and the alleged victim. The result of the initial investigation was to arrest Foster, 23.

Foster was then transported and booked at the Santa Clara County Main Jail, where he was held on \$75,000 bail. He was released on bail Sunday night. The Los Gatos-Monte Sereno Police said the incident remains under investigation.

The San Francisco Chronicle first reported Foster's arrest and, the San Jose Mercury News reported the additional charge related to suspicion of possession of an assault rifle.

The 49ers released a statement Sunday night indicating they were in the process of gathering facts about the situation.

"The San Francisco 49ers organization is aware of the report regarding Reuben Foster," the statement said. "We take matters of this nature seriously and are gathering all pertinent information."

For Foster, Sunday's arrest comes on the heels of a Jan. 12 incident in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, where he was charged with second-degree marijuana possession, a Class A misdemeanor in Alabama. He was released that night on \$2,500 bond.

Foster's arrests could lead to discipline from the NFL, up to and including a suspension. Foster's cases both stand to be reviewed under the league's policy on substance abuse as well as on personal conduct.

Both arrests follow a successful rookie season for Foster in which he was second on the Niners in tackles with 72 in 10 games. They also are added to a list of off-field incidents that initially contributed to Foster falling to San Francisco with the No. 31 pick in the 2017 NFL draft.

Foster initially raised some red flags at last year's NFL scouting combine, where he was sent home early after an argument with a hospital worker. He also had a urine sample taken there show up as diluted, which, according to the NFL's policy on substances of abuse, was treated as a positive test.

Because of the diluted sample, Foster entered the league as part of the substance abuse program.

Despite the incidents in Indianapolis, 49ers general manager John Lynch said after drafting Foster that he and the organization were comfortable with Foster's character and that he would be able to avoid trouble off the field. After the January marijuana arrest, Lynch told SBNation.com at the Senior Bowl that Foster had to figure out how to avoid off the field issues.

"He's got to stay -- he knows it -- he's got to stay clean," Lynch said. "We all know how special a player he can be when he's right. So, he's got to figure out how to stay healthy and stay out of trouble, but we believe he will do that."

Foster's arrest is the second related to domestic violence since Lynch and coach Kyle Shanahan joined the 49ers last year.

In April 2017, cornerback Tramaine Brock was arrested in Santa Clara on a felony domestic violence charge. The 49ers released him the next day. The charges against Brock, who is now with the Minnesota Vikings, were dropped in August and the NFL did not pursue any further discipline.

At the time of Brock's release, Lynch said the Niners' handling of such situations would be handled on a case-by-case basis.

"I think we have been consistent, we have said that character is important to us, football character," Lynch said then. "Football character means a lot of different things. As Kyle articulated very well and I feel the same way because we kind of forged these philosophies together, as those situations arise -- and hopefully there won't be a lot of them -- we're going to treat each one of them as a unique and different situation."

2018 NFL free agency: NFL teams will be bidding on small crop of offensive linemen

By John Breech
CBSSports.com
Feb. 12, 2018

You might not have Valentine's Day circled on your calendar, but you should this year, because February 14 means we'll be exactly one month away from the start of NFL free agency.

At 4 p.m. ET on March 14, the free agent floodgates will open and teams will be able to sign any unrestricted free agent. Although you'll probably hear a lot about this year's quarterback class over the next month (Kirk Cousins and Drews Brees to name two guys) and you'll probably also even hear a lot about the loaded running back class (Le'Veon Bell and Dion Lewis to name a few), one group of players you probably won't hear too much is the offensive linemen.

Although signing a great lineman can be the fastest way to building a solid foundation for your team, the truth is, great linemen are kind of like great quarterbacks, in the sense that they rarely become unrestricted free agents.

Of course, that doesn't mean you can't find an All-Pro offensive lineman in free agency. As a matter of fact, one of the best guards in the NFL is going to be available on March 14 when the clock strikes 4 p.m. ET.

So who is that player and who else is available?

Lets take a look at the best free agent offensive linemen heading into the offseason.

Tackles (Listed by Pro Football Focus Ranking)

17. Ja'Wuan James, RT (Dolphins)

24. Cameron Fleming, RT (Patriots)

32. Nate Solder, LT (Patriots)

40. Chris Hubbard, RT (Steelers)

48. Sam Young, RT (Dolphins)

52. Justin Pugh, RT (Giants)

61. Michael Schofield, RT, (Chargers)

Synopsis: Although James is listed at the top of PFF's rankings, the player to keep an eye on here is Solder and that's because he'll be the best left tackle available when free agency starts. As the top left tackle, there's a good chance Solder is going to be able to command top dollar and if we've learned one

thing about Bill Belichick during his time with the Patriots, it's that he generally doesn't like to pay top dollar for anyone.

The other thing to keep in mind here is that the Patriots actually have two offensive tackles who will be free agents. With Cameron Fleming also free to sign with anyone in March, it's almost a guarantee that the Patriots will only make a play for just one of their guys. Fleming is only 25 -- Solder turns 30 in April -- and Belichick loves to use his younger guy as a swing tackle, so it wouldn't be surprising at all to see the Patriots make a play for Fleming.

As for James, the Dolphins right tackle might have graded the highest of any free agent, but he comes with a big injury question mark. The 2014 first-round pick missed the final eight games of the 2017 season after going on injured reserve in November with a hamstring injury. When he's healthy, he generally plays well, but there's no guarantee James can stay healthy. Over the past three seasons, the right tackle has missed 17 out of a possible 48 regular season games for the Dolphins.

Others: Andre Smith, RT (Bengals), Greg Robinson, LT (Lions), Austin Pasztor, RT (Falcons), Gary Gilliam, RT (49ers), Chris Clark, LT (Texans), Cornelius Lucas, RT (Rams), Will Beatty, LT (Eagles)

Guards (Listed by Pro Football Focus Ranking)

3. Andrew Norwell, LG (Panthers)

21. Brandon Fusco, RG (49ers)

22. Josh Kline, RG (Titans)

23. Joe Berger, RG (Vikings)

29. Evan Smith, RG (Buccaneers)

30. Jahri Evans, RG (Packers)

35. Jonathan Cooper, LG (Cowboys)

42. Senio Kelemete, LG (Saints)

47. Tom Compton, T/G (Bears)

49. Matt Slauson, LG (Chargers)

51. Luke Joeckel, LG (Seahawks)

Synopsis: It's not often that an offensive lineman hits free agency after being named first-team All-Pro, but that's exactly what's going to be happening with Andrew Norwell this year. The Panthers offensive lineman, who signed as an undrafted free agent in 2014, has progressively gotten better each year that he's played in the NFL. Norwell has started in all 32 games the Panthers have played in over the past two seasons, and he also served as a key member for a high-powered Carolina offense that made it all the way to Super Bowl 50 in 2015.

If you're wondering why the Panthers wouldn't just keep Norwell, it's because they already have a boatload of money locked up in their offensive line, with guys like guard Trai Turner (four-year, \$45 million) and left tackle Matt Kalil (five-year, \$55.5 million) signed to big contracts.

The Panthers will definitely make him an offer, but it's unlikely they'll be able to match any deal that comes from a franchise that's sitting on a fortune of salary cap space. CBSSports.com's Joel Correy, a former agent, believes Norwell will become the highest paid guard in NFL history.

That's probably out of the Panthers' budget. Also, Carolina won't be able to afford to hit Norwell with a franchise tag because it would likely eat up too much of their cap room heading into free agency.

The guards to keep an eye in this class are the six guys listed after Norwell. All six of those guys would be an immediate starter on almost any team they might sign with. One surprise guy on the list is Jonathan Cooper. You might remember him as the seventh overall pick in the 2013 NFL Draft. After fizzling out in Arizona (2013-15) and Cleveland (2016), Cooper signed a one-year prove-it contract with the Cowboys in 2017 and had a solid year, starting 13 games for Dallas. He could be an inexpensive upgrade for a team looking to add a guard.

Any team looking for a durable starter should be looking at Brandon Fusco. Although he's not as good as Norwell, he can be successful in the right offense, not to mention, he's been able to stay incredibly healthy over the past few years. Since 2015, Fusco has played in 46 of a possible 48 games.

Others: D.J. Fluker, RG (Giants), Jermon Bushrod, RG (Dolphins), Alex Boone, LG (Cardinals), Allen Barbre G/T (Broncos), Jack Mewhort (Colts), Shawn Lauvao (Redskins), Jack Mewhort (Colts), Kenny Wiggins, RG (Chargers), Xavier Su'a-Filo, LG (Texans)

Center (Listed by Pro Football Focus Ranking)

9. Ryan Jensen (Ravens)

10. John Sullivan (Rams)

19. Spencer Long (Redskins)

23. Daniel Kilgore (49ers)

25. Russell Bodine (Bengals)

32. Travis Swanson (Lions)

35. Wesley Johnson (Jets)

*Weston Richburg (Giants)

Synopsis: With the center class, there's basically Jensen, Sullivan and everyone else. After you get past Sullivan there's a steep drop-off to the next guy on the list, Spencer Long. To put that drop-off in perspective, PFF says Sullivan graded out with an 84.6 (out of 100) in 2017 while Long was just a 56.0.

Of course, PFF couldn't really grade Weston Richburg, and that's because he spent most of the season injured. The 26-year-old, who was a second-round pick in 2014, only played in four games this season after suffering a concussion that sent him to injured reserve. As long as teams are confident in his health, Richburg will be one of the top centers in free agency.

As for Jensen, the Ravens will likely try to re-sign him, but to do that, they're going to have to outbid multiple teams for his services, and one of those teams is likely going to be the Jets.

On Sullivan's end, he's definitely going to be looking for a massive raise after playing the 2017 season on a one-year, \$999,999 deal. The Rams had one of the worst offensive lines in 2016 and Sullivan was a big reason why they were able to turn things around in 2017.

Sullivan spent a year with Sean McVay in Washington (2016) and then came with him to Los Angeles. It will be interesting to see what kind of offer the Rams give Sullivan, since he played such a vital part in their offensive resurgence, just ask Jared Goff about that.

"It takes a lot off my shoulders for sure, with his ability to understand defenses and make a lot of calls up front," Goff said in December, via the Los Angeles Times. " If I see something, and overrule, I can. Ninety-nine percent of the time he's right."

For the Rams, and every other team that has a pending free agent at center, the best move might be to keep the guy you have. As we mentioned, there's just not a lot of talent to choose from and getting an instant upgrade at the position is going to be difficult.

For instance, Russell Bodine hasn't been great for the Bengals, but unless they plan on splurging on a guy like Jensen or Richburg, their best option might actually be to sign Bodine. That's basically the center position in a nutshell this year. Any of these teams could also look to the draft, but giving the center job to an unproven rookie could lead to total chaos, which is the last thing you want when you're looking for a guy who's going to be touching the football on every play.

Others: Tim Barnes (49ers), Brian Schwenke, G/C (Titans), Luke Bowanko G/C (Ravens), Jonotthan Harrison (Jets)

Three-round mock draft: Browns among 7 teams that pick QB

By Chad Reuter

NFL.com

Feb. 12, 2018

With Super Bowl LII in the books, draft season is upon us, and it's time for my first three-round mock of the year.

There are still many unknowns at this point in the process, with free agency, the NFL Scouting Combine and pro days still ahead of us. Therefore, the goal of this mock draft is to show the value available throughout the first three rounds, as well as point to potential fits for players if needs hold firm through the pre-draft process.

NOTE: There's a tie for the ninth overall pick. A coin flip between the San Francisco 49ers and Oakland Raiders will determine which team picks first. ... Teams with the same record will rotate so that the team selecting first in Round 1 will select last in the following round.

PICK 1

Sam Darnold - QB, USC

The Browns need a leader and playmaker at quarterback. Darnold is the total package.

PICK 2

Josh Rosen - QB, UCLA

Rosen's the best pure passer in the class.

PICK 3

Saquon Barkley - RB, Penn State

Barkley's the top player on the board for most teams, and the Colts can't rely on Frank Gore, who's due to become a free agent, forever.

PICK 4

Bradley Chubb - EDGE, N.C. State

Chubb on one side and Myles Garrett on the other? Quarterbacks beware.

PICK 5

Minkah Fitzpatrick - S, Alabama

For now, I'll say Kirk Cousins ends up with Denver, opening a spot for the Broncos to add Fitzpatrick to their defense.

PICK 6

Josh Allen - QB, Wyoming

If the Jets liked Christian Hackenberg, they're going to love Allen. The Wyoming product showed during Senior Bowl week his ability to utilize his talents to the fullest.

PICK 7

Quenton Nelson - OG, Notre Dame

Nelson's a dominant presence who will help Jameis Winston and whoever is carrying the ball for the Bucs over the next decade.

PICK 8

Denzel Ward - CB, Ohio State

The Bears' secondary needs an upgrade. Ward's toughness and agility in coverage will help him overcome his average size.

PICK 9

remaine Edmunds - LB, Virginia Tech

Edmunds is athletic enough to handle coverage duties and rush the passer.

PICK 9

Roquan Smith - LB, Georgia

Smith has "bench to bench" range, tracking down ball carriers all over the field.

PICK 11

Marcus Davenport - EDGE, UTSA

While Davenport is still raw in some ways, his length and agility will pay dividends for the Dolphins sooner than some might expect.

PICK 12

Connor Williams - OT, Texas

Williams' ability to move the line and pass protect will make him a hot commodity on draft day.

PICK 13

Calvin Ridley - WR, Alabama

Ridley will be a great asset to new Washington quarterback Alex Smith.

PICK 14

Vita Vea - DT, Washington

Green Bay needs pass rushers, but Vea can wreak havoc outside and inside, freeing up Clay Matthews and Nick Perry to do their thing.

PICK 15

Baker Mayfield - QB, Oklahoma

I won't be surprised if a team trades ahead of the Cardinals to grab Mayfield, who should be a strong leader at the next level.

PICK 16

Courtland Sutton - WR, SMU

Flacco needs another downfield threat like Sutton to maximize his talent.

PICK 17

Orlando Brown - OT, Oklahoma

Whether Brown plays at left or right tackle doesn't matter. He'll eclipse his opponent with pure size and play with a nasty streak.

PICK 18

Derwin James - S, Florida State

This is an easy fit for James, whose game is too similar to Kam Chancellor's to ignore his potential in the Seahawks' defense.

PICK 19

Da'Ron Payne - DT, Alabama

Payne showed in the College Football Playoff that he can be a force in the middle, which is something the Cowboys' defense lacks.

PICK 20

Maurice Hurst - DT, Michigan

Keeping Hurst in-state will help the Lions pressure QBs from the interior, which is something Detroit has struggled to do since Ndamukong Suh left town.

PICK 21

Lamar Jackson - QB, Louisville

After Jackson learns the ropes from Tyrod Taylor, he'll use his strong arm and amazing speed to turn defenses upside-down.

PICK 22

Billy Price - C, Ohio State

Eric Wood's career-ending injury makes finding a sturdy replacement like Price a must.

PICK 23

Mike Hughes - CB, UCF

The Rams could use help in the secondary, even if Trumaine Johnson is re-signed.

PICK 24

Mike McGlinchey - OT, Notre Dame

McGlinchey is a good fit for a Panthers team looking to dominate on the ground.

PICK 25

Harold Landry - LB, Boston College

With Brian Orakpo and Derrick Morgan a year away from free agency, the Titans need to find their next pass rusher. Landry will be a good value at this point in the draft.

PICK 26

Harrison Phillips - DT, Stanford

Phillips is a tough customer inside, and the Falcons' interior D-line might have some holes to fill this spring if Dontari Poe and Ahtyba Rubin depart.

PICK 27

Dallas Goedert - TE, South Dakota State

Goedert has a chance to be the second coming of Jimmy Graham in the Saints' offense.

PICK 28

Rashaan Evans - LB, Alabama

Evans fits beautifully in the Steelers' defense. He'll be able to play inside or outside.

PICK 29

James Washington - WR, Oklahoma State

With Marqise Lee and Allen Robinson due to become free agents, the Jaguars will likely need to bolster the position this year.

PICK 30

Kolton Miller - OT, UCLA

Miller isn't getting a lot of pub outside the West Coast, but he's a future starter.

PICK 31

Andrew Brown - DE, Virginia

The Patriots need help up front. Brown's length and surprising agility would allow him to play outside on early downs and inside in pass-rush situations.

PICK 32

Malik Jefferson - LB, Texas

Not every NFL scout believes Jefferson is worthy of a first-round pick, but I think the Eagles could benefit from his size and athleticism inside or outside.

Round 2

33. Browns: Christian Kirk, WR, Texas A&M
34. Giants: Martinus Rankin, OT Mississippi State
35. Browns: Derrius Guice, RB, LSU
36. Colts: Sam Hubbard, EDGE, Ohio State
37. Jets: Ronald Jones II, RB, USC
38. Bucs: Sony Michel, RB, Georgia
39. Bears: Anthony Miller, WR, Memphis
40. Broncos: D.J. Chark, WR, LSU
41. Raiders: Isaiah Oliver, CB, Colorado
42. Dolphins: Will Hernandez, OG, UTEP
43. Patriots: Uchenna Nwosu, LB, USC
44. Redskins: Ronnie Harrison, S, Alabama
45. Packers: Josh Jackson, CB, Iowa
46. Bengals: Josh Sweat, DE, Florida State
47. Cardinals: Jaire Alexander, CB, Louisville
48. Chargers: James Daniels, C, Iowa
49. Jets: Dorance Armstrong Jr., EDGE, Kansas
50. Cowboys: Mark Andrews, TE, Oklahoma
51. Lions: Ogbonnia Okoronkwo, LB, Oklahoma
52. Ravens: Arden Key, EDGE, LSU
53. Bills: Simmie Cobbs Jr., WR, Indiana
54. Chiefs: Donte Jackson, CB, LSU
55. Panthers: Justin Reid, S, Stanford
56. Bills: Taven Bryan, DT, Florida
57. Titans: Mike Gesicki, TE, Penn State
58. Falcons: Isaiah Wynn, OG, Georgia
59. 49ers: Carlton Davis, CB, Auburn
60. Steelers: Marcus Allen, S, Penn State
61. Jaguars: Hayden Hurst, TE, South Carolina
62. Vikings: Mason Rudolph, QB, Oklahoma State
63. Patriots: Tarvarus McFadden, CB, Florida State
64. Browns: Da'Shawn Hand, DE, Alabama

Round 3

65. Browns: Derrick Nnadi, DT, Florida State
66. Giants: Michael Dickson, P, Texas
67. Colts: Josey Jewell, LB, Iowa
68. Texans: Brian O'Neill, OT, Pittsburgh
69. Bucs: JoJo Wicker, DE, Arizona State

70. 49ers: D.J. Moore, WR, Maryland
71. Broncos: Tyrell Crosby, OT, Oregon
72. Jets: Quenton Meeks, CB, Stanford
73. Dolphins: Leighton Vander Esch, LB, Boise State
74. 49ers: Alex Cappa, OG, Humboldt State
75. Raiders: Rasheem Green, DT, USC
76. Packers: Lorenzo Carter, EDGE, Georgia
77. Bengals: Frank Ragnow, C, Arkansas
78. Redskins: Nick Nelson, CB, Wisconsin
79. Cardinals: Braden Smith, OG, Auburn
80. Texans: J.C. Jackson, CB Maryland
81. Cowboys: DaeSean Hamilton, WR, Penn State
82. Lions: Chad Thomas, EDGE, Miami
83. Ravens: Nick Chubb, RB, Georgia
84. Chargers: Daniel Carlson, K, Auburn
85. Panthers: Hercules Mata'afa, EDGE, Washington State
86. Chiefs: DeShon Elliott, S, Texas
87. Rams: Darius Leonard, LB, South Carolina State
88. Panthers: Equanimeous St. Brown, WR, Notre Dame
89. Titans: M.J. Stewart, CB, North Carolina
90. Falcons: Jamarco Jones, OT, Ohio State
91. Saints: Kyle Lauletta, QB, Richmond
92. Steelers: Royce Freeman, RB, Oregon
93. Jaguars: Wyatt Teller, OG, Virginia Tech
94. Vikings: Tyquan Lewis, EDGE, Ohio State
95. Patriots: John Kelly, RB, Tennessee
96. Bills: Chukwuma Okorafor, OT, Western Michigan