

# NFL execs unfiltered: Winners and losers for all 32 teams in free agency

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Elite player trades and a fast-spinning quarterback carousel have made this NFL free-agency period especially compelling.

This 32-team review features insights from coaches, executives and other league insiders on all the big moves after Marcus Peters, Ndamukong Suh, Kirk Cousins, Alex Smith, Jarvis Landry and others found new homes.

Some of the teams receiving high marks from fans and media didn't fare quite as well here. That included a couple of the teams that made the biggest splashes.

## Arizona Cardinals

The Cardinals are the only team in the league guaranteed to have both a new head coach and new primary starting quarterback for 2018. They weren't serious players in the Kirk Cousins sweepstakes, and of the viable alternatives in the veteran market, none had significant connections to new Cardinals offensive coordinator Mike McCoy.

"If there are any quarterbacks who fit McCoy's system, I will give them credit in that Sam Bradford and Mike Glennon fit what McCoy wants," an exec said. "You have to be a veteran and extremely smart to understand that offense, which is basically the Peyton Manning offense where you do a whole lot at the line of scrimmage, especially with protections."

Finding a quarterback in the draft could be tough with Arizona slotted 15th in the order.

"Bradford-Glennon is not ideal, but you could do a lot worse," an insider said. "What they really need is for David Johnson to have a Todd Gurley-type season that makes everyone around him look better, and that could happen."

The Cardinals took some criticism for cutting Tyrann Mathieu, but all the insiders agreed that the "Honey Badger" was no longer a dynamic enough player to justify the salary he was earning in Arizona. That does not mean Arizona is better without him.

## Atlanta Falcons

The Falcons haven't done much in free agency, which should not come as a shock for a team with one of the NFL's better rosters and big business looming.

"The big thing with them is they need cash moving forward to re-sign Matt Ryan, which is a piece of this," an insider said. "The biggest potential loss could be the defensive line between [Adrian] Clayborn and [Dontari] Poe. Maybe they hope someone like Da'Ron Payne from Alabama falls to them and then they've got their guy."

Left tackle Jake Matthews is the other veteran Falcons player whose expensive looming contract could be affecting the Falcons' decisions in free agency.

"Yet, I don't think they needed to go out and do a bunch of crazy stuff in free agency," another insider said. "They are fine on offense, and they let some guys go on defense."

#### Baltimore Ravens

For a team that has openly fretted over empty seats at M&T Bank Stadium, the Ravens did not go on an excitement-generating spending spree.

"I like the Michael Crabtree addition," one exec said. "He fits what the Ravens have been about. That is a good signing for them. It helps them, but it's not like he scares you."

Crabtree signed for three years and \$21 million after a failed physical nixed the Ravens' previous agreement with former Redskins receiver Ryan Grant. John Brown was another receiver addition for Baltimore, costing \$5 million for one year. Meanwhile, Jeremy Maclin is out, and 2015 first-round pick Breshad Perriman is coming off a third straight disappointing season. He has three scoring receptions in three NFL seasons.

"The thing with Baltimore, and it was the same with Seattle, is they could always let guys walk because they drafted so well," an exec said. "Then you go two to three drafts in a row where you are missing, and you are stuck. Their drafts have been awful in recent years with guys like Perriman and Maxx Williams, guys who are injury-prone. Now, they are having to overpay receivers who were castoffs from their previous teams."

#### Buffalo Bills

Quarterback Tyrod Taylor, defensive tackle Marcell Dareus and left tackle Cordy Glenn carried the highest annual salaries for Buffalo in 2016. All three have been traded away under new coach Sean McDermott and GM Brandon Beane, including Taylor and Glenn this offseason. Those moves have put Buffalo in position to strike for a quarterback in the upcoming draft.

"I think all along they knew long term they were in a complete rebuild, and they surprised even themselves by how much they won last season," an insider said. "They needed to fix their cap because they have been up against it for the last several years. It feels like they are still gutting their roster right now."

Dareus was earning \$15.85 million per year. His replacement, the newly signed Star Lotulelei, checks in with a \$10 million average. Lotulelei is also familiar with McDermott from their days together in Carolina. Lotulelei, though much less explosive than Dareus was at Dareus' peak, has missed four games in five NFL seasons. Dareus has missed 27 games over the same span.

"The Star [Lotulelei] signing is one I did not like," an insider said. "I feel it is more on the name and the former first-round pick status compared to who the player is. He is consistent and he is going to be reliable and he is cheaper than Dareus. I would argue they could have found one of those guys in the draft. But they are leveraging those picks for a quarterback, they really need linebacker help and they arguably have the weakest receiver group in the league, so maybe they do not have those picks to make for a defensive lineman."

The Bills also used free agency to address their outside pass rush (Trent Murphy) and cornerback depth (Vontae Davis) while picking up some insurance and potential upside at quarterback by entering into a two-year, \$10 million deal with AJ McCarron.

"McCarron fell to the second round in the [2014] draft because everybody thought he was a jerk coming out, but if you talk to the guys in Cincinnati, it is not really like that," an exec said. "Buffalo made out really well there. They only have to pay him \$10 million. They can still draft a quarterback, which I would think they will do, and McCarron could still have upside."

#### Carolina Panthers

During the past couple of seasons, the Panthers have gone from kings of the NFC to arguably the third-best team in their division. This free agency period did not seem to reverse the tide.

A bizarre foot injury requiring a skin graft doomed Carolina's agreement with former Redskins cornerback Bashaud Breeland -- this after the Panthers agreed to trade one of their own corners, Daryl Worley, to Philadelphia for receiver Torrey Smith.

"Not getting Breeland might have been a blessing in disguise for them, because even though he is a good player, his play has declined every year for the last three years," an insider said.

There was much less surprise when All-Pro guard Andrew Norwell departed for \$13.3 million per year with Jacksonville, or when starting defensive tackle Star Lotulelei accepted \$10 million per year from Buffalo. Carolina replaced Lotulelei with Dontari Poe while by trading for Smith and signing Jarius Wright at receiver.

"Their plan is to get younger on the back end, so we could see them focus there in the draft," an insider said. "They still need another running back. I feel like they still need a receiver. They put all that money into Matt Kalil at left tackle last year, and that was a mistake. So there are question marks on offense, too."

#### Chicago Bears

The moves Chicago made to add receiving options Allen Robinson, Taylor Gabriel and Trey Burton understandably drew much attention. Those additions and the hiring of head coach Matt Nagy were all designed to support young quarterback Mitchell Trubisky.

"Any time you are in free agency, you are going to overpay, but in the Bears' case, they have a coach who they are confident will be able to maximize those weapons," an exec said.

While those offense-minded moves could be pivotal for Chicago, it was the Bears' handling of cornerback Kyle Fuller that generated the most interesting discussion.

One exec called the Bears' use of the transition tag for Fuller a "textbook" example of how to use the system. When they matched the Packers' offer to Fuller, the Bears emerged with a deal that will pay him \$29 million over the next two years, almost identical to what two years of transition tags would have cost. They also guaranteed much less to Fuller than Malcolm Butler commanded. Most importantly, they actually got a deal done, which would have been much tougher to do if Chicago had used the more expensive franchise tag.

"It is tough because you are still wondering whether Fuller is that guy or not, but you are kind of saying he is that guy -- you tagged him," the exec said. "The Packers obviously thought he was that guy. Do you think having a \$6.5 million cap number on a corner you just transitioned is a bad thing? It is a great thing, even if you halfway like the player and are saying he is a top-20 corner instead of a top-10 corner. They minimized the guarantee at \$18 million, which might be the biggest key on a player who has been hurt and has not been consistent."

#### Cincinnati Bengals

The Bengals paid a high price last season for parting with mainstay offensive linemen Andrew Whitworth and Kevin Zeitler. Trading for Cordy Glenn as Whitworth's successor at left tackle seemed better than another roll of the dice in the draft.

Glenn, 28, is eight years younger than Whitworth. He is signed through 2020 with cap numbers that will fall from \$11.25 million this season to \$9.25 million over each of the following two. There will be no cap ramifications for the Bengals if they release Glenn after this season, which could certainly happen if Glenn continues missing games (he has missed 15 during the past two seasons after three straight 16-start seasons).

"I think they had to make that trade," an exec said. "Their offensive line was atrocious."

Another exec thought the Bills took advantage of the Bengals' desperation. It had been clear since last season that Buffalo was going to unload Glenn and his contract one way or another. The trade with Cincinnati allowed Buffalo to jump from 21st to 12th in the first round.

"I was surprised by what Buffalo got for Glenn based on his age, salary and durability issues," this exec said. "When Glenn is healthy, he is every bit worth it. That is the wild card and a risk. Had the Bengals stayed at 12 [in the draft order], I think they could have gotten an elite defensive player, maybe a corner or a safety or something like that."

The prices Cincinnati paid on one-year deals for tight end Tyler Eifert and defensive tackle Chris Baker seemed favorable. There are also good reasons neither player commanded more.

"You forget that two years ago, before Eifert got hurt in the Pro Bowl, he was one of the top five to 10 tight ends in the league," an exec said. "He just has to stay healthy. Baker is a big guy who knows how to play the position. If you overpaid, that is one thing, but you got a good price on him and he will help."

#### Cleveland Browns

The Browns figured out early in the process that attracting veteran players to Cleveland was going to be difficult coming off an 0-16 season. That is one reason they have been so aggressive in the trade market, in which players who are not front-line starting quarterbacks tend to have a harder time influencing the process.

"I like what Cleveland did -- a lot -- because free agents weren't just going to go there," an exec said. "Tyrod Taylor is not going to turn the football over a ton. They have Josh Gordon to stretch the field and now they have a slower slot guy in Jarvis Landry who will catch the underneath stuff, which will help Tyrod. They got a tackle that I like [Chris Hubbard]. The way they are going about it, it is going to help them win some games."

The trades for Taylor, Landry and cornerback Damarious Randall cost Cleveland picks in the third and fourth rounds this year, plus backup quarterback DeShone Kizer and a 2019 seventh-rounder. The Browns also sent nose tackle Danny Shelton and a 2018 fifth to New England for a 2019 third. An exec from another team speculated that 2016 first-round pick Corey Coleman could eventually join Shelton and Kizer on the Browns' alumni roster, noting that Landry's addition could already compromise Coleman in certain personnel packages.

"They have improved more than a lot of teams and they still obviously have a lot of holes," one insider said. "Losing Joe Thomas is huge. It really hurts. But they are not as bad as where they were. I think the tough thing for me on their moves is, these DBs they were signing, again, you are spending starter money on backups, role players, and maybe those guys do become really good corners, but it's just the risks of free agency."

#### Dallas Cowboys

The Cowboys wanted Sammy Watkins first, but wound up with Allen Hurns later -- and for much less money. That is probably not a terrible thing.

"Watkins going to Kansas City definitely threw a wrench into what they were trying to do," an exec said. "The probably could have done some things on defense, but them essentially not participating in free agency is not bad. They did not get the guy they targeted, and then they did not reach. They just added another receiver [Hurns]."

Hurns has played in 36 games over the past three seasons (it has been 38 games for Dez Bryant). Hurns has 138 catches for 1,993 yards and 15 touchdowns over that span (it's 150 catches for 2,035 yards and 17 scores for Bryant). There are obvious questions about what comes next.

"I think they are still going to try to muscle Dez to take a pay cut," an insider said. "I like Hurns. Health issues are a question mark with him, and really, just how the Dallas offense is being operated right now. Jason Witten and Cole Beasley are the top two targets in that offense since Dak Prescott became the quarterback. Do you really need Dez? I don't know."

#### Denver Broncos

Case Keenum is joining the following list of quarterbacks other than Peyton Manning to start games for Denver in the past 10 seasons: Kyle Orton, Trevor Siemian, Jay Cutler, Tim Tebow, Brock Osweiler, Paxton Lynch and Chris Simms.

"You know what that sounds like?" an exec asked upon seeing the list. "The Browns. Doesn't it? It is a great question: How can John Elway, one of the greatest quarterbacks ever, not identify a quarterback? Because it's fricking hard! That is how. You just have to pray that your owner has enough confidence in you to give you multiple attempts at it."

The Broncos aren't asking Keenum to be Manning. First, they hope he can avoid the negative plays that hurt them so badly last season. The win probability Denver lost from interceptions, sacks and sack/fumbles last season amounted to 3.8 full games lost, the NFL's fifth-highest figure. Minnesota was second best, with Keenum at quarterback, losing 2.2 full games of win probability on those plays.

"Keenum has been in the league for five years, and other than one year, he was a certain guy," the same exec said. "He had a career year in Minnesota, and you should be careful paying a guy for that. They have a high pick, so maybe they draft one, too."

#### Detroit Lions

The Lions have done next to nothing in free agency. Adding LeGarrette Blount finally gave them a power runner, but letting Eric Ebron leave created a void at tight end. Detroit was content letting veteran defensive tackle Haloti Ngata leave, along with linebackers Tahir Whitehead and the still-unsigned Paul Worilow.

"The coach and GM have a type of player they want, a Patriots-type player who is what they define as a Lion, and they are going to find those players in the draft more than free agency," an insider said. "That is understandable as far as philosophy, but from a talent standpoint and even from a production standpoint the last two years, Ebron has been OK."

Getting left tackle Taylor Decker healthy for a full season could help the Lions get more from the investment they made along the line through free agency last offseason. That and adding to the group at running back could help Detroit become more balanced.

"Blount is good in that role as far as being No. 1 slash No. 1A or 1B with Ameer Abdullah," an exec said, "but I do not think that is a done deal. If you look at the runners in this year's draft, it is a deep, deep group. You will be able to get quality runners."

#### Green Bay Packers

Jordy Nelson had 94 receptions for 1,160 yards and 14 touchdowns in his last 16 starts with Aaron Rodgers at quarterback. He had 66 receptions for 763 yards and four touchdowns in his last 16 starts when Rodgers was not in the lineup. The question then becomes whether the Packers gave up on Nelson prematurely.

"I don't think they gave enough credit to not having Rodgers there as to Jordy's downfall," an exec said. "He is not the same guy. He is not as explosive. But he can still catch 70 balls for 800 yards. Now, is he worth \$10 million a year? No, but you try to keep him, don't you?"

Plugging in tight end Jimmy Graham as a replacement arguably turns the Nelson decision into a wash.

"All Jimmy is now is a red zone target," an exec said. "They are saying, 'OK, when we get to the red zone, we are just going to have our quarterback throw the fade ball up to Jimmy Graham and let him go get it.' Jimmy is best at that, but outside the red zone, he just doesn't run routes hard any more. You get a veteran guy who has had injuries and he really only wants to play when it is touchdown time."

#### Houston Texans

This offseason is all about getting healthy for key Texans contributors such as Deshaun Watson, J.J. Watt and Whitney Mercilus. It was somewhat notable, then, that two key players signed in free agency carry availability concerns.

Tyrann Mathieu has finished two of his five NFL seasons on injured reserve and is coming off the first 16-game season of his career. He has yet to recapture the peak form that made him a dynamic player in

Arizona before his injuries. Aaron Colvin finished the 2016 season on injured reserve and also served a four-game suspension for performance-enhancing drugs that year.

"Colvin is a good player and very, very talented," an exec said. "In my opinion, he was probably the second- or third-best corner in free agency, with Kyle Fuller being No. 1, so I think they helped themselves. [Colvin] can play inside, he can play outside, he is strong, has good speed, competes well at the ball, has good instincts. I think he is going to be a high-value signing."

Another exec liked the Mathieu signing for the price, noting that Mathieu performed better late in the 2017 season. But with no picks in the first two rounds of the upcoming draft, Houston wasn't positioned well to make a run at tackle Cordy Glenn, who could have brought badly needed stability at left tackle.

"You got Deshaun Watson in the draft last year -- congrats -- but having no pick 'til the third round is what you have to live with," an exec said. "They have three third-rounders, so I do see them trying to move up, potentially for a tackle. In free agency, Mathieu grades out as a low-level starter right now, but he is so instinctive, so tough, so gritty that he is the type of player that I really want on my team."

#### Indianapolis Colts

The Colts bowed out of the high-priced markets for players such as Allen Robinson and Andrew Norwell. They re-signed kicker Adam Vinatieri and added lower-priced receiving options in Eric Ebron and Ryan Grant, operating like a team that will have every opportunity to improve itself in the draft after swinging a profitable trade with the Jets.

Landing three second-round picks for moving back three spots to the sixth overall choice was the type of move GMs dream about.

"It is amazing he got three twos for three spots -- unbelievable," an exec said of second-year Colts GM Chris Ballard.

Those additional picks will let the Colts restock their roster at much lower prices than teams are paying in free agency.

"All of a sudden, you have the sixth pick and four seconds -- you got a chance to get healthy in a hurry, don't you?" another exec said.

#### Jacksonville Jaguars

The Jaguars stayed the course at quarterback with Blake Bortles while getting more talented on their offensive line (adding \$13.3 million-per-year guard Andrew Norwell) and less talented at wide receiver (subtracting starters Allen Robinson and Allen Hurns). These moves were consistent with a team looking to win with defense and a strong running game.

"It was really damned if you do, damned if you don't with Bortles," an exec said. "I don't think he is going to take them where they want to go, but if you trust the defense and trust the running game, more power to you. I don't think they got better at the receiver position, but that is not how they are built, so I get it."

The receiver position was not a total overhaul. The Jaguars did re-sign Marqise Lee.

"Them signing their own guy back is legit," another exec said. "They like where he is headed and like him as part of the group, so you re-sign him. You re-sign your own guys because you know them best. I like that."

#### Kansas City Chiefs

The Chiefs unloaded their most talented defensive player (cornerback Marcus Peters) and their starting quarterback (Alex Smith) before paying \$16 million per year for a wide receiver (Sammy Watkins) who is on his third team in eight months. They also paid \$9 million per year for a linebacker (Anthony Hitchens) who has not always played third down, ahead of a draft some consider to be strong on linebackers.

"Just because you make Sammy Watkins your one [No. 1 receiver] doesn't mean he is going to play like Julio Jones," an exec said. "I don't know what Sammy Watkins is, but he is not a one. You are still taking him off what you thought about him in the draft, but he has never been consistent enough, so I would be leery."

The Chiefs are banking on coach Andy Reid, who might be as good as anyone at maximizing offensive personnel.

"They said, 'Listen, we want to be the Greatest Show on Turf, we already have a tight end [Travis Kelce], a back [Kareem Hunt] and another receiver [Tyreek Hill], so let's go pay a ton of money for a receiver [Watkins] that can be explosive and stretch the field outside,'" an exec said. "They basically committed to being the best offense in the league."

Every move the Chiefs made was explainable. They saw Peters as a distraction and decided to get value for him now. They wanted to get value for Smith before transitioning to Patrick Mahomes. They saw Watkins as a top-five draft talent who could make a good offense better without having to carry the full load. And they valued Derrick Johnson so much as an inside linebacker that they preferred paying Hitchens to taking their chances in the draft.

"They just don't have anyone on defense right now," another insider said, calling the Chiefs the NFL's least talented defense heading into April. "Maybe Peters is a problem, but you get rid of the best player on your defense when you didn't have a good defense to begin with, which to me means they are completely rebuilding on the defensive side. The interesting thing is that the AFC West is pretty mediocre overall, so that could help [in making that decision]."

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#### An NFL executive

#### Los Angeles Chargers

The Chargers re-signed cornerback Casey Hayward, bolstered their offensive line with Mike Pouncey and picked up a blocking tight end in Virgil Green. There was nothing too flashy, which is pretty much standard for the Chargers under GM Tom Telesco.

"Casey is a good player who has earned that contract," an insider said. "He has some limitations against speed on the perimeter, but he understands how to play at a high level despite them. That was a good signing, and then from there, they just need to get healthy. Their second-round pick from last year [Forrest Lamp] was hurt. Mike Williams should have a full year to recover from his injuries. This is a good team that ended on a high note and just needs to draft well."

Another insider liked the Pouncey signing, but feared the veteran center would wind up where so many other Chargers players seem to wind up: in the training room. Pouncey started all 16 games for Miami last season, a first for him since 2012.

"He is not a great player by any means," another insider said, "but I think he is a good player for where they are right now. They are on the verge of being a good football team. Their defense is really good. They have had trouble because they have not been able to do what they wanted to do on offense. Whether that is keep people healthy or what, they have been in the same boat as Chicago and some other teams who have had their most impactful offensive players hurt."

#### Los Angeles Rams

The Rams have hogged the headlines during free agency. Former defensive mainstays Robert Quinn, Alec Ogletree and Trumaine Johnson are out, as is one-year receiver rental Sammy Watkins. Cornerbacks Marcus Peters and Aqib Talib are in, along with defensive tackle Ndamukong Suh.

"When you look at the Rams' roster, I think they are actually a little worse now than what they were, which is kind of interesting," an insider said. "They clearly have the best interior defensive line in the league, but they also have one of the worst edge-rushing groups after trading Quinn. Maybe they can get favorable one-on-one matchups with Aaron Donald and Suh in there, although Suh has been in decline."

It's only April. The Rams will add players through the draft. And if you're paying close attention, you'll notice that by using the trade market and by picking up a released player such as Suh, the Rams are coming out ahead in the equation for compensatory draft choices, which is based on activity involving unrestricted free agents. The Rams are in position to gain two additional third-round picks in 2019, and then some. But all the high-profile players Los Angeles added come with reputations as strong personalities.

"Suh almost seems like a contract worker," an insider said. "He will come in, do his work and get out. He is not as invested. If they start losing early, can they handle all those personalities at once?"

That was the No. 1 question an exec raised as well.

"Over time, just because you go sign a bunch of guys in free agency or add them by trade, it does not guarantee success," this exec said. "That locker room is going to be interesting. Wade [Phillips] can handle it for a year, but if it goes south, it won't just go south, it will bottom out."

An NFL insider

Miami Dolphins

The Dolphins subtracted their most talented and/or productive player from each side of the ball by trading Jarvis Landry and cutting Ndamukong Suh. They also cut center Mike Pouncey. They added Robert Quinn, Daniel Kilgore, Frank Gore, Josh Sitton, Danny Amendola and Albert Wilson in the type of swap-out that ideally would not come two years into a coach's tenure.

"They are going into the third year of a new coach and it's like they are starting over," an exec said. "I don't really understand that. They have gotten rid of legit players. I'm not sure what to think of them."

Another insider noted that swapping out high-profile wide receivers will be nothing new for Dolphins coach Adam Gase. Denver and Chicago traded away Brandon Marshall when Gase was with those teams. Denver also traded away Brandon Lloyd in 2011, less than a year after he led the NFL in receiving yards with 1,448.

"I know Albert Wilson is athletic and we liked him at a certain price, but he has trouble catching and that is a real problem," another insider said. "He also has a little bit of the same role as Amendola, which is interesting."

The Dolphins look and sound like a team that was willing to sacrifice raw talent for a chance at improving overall team dynamics.

"They are getting rid of any attitude guys and trying to add some leadership guys so that it doesn't all fall on Ryan Tannehill, who is not a natural leader," an insider said.

#### Minnesota Vikings

The Vikings won the big headlines in free agency by adding the most expensive quarterback (Kirk Cousins) and one of the bigger-name defensive linemen (Sheldon Richardson). If Sam Bradford's contract with Arizona offsets Cousins' new deal in the formula used to award compensatory draft choices, Minnesota also could come away with a 2019 third-rounder to offset Case Keenum's signing with Denver.

It all looks like a towering home run, followed by a prolonged trip around the bases and a victory party at home plate.

"I think here is what the Vikings think," an exec said. "They have a defensive head coach along with a guy in Keenum who had never had much success. They see Kirk as better than him, and probably rightly so. They think their defense is going to be good, they have some receivers, they have a running back, the quarterback doesn't need to carry the team, but he is going to be better than what they had. My thing is, can they be so good on defense that they can win it all with that type of quarterback?"

Execs aren't racing to place their bets.

"The quarterback money is stupid," one exec said. "They have deals coming down the pipe for [Anthony] Barr, the defensive end from LSU [Danielle Hunter] and then [Eric] Kendricks. I don't know how they are going to fit all those guys. And then Kirk is a good player, but he cannot finish games. He couldn't do it at Michigan State, and he can't do it in the NFL. They might have been better keeping Keenum at a much lower price."

### New England Patriots

The Patriots lost their starting left tackle, their part-time starter at right tackle, their starting cornerback and a key slot receiver in Danny Amendola. No one is panicking.

"New England might not be as good, but at the end of the day, they are not done working, either," an exec said. "They will do their stuff during the draft, make a trade, get a guy here, pick up a vet there and they will be right back to even as they were."

The Patriots sent a 2019 third-round pick to Cleveland as part of the Danny Shelton trade, knowing they're in position to gain two additional 2019 thirds as compensatory choices for losing left tackle Nate Solder and cornerback Malcolm Butler. They added cornerback Jason McCourty to partly offset Butler's departure. Julian Edelman's return from injury could help offset Amendola's departure. They added Adrian Clayborn to help a pass-rushing situation that probably still needs reinforcement.

The situation at offensive tackle appears more concerning, but close followers of the Patriots know it's not necessarily a crisis. New England typically fortifies its interior so that its tackles can push the outside rushers past Tom Brady, who typically sets up five to six yards behind center.

"When offensive linemen leave New England, they struggle," an exec said. "Solder was not very good this past year and might have been the worst pass-protecting left tackle in that division. I just like how the Patriots value players. They think they can find answers. They want to breed their own guys and they think they can out-coach you."

### New Orleans Saints

Life is good when a team drafts as well as the Saints did in 2017. It gets better when your future Hall of Fame quarterback accepts a team-friendly deal enabling a few buys in free agency. The Saints still need pass-rush help and could have a hard time finding a solution with only the 27th and 91st picks in the first three rounds.

"You can make a case for the Saints having the best roster in football right now," an insider said. "It is because they hit on all those rookies last year. They have all these guys signed for cheap and they are all young. It is crazy how different New Orleans' roster looks in one year."

The Saints added Patrick Robinson, who was the Eagles' best corner last season. They picked up linebacker Demario Davis. There were no budget-busting signings because none was required.

"They were a crazy play away from being the NFC Championship Game last year," an exec said. "They added pieces that will help build on what they had. They were in a good spot."

### New York Giants

The Giants earned acclaim for winning free agency two years ago by adding Olivier Vernon and others. They are paying a price for those moves now, and will have even less flexibility as long as Eli Manning's expensive contract is on the books. Worse, they were so desperate for help at left tackle that they signed Nate Solder from New England for \$15.5 million per year, making him the NFL's highest-paid player at the position.

"There is no way [GM] Dave Gettleman thought Nate Solder was as good as the contract they gave him," an insider said. "He struggles in pass protection, and it's not like he's going to have Tom Brady standing strong in the pocket, either."

Insiders agreed that the Giants needed to do something to bolster the offensive line. They also agreed that options were limited.

"They had to make a statement," an insider said. "I heard they were trying to get the guard, [Andrew] Norwell, and then flipped once he went to Jacksonville. They had to do something to say to their quarterback, 'Hey, we are going to take care of you.'"

The Solder move overshadowed the Giants' other transactions, from acquiring linebacker Alec Ogletree to signing running back Jonathan Stewart.

"The Giants are the classic case of going all-in on free agency a couple years ago and now you are kind of stuck as far as flexibility," an insider said. "They had to get rid of JPP's contract. With Gettleman and a whole new coaching staff coming in, naturally they want to build things in their own vision, but to do that, you need flexibility. Eli Manning is a great example of that, too. Do you keep trying to live with Eli as your quarterback for the next three years?"

#### New York Jets

The Jets made a push for Cousins in free agency. When they did not get him, they sent the sixth overall pick and three second-rounders to the Colts for the third overall pick, presumably because they plan to draft a quarterback in that slot. Had the Jets gotten Cousins, they could have selected, say, a badly needed edge rusher sixth overall while keeping all those second-rounders to build depth.

"To me, they are in a better situation now than if they would have got Kirk Cousins," an exec countered. "They will get their second choice at quarterback in the draft because I feel like New York [the Giants] is not taking a quarterback. You give up draft capital, but you help your defense with Trumaine Johnson, and they just signed Terrelle Pryor Sr., too. Essentially, they will have three quarterbacks and see who wins out, and support their guy in the draft, as opposed to paying \$30 million per year to Kirk Cousins."

#### Oakland Raiders

The Raiders keep adding mid- and lower-salaried veterans such as Jordy Nelson, Doug Martin, Breno Giacomini and Leon Hall. They are different. Are they better? Either way, Jon Gruden is putting his stamp on this Oakland roster.

"Maybe he is thinking, 'If I want to get my message across, I have to have all these vet guys,'" an evaluator said. "If you just go young, there can be entitlement. If you just go old, you are not really building a culture as much as you are trying to win now. Both can backfire. With the older guys, you are not able to continually build as easily."

This evaluator thought there would be a clear talent drop from Michael Crabtree to Nelson. An exec liked the move as long as Gruden determined Nelson's statistical drop reflected the huge drop from Aaron Rodgers to Brett Hundley.

"Gruden watches tape and has to have watched Jordy a bunch," this exec said. "[Wide receiver coach] Edgar Bennett can say, 'Hey, he is a good locker room guy who has something left.' Maybe Gruden puts on the tape where Aaron is playing and all of a sudden, Jordy looks halfway good."

A second exec agreed that Nelson probably can produce with a competent quarterback, provided he can stay healthy.

"Going to Gruden is a great fit for him," this exec said. "He is a smart, veteran receiver that Jon can tinker with and do things with. Gruden can really do that well. He did it with Tim Brown, Jerry Rice, Joe Jurevicius, Keenan McCardell and those guys. They were all like where Jordy Nelson is at now. That is a good fit, but Jordy has to stay healthy, and that is the big concern."

#### Philadelphia Eagles

The Eagles might have sacrificed glue for glitter when they added defensive linemen Michael Bennett and Haloti Ngata at the expense of Vinny Curry and Beau Allen. They were able to re-sign linebacker Nigel Bradham, which was a top priority, but they lost their top-performing corner from 2017 when Patrick Robinson signed with New Orleans.

"I like what Philly did," an exec said. "You trade Torrey Smith for corner help [Daryl Worley] and you go sign a better receiver [Mike Wallace]. I think the Bennett signing was a little out of character for them because of what you are adding to your locker room. That was a stretch."

Another insider also saw risk in bringing in a relatively high number of "name" veterans.

"It is hard to microwave a team," this insider said. "You can argue that they did it last year, but I would not agree. Their offensive line and defensive line had guys who had been there in that system. The quarterback was a homegrown guy. They brought in some receivers, which I think skill guys you can do easier. It will be interesting to see how they sustain the success."

A third insider called Curry and Allen "integral role-playing glue guys" who could be missed.

"I would rather have Michael Bennett for the money over Vinny Curry all day, so I get that part of it," this insider said. "I do like what Philly has done overall. [GM] Howie [Roseman] has been extremely good at figuring out ways to work out deals in his favor. The biggest thing is just the type of guys they are bringing in, but they have so far been able to make it work between [LeGarrette] Blount and Jay Ajayi and guys who were considered castoffs from other teams."

#### Pittsburgh Steelers

The Steelers' search for an upgrade at safety led them to Morgan Burnett, whose ability to play a dime linebacker role could help Pittsburgh at two positions of need.

"Burnett is high-character, very much the Steeler kind of brand, but he is older and doesn't produce like he used to," an exec said. "You get a more stable [version of] Mike Mitchell but a less explosive [version of] Mike Mitchell."

Another insider said this offseason has fallen right for Pittsburgh. The safety market was soft, allowing Burnett's deal to come in under \$5 million per year. The draft appears heavy on talent at linebacker, which is another position Pittsburgh needs to target after losing Ryan Shazier.

"They have the most star players in the league and they are also really good at being able to find glue guys to fill specific roles like [Alejandro] Villanueva at left tackle or Mike Hilton, who is suddenly their nickel corner out of nowhere," an insider said. "Burnett is not the same player he was, health-wise and movement-wise, but he does bring some versatility."

#### San Francisco 49ers

Center Weston Richburg, running back Jerick McKinnon and cornerback Richard Sherman were the main additions in free agency. These were lucrative deals featuring team-friendly structures in that San Francisco can terminate the contracts as late as April of next year without 2019 salaries becoming fully guaranteed.

"Richburg upgrades them, and they were able to trade their other center [Daniel Kilgore]," an evaluator said. "Jerick McKinnon is very good for what Kyle Shanahan wants to do. They don't have a first- and second-down guy, but this guy gives them ability on three downs. He can help in the passing game."

Richburg, 26, had missed only one game in three seasons before a concussion limited him to four games in 2017. McKinnon, 25, has played 58 of 64 games so far. Sherman, who turned 30 over the weekend, never missed a game until suffering a torn Achilles tendon in November.

Another insider noted that the 49ers' previous leadership ran into trouble targeting injured players in the draft. Richburg and Sherman both carry injury concerns off last season.

"It's interesting to watch the new regime," this insider said. "They have talked about ethos, but when you pay Kilgore and say he is the type of guy you want, then turn around and trade him a month later, players in the locker room see that. It's like talking about the ethos they want and then drafting Reuben Foster or the running back from Utah [Joe Williams] who quit, had injury concerns and got hurt as a rookie. We will see what happens."

#### Seattle Seahawks

A mass exodus from Seattle has seen the Seahawks part with Michael Bennett, Richard Sherman, Jimmy Graham, Luke Willson, Paul Richardson and Sheldon Richardson. The team made no high-profile acquisitions, but the volume of its UFA signings -- adding Ed Dickson, Tom Johnson, Barkevious Mingo, D.J. Fluker, Jaron Brown, Shamar Stephen -- means Seattle is not in position to recoup compensatory choices in 2019.

Meanwhile, Seattle needs draft capital this year after trading away its 2018 picks in the second (Sheldon Richardson) and third (Duane Brown) rounds. There has been chatter about an Earl Thomas trade that would ideally return a first-rounder as part of the compensation, but that chatter has not become anything more so far.

"It is hard for teams to give up those No. 1s," an evaluator said. "Look at all the teams that have made trades for players that were quote-unquote high-value players. There were very few No. 1 picks. Some threes and maybe a No. 2 for the following year. For example, you would think with a guy like Marcus Peters, you are definitely getting a first-rounder and something else, but teams do not want to invest in that market."

Fluker's addition to the offensive line signals a significant scheme change now that Mike Solari has replaced Tom Cable as offensive line coach.

"I think Solari will do a good job with Fluker," an exec said. "Fluker is not great, but he is big and he is tough. I think he could play right tackle. It will be interesting to see what [Germain] Ifedi does. They are going to get bigger, be more of a power, counter-type scheme and not so much of the wide zone."

#### Tampa Bay Buccaneers

It's unfortunate that the Buccaneers needed to acquire Jason Pierre-Paul, but fortunate they were able to do so. The desperation move for pass-rush help cost Tampa Bay a third-round pick and generally went over well under the circumstances.

"They could do worse than having JPP," an evaluator said. "At least they took a stab at it. They got JPP, they got Vinny Curry, so they definitely improved their rush. Now the question is, I don't know where they go draft-wise. Maybe back to the defensive line."

The Bucs got deals done with No. 1 receiver Mike Evans and tight end Cameron Brate. They landed center Ryan Jensen instead of higher-priced line alternatives such as Norwell, which could pay off for Tampa Bay when the team meets Ali Marpet at the negotiating table. On the downside, Jensen has started just one season, so he is less proven.

"If Jensen plays the way he did in Baltimore last year, that deal is a good one," an insider said. "If you go after an established guy, you just pay so much. Solder and Norwell are great examples. They are not the best tackle and guard in the NFL, but they were just paid that way. Olivier Vernon was not the best defensive end, but when the Giants wanted him on their team, they had to pay him that way. It is just the way free agency is."

That's what is nice about Pierre-Paul. He's a proven player already under contract through 2020, and the Bucs can release him after this season without cap consequences. If that happens, it probably means bad things for Tampa Bay.

"I don't think they have done anything bad," an exec said. "It is just how good the older guys play when you could have had picks. You are kind of playing for right now."

#### Tennessee Titans

Free agency was about one-two punches for the Titans. Newly signed corner Malcolm Butler joins former New England teammate Logan Ryan to give Tennessee a capable tandem at corner. Another former Patriot, Dion Lewis, joins Derrick Henry to give the Titans what should be an upgraded one-two punch at running back, under the assumption DeMarco Murray was finished.

"They want smart people familiar with the [Mike] Vrabel/New England connection, so let's get Malcolm Butler, who has formed a decent combination in the league before with Logan Ryan," an evaluator said. "I don't think either is a No. 1, but both are viable cover guys. Their problem was that their offense was stagnant. [Offensive coordinator] Matt LaFleur must change that."

Using Lewis the way the Patriots sometimes used him would be a start.

"New England would maul you with [LeGarrette] Blount and then put in Lewis and you couldn't find him," an insider said. "They would shift him outside and he could run hitches and slants. He was really a poor man's Darren Sproles who could detach and run basic routes to help give Brady a read on the coverages."

#### Washington Redskins

Alex Smith's completion percentage, passer rating and Total QBR during the past three seasons are indistinguishable from those of Kirk Cousins in the same span. Smith has a much better won-lost record because his Kansas City teams significantly outperformed Cousins' Washington teams on defense and special teams.

"I think Cousins is better than Alex Smith, but I think it is a marginal better," an insider said. "Alex Smith to me is an average starter who can fall into a category very similar to Tyrod Taylor, depending on the support around him. I think Cousins is slightly above average."

Smith is cheaper than Cousins, giving the Redskins cap flexibility. Washington did not necessarily put that flexibility to use in high-profile ways. The team added receiver Paul Richardson from Seattle and, in a much smaller deal, outside linebacker Pernell McPhee from Chicago.

"The running back spot for me is the big question mark," another insider said. "Maybe they take advantage in the draft even though they took Samaje Perine last year."

# Broncos visit with QB Sam Darnold in Los Angeles

By Aric DiLalla

DenverBroncos.com

April 7, 2018

The Broncos continued to evaluate this year's crop of quarterback prospects with a stop in Los Angeles.

A Broncos contingent, led by President of Football Operations/General Manager John Elway and Head Coach Vance Joseph, held a private workout with former USC quarterback Sam Darnold on Friday.

Darnold, the youngest of the top quarterback prospects, played two seasons at USC. As a redshirt sophomore, he completed 63.1 percent of his passes for 4,143 yards and 26 touchdowns as he led the Trojans to a Cotton Bowl berth.

His finest game as a collegiate athlete, though, likely came against Penn State in the 2017 Rose Bowl when he threw for 453 yards, five touchdowns and one interception in a comeback win.

Denver previously welcomed prospect Josh Rosen to UHealth Training Center on Wednesday.

# Did Titans uniform unveiling boost chances of hosting NFL draft in Nashville?

By Jason Wolf  
USA Today  
April 7, 2018

Amy Adams Strunk's eyes grew as wide as saucers as the Titans' controlling owner walked onto the stage Wednesday night on Lower Broadway, her view flooded by the estimated crowd of as many as 20,000 fans who packed the street to see the team's new uniforms, a free Florida George Line concert and fireworks.

"Wow! I am just blown away by this. And you know what, Mike?" Strunk said to Mike Keith, who emceed the event, before turning to the audience. "I think Nashville needs to host the NFL draft! What do you think?"

The throng erupted in cheers.

"This is an example of what we can do," Keith said. "There's no doubt about it."

Nashville is among five cities being considered to host the NFL draft in either 2019 or 2020, along with Las Vegas, Denver, Kansas City and a combination bid from Cleveland and Canton, Ohio. The league anticipates it will determine and announce the location of both drafts during its spring meeting from May 21-23 in Atlanta.

Butch Spyridon, the president and CEO of the Nashville Convention & Visitors Corp., said the success of the Titans' uniform unveiling Wednesday night can only aid the city's efforts to land the NFL draft.

"A number of NFL folks were in town," Spyridon said. "More on the merchandising side. But I think everybody from the Titans organization and certainly from my staff was fed every encouraging word possible about our prospects. I'd say they were appropriately impressed ...

"Worst case, we have a 40 percent shot. Two out of five. I feel like our chances are better than that, but I certainly don't think it's a slam dunk."

# 2018 NFL Draft: Browns take Sam Darnold at No. 1, Josh Allen to Jets and other predictions

By Jason La Canfora

CBSSports.com

April 7, 2018

As tempting as it may be, I'm not doing a mock draft less than a month from the first round getting underway. Too many moving parts, too many trades that could get completed, too many needs that could still be filled and far too much time to gather intel on what teams are truly thinking to wade into those waters yet.

But we are close enough to the big weekend that a few things are coming into focus. A few needs are so extreme they stand out. A few teams are falling in love with certain players. A few trends seem to be imminent. The trades that have already been completed portend other moves. So with that in mind here are a few things I could certainly see going down once the draft finally approaches. I guess you could call them fearless forecasts or something like that:

#### Browns kick it off with Sam Darnold

Sure, they could go in a different direction, but sometimes you just shouldn't try to over-think things. Darnold is pretty clean and super impressive and some of the other teams in line to select quarterbacks at the top of the draft just don't see John Dorsey passing on him. Yes, Josh Allen would fit a profile as well, but Darnold was more productive in a tougher conference and may be as close to the perfect package as you are going to get at this position in this particular draft.

#### Josh Allen doesn't get past the Jets

If the Giants select a quarterback second overall, then all the more reason that this will hold true. But even if it doesn't, the metrics – completion percentage aside – are very high and this kid has been impressing NFL teams the more time he spends around them and the Jets are among a handful of teams who were already super impressed by what Allen did in 2016. He won't have to wait long when Day 1 of the draft begins.

#### Bradley Chubb's floor is sixth overall

The more time you spend digesting this draft class, the more clear it becomes just how scant it is on proven pass rushers. And if NFL free agency teaches us anything, it's that you are more likely to land a former Pro Bowl QB on the open market than you are an elite pass rusher in his prime. So no way I see Chris Ballard – desperate to rebuild the Colts long-anemic defense – letting Chubb get past him. I still think he's gone by fourth overall if Dorsey keeps that pick, but six is the floor.

#### Somebody is trading for Baker Mayfield

He may be the best quarterback in this class and I don't believe he is going first overall. And I don't see him being a fit with the Giants even if they do go QB with the second pick and it might be too big of a gamble for the Jets, too, who as I noted I think may lean Allen. But there is too much here to like – off-field issues and crotch-grabbing aside – and with the Patriots and Bills and Cardinals among those focused on moving up for a QB, Mayfield could be the target. Perhaps the Broncos just keep their pick and take him, but I have a hunch he becomes the Patrick Mahomes of this draft, and ends up with his team via trade.

Mason Rudolph is going in the top half of the first round

Some teams are divided on just how well this kid projects to the NFL, but there are enough teams that like him enough that I see him being the fifth QB off the board ... And far sooner than some would have projected. I continue to hear the Ravens – deep into this QB market with them able to untangle themselves from Joe Flacco's contract after 2018 – are high on Rudolph and I'm guessing he doesn't get by them with that pick. The question becomes has Arizona (pick 15, for now) or someone else already selected him? Personally, I'm more of a Lamar Jackson guy, but I'm becoming convinced that Rudolph beats him off the board. I've been maintaining for quite some time that six passers will go in the first 30 picks, and I continue to expect that to be the case.

The Panthers are taking a defensive back

Yes, receiver remains a need as well, but this is a tough first round to try to address that need. But the defensive backs crop is quite deep and they could end up accounting for a fourth of all first-round picks and I can't see the Panthers not getting in on that group. I can't tell you which one just yet - a safety like Justin Reid or a corner like Josh Jackson, perhaps - but this is one team-to-position pairing that is as crystal clear as it seems. Hard to see a pass rusher dropping who would make any sense.

Rashaan Evans just seems like a Steeler

As much as Ryan Shazier has hinted about hoping to play again, he faces some significant medical odds. Pittsburgh has to operate as if he may have played his last snap for them and Evans, a tough-minded, speedy, long, impactful prototype 3-4 inside linebacker just looks like the perfect fit. Given where the Steelers are drafting, this could end up being a match.

Odell Beckham, Earl Thomas traded by first day of draft

The Giants are not inclined to pay Beckham what the market will yield him elsewhere, and, likewise, Thomas is not in line to get another payday from Seattle at this point. Both teams are transitioning – if not rebuilding – and holding on to these star players won't make much sense. Beckham's holdout would be a mess for the Giants, and while Thomas won't fetch the first-and-third the Seahawks hoped for, he'll land multiple other picks.

## 2 draft prospects hurt during private workouts, maybe it's time to end this nonsense

By Frank Schwab

Yahoo.com

April 7, 2018

N.C. State defensive end Kentavious Street had an even longer resume for NFL teams to peruse. He had 46 college games of tape for teams to watch, and also worked out at the combine and the Wolfpack's pro day.

That should be enough for NFL teams. If they don't know who Nelson and Street are by the end of those pro day workouts, maybe they're just not very good at their jobs. Yet, Nelson and Street — good, promising mid-round prospects in this draft — both suffered knee injuries in extra private workouts.

Street tore his ACL working out for the New York Giants, Pro Football Talk first reported. Nelson tore his meniscus and will be out 3-4 months after surgery, according to NFL Network's Ian Rapoport. Pro Football Talk said Nelson's injury happened in a private workout for the Detroit Lions.

What exactly was the point?

NFL teams shrug and move on to the next dog-and-pony show private workout that likely won't help a player's draft stock. Meanwhile, the injured players are stuck rehabbing, missing significant time and in Street's case, probably his entire rookie year. Nelson and Street will have their draft status affected due to the injuries, and they'll lose a lot of money as a result. But hey, at least the teams got to put them through a private workout, like the combine and pro day didn't give them all the information they needed.

Why do NFL teams do private workouts? Because they can. The union hasn't stepped in and told players not to, although there's no real reason for the workouts in almost every case. If you want to be cynical — and since this is the NFL, feel free — it seems like a good way for teams to indoctrinate players and let them know that when an NFL team asks them to do something, no matter how meaningless it is, they better do it. Prospects work out for teams because they worry if they don't, their draft stock will be affected because word will get out they're uncooperative. It's a no-win situation when players are asked to do private workouts. NFL teams know that, and it's a passive aggressive way for them to assert their power over players.

Christian McCaffrey showed how useless private workouts are. He smartly declined them all before last year's draft. He still went eighth overall. McCaffrey knew that teams had enough information to form their draft decisions on him. He was right. McCaffrey was an elite prospect, and not every prospect has the luxury to turn down teams. But McCaffrey's approach should start a trend.

The union needs to tell players to decline workouts. Agents need to band together and tell teams their clients will come meet and interview with them, but they won't work out. Teams won't be able to leak to reporters that players turned down workouts and are hurting their draft stock if all players are turning them down. In almost every instance, NFL teams have enough information. They still get private workouts because nobody is stopping them. Teams wouldn't be happy if players don't work out for

them anymore (this is the ultimate “We’ve always done it this way, and we resist any change to that” league), but they’ll get over it. They did with McCaffrey.

Imagine if there was a different attitude about private workouts this offseason. Nelson and Street wouldn’t be rehabbing knee injuries suffered in meaningless workouts, worried about how much money they cost themselves for something that wasn’t going to help them much anyway.

# Casey Kreiter signs tender with Broncos

By Charean Williams

Pro Football Talk

April 7, 2018

Broncos long snapper Casey Kreiter signed his exclusive rights tender, keeping him with the Broncos next season.

Kreiter, who signed with the Broncos in 2016, played 10 games in 2016 before a calf injury landed him on injured reserve with three games remaining in the season. He played all 16 games last season.

He will get a new punter to snap to, with the Broncos having signed Marquette King on Thursday.

# **Broncos work out Sam Darnold on Friday**

By Charean Williams

Pro Football Talk

April 7, 2018

The Broncos worked out Sam Darnold on Friday as they continue to scout the draft's top quarterbacks.

President of Football Operations John Elway and head coach Vance Joseph were among the team's contingent in Los Angeles, Aric DiLalla of the team website reports.

Denver hosted Josh Rosen at its training complex Wednesday.

Darnold completed 63.1 percent of his passes for 4,134 yards and 26 touchdowns last season as the Trojans earned a Cotton Bowl berth.

# Commissioner will still call names on first night of the draft

By Mike Florio  
Pro Football Talk  
April 7, 2018

As the draft continues to make major changes, one key aspect will stay the same: The assembled crowd will have the ability to boo the Commissioner, loudly.

Per the league office, Roger Goodell will continue to stride to and from the podium, calling out the names of each of the players taken in the first round of the draft on Thursday night, April 26 in Arlington, Texas. He'll adhere to the ritual despite concerns among some within the league's power structure that it's not good for The Shield when Goodell feels like he should be hiding behind one in such a public setting.

As the draft becomes even more of a spectacle (this year, the first two nights will be broadcast by FOX, NFL Network, and ESPN), the crowds get larger and the boos necessarily become louder. With the draft happening this year at the Cowboys' home stadium, and in light of the league's decision to suspend Cowboys running back Ezekiel Elliott for six games last season, the locals in attendance will feel even more compelled to make plenty of noise each time the Commissioner makes an appearance.

Last year, the league tried on the second night of the draft in Philadelphia to use fan favorites like Ron Jaworski to serve as a buffer for Goodell. It didn't work; Jaworski was cheered, and Goodell was booed. By day three, Goodell was no longer to be seen.

For his part, Goodell seems to not be bothered by the booing. (At times, he welcomes it.) Still, the league needs to ask itself whether it makes sense to essentially embrace such hostility on one of the biggest nights of the year. Others could easily be found who would be greeted by the crowd with praise and adulation. At some point, someone may need to persuade Goodell that this would be a much better look (and sound) for the NFL.