

If Saquon Barkley is available at No. 5, Denver Broncos must draft him

By Woody Paige
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Saquon is the One.

If Saquon Barkley remains available at the fifth pick, the Broncos must eschew the quarterbacks and choose The Running Back.

In 12 days, draft No. 8 will be the most vital for Ol' No. 7 since his first. The Broncos possess their highest pick since 2011 when John Elway made his wisest selection ever - Von Miller.

Fifty-one years ago, in the inaugural combined AFL-NFL draft, the Broncos chose a running back in the sixth spot. Floyd Little is a member of the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

Elway didn't win a Super Bowl until he was accompanied by another incoming Hall of Fame running back - Terrell Davis (drafted in the sixth round).

The Broncos should say yes to "Say Say" Saquon. He is the best player in the wacky quarterback draft.

At Penn State, Barkley compiled 5,088 yards rushing, receiving and returning, and scored 53 times. More than half his carries were for 15 yards-plus. He is the epitome of the three-down, touchdown back.

At the NFL Combine Barkley dominated, doing the 10-yard split in 1.54, the 40-yard dash in 4.4, a vertical jump of 41 inches and 29 reps in the bench press. Those numbers were superior to exceptional NFL offensive linemen, wide receivers, running backs and punt returners.

The Broncos president of football operations, his consigliere Gary Kubiak and coach Vance Joseph always maintain they want to run the football, and score the football.

Here's Your Man.

A veteran NFL scout told me Friday: "All you have to know is he's better than Ezekiel Elliott, and he doesn't come with luggage. He should be No. 1 overall." Elliott was drafted fourth in 2016. At the combine he ran 1.58, 4.47, had a vertical of 32.5 and did not participate in the bench press. Zeke is a 6-footer weighing 225 pounds. Quon is 6-foot, 234 pounds. Elliott rushed for 1,631 yards and 15 touchdowns as a rookie, then was suspended for six games last season.

Everyone in Denver seems to have an opinion about which quarterback the Broncos should take - Baker Mayfield, Josh Allen, Josh Rosen or Sam Darnold.

There's a very reasonable possibility all four will go before the Broncos pick.

The decision should be a snap for Elway et al.

From QB to Q2: Guard Quenton Nelson or Saquon Barkley? Nelson probably will become a Pro Bowler someday, but Barkley probably will be Rookie of the Year and a Pro Bowler in 2018.

Suddenly, with Barkley and Case Keenum, the Broncos aren't rebuilding. They're retaking the AFC West and a postseason position.

Those four quarterbacks won't even get on the field for a year or two, or three. How much has Paxton Lynch helped the Broncos in his first two seasons? Zero. Did Garret Bolles get the Broncos into the playoffs last season? Would Nelson or Bradley Chubb turn the Broncos into a franchise that can beat out the Patriots, the Steelers or even the Chargers? No.

Which would you rather have - C.J. Anderson's past or Barkley's potential? Anderson would be owed a \$4.5 million salary, and the fifth pick likely will receive \$28 million over five years. C.J., bless him, could be traded after the Barkley pick for a middle-round choice.

The Broncos are in love with Devontae Booker, but he has produced 911 yards (3.6 average) in 29 games, and rookie De'Angelo Henderson rushed for 15 yards, and caught one sparkling pass in the final game for 29 yards and a touchdown. They are a fine pair of backups.

How intrigued are the Broncos, and especially Elway and Kubiak - Joseph is a bystander - with Barkley? Dove Valley isn't echoing with hints or whispers. The Broncos haven't invited Barkley for a visit, but he did disclose that they interviewed him at the combine. The Broncos obviously know that Barkley has been strong academically at Penn State, comes from a solid family background and is a journalism major. He could write this column.

Yet, the Broncos have been showing more interest in a half dozen other running backs who won't be selected in the first round or possibly the entire draft. Wrong.

A problem does exist: Barkley could go in the first four.

But Saquon should be Plan A. Plan B: Trade the pick.

Why the Broncos should ... pick an offensive lineman at No. 5

By Andrew Mason
DenverBroncos.com
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In all likelihood, only one offensive lineman in this year's draft class could possibly end up selected in the first five picks. That the lineman happens to play guard makes this possibility one of the most fascinating of this season.

Notre Dame's Quenton Nelson could be the most talented player at his position in this year's draft class, and is arguably the best guard prospect in the last 30 years.

But he's fighting headwinds in the form of decades of trends.

Simply put, guards are rarely drafted in the top 10 in the modern NFL, let alone the top 5. In the 51 years of the modern NFL Draft -- since the AFL and NFL had their first common draft in 1967 -- just 16 guards have been picked in the first 10 picks, with only five of them going in the first five selections.

What is interesting is the variance among guards drafted in the first 10 picks. Three of the 16 became Hall of Famers -- an astounding 18.5 percent Hall of Fame rate, even accounting for the small sample size -- and another two became a two-time All-Pro selection (Bill Fralic, No. 2 overall by Atlanta, 1985) and 2015 No. 5 overall pick Brandon Scherff of the Redskins.

So while just 31.3 percent of the pure guards taken in the first 10 picks became Pro Bowl selections, 53.6 percent of those taken in the next 10 selections were Pro Bowlers, including eight All-Pros -- which, at 28.6 percent, is higher than the percentage of All-Pros from the first 10 picks (25.0 percent).

Since 1990, the sweet spot for finding elite guards has come from pick 11 to pick 20. Although teams picked just 11 guards in that range in the last 28 drafts, seven of them were Pro Bowlers -- all earning multiple selections -- and four were first-team All-Pro selections.

Two other factors contribute to the lack of guards at the top of the draft. One is the ability to find solid starters at the position in the middle rounds. According to pro-football-reference.com, the average guard selected in the first 32 picks since 1990 is a full-time starter for 5.6 seasons, but that figure only drops to 3.9 seasons for players taken in what would be this year's second round (33-64) and 3.3 for those in current third-round slots (65-100). That is a marked contrast from quarterback, where second-rounders start for an average of 2.3 years, and third-rounders for 1.2.

Even for Day 3 guards -- Rounds 4 through 7 -- the average pick from each round is a starter for at least 1.3 seasons. The average guard taken in picks that correspond to this year's seventh round is a primary starter for 1.3 years -- 0.4 years more than the average quarterback taken for picks that cover this year's final five rounds.

The other factor is a simple question: How much better can an elite guard make your team?

Just six pure first-round guards from the common-draft era are in the Pro Football Hall of Fame. Three of them were top-10 choices: John Hannah (New England, No. 4, 1973), Mike Munchak (Houston Oilers, No. 8, 1982) and Bruce Matthews, Houston Oilers, No. 9, 1983). Matthews would play his career all over the line of the Oilers -- and later the Tennessee Titans -- but was drafted as a guard and spent most of his career there.

Gene Upshaw (Oakland, No. 17, 1967), Randall McDaniel (Minnesota, No. 19, 1988) and Joe DeLamielleure (Buffalo, No. 26, 1973) round out the list.

Among that group, only Upshaw won a Super Bowl. Matthews and Hannah each played in one. But four of the six -- Hannah, Munchak, Matthews and DeLamielleure -- all played on at least one team that won two or fewer games in a full, non-strike season.

Of the potential top 10 picks in this year's draft, Nelson likely offers the least risk of being a bust. The valid expectation of Nelson is that he could have a career like Munchak, Matthews, Upshaw, Hannah, McDaniel or DeLamielleure -- a career that sees long stretches of individual dominance and ends with enshrinement.

But Joe Thomas, an offensive tackle for the Browns who just retired, also dominated for the last decade. He never played in a playoff game -- and he played at left tackle, historically the position that attracts a premium draft investment -- and, later on, a premium cost in free agency. That was demonstrated this year by Nate Solder receiving a four-year contract from the Giants that could be worth up to \$62 million.

Nelson could provide a team stability and potentially excellent form at a guard spot for the next decade. But the nature of his position ensures that he cannot elevate a team individually in the way that, for example, a quarterback could. So to take Nelson early and ensure a maximum return on investment, a team likely has to have its premium positions -- quarterback, left tackle, primary edge rusher and No. 1 cornerback -- secured with quality players.

Thus, the notion of Nelson as a top-5 pick isn't for every team. But if a team picking early believes it is set at those key positions, he could be worth the call.

More rags than riches in 1960s drafts

By Jim Saccomano
DenverBroncos.com
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There are no offseason NFL events that I look forward to more than the draft. By then the schedule is out and you have a sense of the new season, a new team being built.

Elsewhere on this site there are great features and pictorials on current and past players, so I thought I would take a quick look back at the Broncos' draft beginnings.

The first American Football League draft was in 1960. Except for a few teams, like the Dallas Texans, Los Angeles Chargers and Houston Oilers, there was no hope for the others — the Broncos especially — of keeping pace financially with the NFL in the signing of college players.

The Broncos' first draft in 1960 found penurious general manager Dean Griffing literally making his selections from players featured in "Street and Smith's College Football," a popular magazine at the time.

Denver first number one choice — no drumroll necessary — was linebacker and placekicker Roger LeClerc from Trinity College. He signed with the Chicago Bears and several years later played part of a season in Denver. To give you an idea of his kicking ability, in 1967 we lost a game to Buffalo by a 17-16 score, with LeClerc going 0-for-5 on field-goal attempts.

The Broncos did not sign or select any players of great note in 1961 either, but starting in 1962 they put the football magazines away and actually scouted some guys.

While not in a financial position to sign them, Denver selected such luminaries as Merlin Olsen (1962) and Kermit Alexander (1963).

Denver's hands were tied by money and reputation, but the Broncos selected three future Pro Football Hall of Famers in 1964.

The Broncos chose offensive lineman Bob Brown, defensive back Paul Krause and Olympic sprinter and wide receiver Bob Hayes in that draft.

Our final choice in 1964, quarterback Bob Berry from Oregon, was in the 26th round. Berry had a fine career in the NFL, but at the time he said he did not sign with Denver over a financial difference in the proposed contract of \$200. I think that sums things up pretty well.

In 1965 Denver knew it could not sign their first pick, but largely for public relations and face-saving purposes selected Illinois linebacker Dick Butkus, who was also chosen by the Chicago Bears. Butkus, of course, signed with the Bears in the NFL and became a pro football legend.

Things continued along the same path into 1966, but the AFL-NFL war reached its peak that year, as the two leagues spent a combined \$7 million to sign their 1966 draft choices.

The NFL signed 75 percent of its 232 draftees, and the AFL got 46 percent of its 181. The two leagues were bleeding money and the major team owners sought a common solution.

A series of secret meetings regarding a possible AFL-NFL merger were held in the spring between Lamar Hunt of Kansas City and Tex Schramm of Dallas.

The merger of the two leagues was announced on June 8, 1966, combining the two leagues to form one expanded league with 24 teams. Every team in the AFL was accepted into the NFL, and one of the criteria of the merger was a common draft.

There is no question that the merger gave the Broncos the life raft they desperately needed to survive, and the common draft meant Denver would be able to sign the players they selected.

Broncos owner Gerry Phipps hired Lou Saban as head coach and general manager following the 1966 season, and that was the first major executive signing that helped the Broncos build a solid foundation.

In 1967 Saban drafted and signed future Pro Football Hall of Fame running back Floyd Little, and in fact each of the Broncos' first 10 draftees that year made the team.

That really was the beginning of the beginning for the Broncos as a competitive team.

Future Broncos Ring of Famer Paul Smith was drafted in 1968, and special mention should be made that Saban also selected Marlin Briscoe that year.

A 14th-round choice and the 357th-overall selection, Briscoe made history in his rookie year as the first African-American to start at quarterback in pro football.

Saban closed out the decade of the 1960s with the selection of another future Ring of Famer in 1969, the legendary Billy Thompson, from what was then Maryland State (now the University of Maryland Eastern Shore).

Thompson set a rookie mark for the ages as the only player in history to lead the league in both yards per kick return and yards per punt return in the same season.

The Broncos were still not a good team, but Saban had Little and the beginnings of a strong Broncos defense.

He resigned during the middle of the 1971 season and John Ralston took over as general manager and head coach in 1972.

There is an excellent photo essay on our team website showing the high number of outstanding 1970s draft choices who paved the way for Denver to become a Super Bowl team, as well as numerous pieces on this year's draft and college prospects.

But it all started in the 1960s.

As you can see, the going was rough in those early years, but the future for the Denver Broncos turned out to be very bright indeed.

The 10 most significant trades for draft picks in NFL history

By Jim Reineking
USA Today
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More than a month before the 2018 NFL draft, the New York Jets moved up three spots in the first round in a blockbuster trade with the Indianapolis Colts.

The Jets most likely made the move with one of the top quarterbacks in this year's draft class in their sights. While many other teams have moved up to take a top passer (or otherwise highly rated player), the results haven't always proved fruitful. Here's our look at the biggest trades for draft picks in NFL history (discounting swaps after players were drafted, like the Eli Manning-Philip Rivers deal).

10. 1998 - Chargers for Leaf

Chargers receive: 1998 first rounder (No. 2: QB Ryan Leaf)

Cardinals receive: 1998 first rounder (No. 3: DE Andre Wadsworth), 1998 second rounder (No. 33: DB Corey Chavous), 1999 first rounder (No. 8: WR David Boston), WR Eric Metcalf, LB Patrick Sapp

Moving into the No. 2 slot meant that San Diego at least would be able to get one of the two coveted quarterbacks in that year's draft class. While the Colts took Peyton Manning at No. 1, the Chargers got Leaf, who became one of the NFL's all-time biggest draft busts. That season, the Cardinals turned this bounty into the franchise's first playoff appearance in 16 years and first playoff win in 51 years.

9. 1990 - Colts for George

Colts receive: 1990 first rounder (No. 1: QB Jeff George), 1990 fourth rounder (No. 83: WR Stacey Simmons)

Falcons receive: 1990 fifth round pick (No. 121: Reggie Redding), 1991 first-rounder (No. 13: WR Mike Pritchard), OT Chris Hinton, WR Andre Rison

Eight years before using the top draft pick to take Manning, the Colts traded into the top spot to get George. In addition to possessing a righteous mustache and mullet, George also had a strong arm. He played 12 seasons in the NFL, but just four for the Colts, chucking 46 picks to 41 touchdowns. The Falcons got a Pro Bowl lineman (Hinton), one of the game's most dangerous playmakers (Rison) and Pritchard was a productive receiver for nine seasons.

8. 2012 - Redskins for RG3

Redskins receive: 2012 first-rounder (No. 2: QB Robert Griffin III)

Rams receive: 2012 first-rounder (No. 6: Traded to Cowboys), 2012 second-round selection (No. 39: CB Janoris Jenkins), 2013 first-rounder (No. 22: Traded to Falcons), 2014 first-rounder (No. 2: OT Greg Robinson)

Through additional draft trades, the Rams also acquired LB Alec Ogletree, DT Michael Brockers, WR Stedman Bailey, RB Zac Stacy and RB Isaiah Pead. In 2014, with RGIII's once-promising NFL career already in decline, Rams coach Jeff Fisher trolled the Redskins when he sent players acquired in this draft trade out for the ceremonial coin toss. RG3 lasted just three seasons with the Redskins. Meanwhile, Brockers is the only player who remains on the Rams.

7. 1983 - Rams for Dickerson

Rams receive: 1983 first-rounder (No. 2: RB Eric Dickerson)

Oilers receive: 1983 first-rounder (No. 3: Traded to Seahawks), 1983 second-rounder (No. 88: TE Mike McCloskey), 1984 fourth-rounder (No. 102: Traded to Redskins)

In the QB-heavy '83 draft in which John Elway went No. 1, Dickerson was the second player chosen. He made an immediate impact for the Rams, leading the league in rushing yards in his first two seasons while setting an NFL record of 2,105 yards in 1984. A trade with the Seahawks put the Oilers into the No. 9 spot, where they selected offensive lineman Bruce Matthews. Matthews and Dickerson are both enshrined in the Hall of Fame, making this a win-win trade for both teams.

6. 1964 - Bears for Butkus

Bears receive: 1965 first-rounder (No. 3: LB Dick Butkus)

Steelers receive: 1964 second-rounder (No. 28: TE Jim Kelly), 1964 fourth-rounder (No. 51: DE Ben McGee)

Talk about foresight: The Bears actually acquired the pick used to get Butkus during the previous year's draft, and it just so happened that Butkus, a Chicago native, was there for the taking. Chicago also owned the No. 4 pick in the 1965 draft and took running back Gale Sayers for one of the greatest team draft classes in league history.

5. 1978 - Oilers for Campbell

Oilers receive: 1978 first-rounder (No. 1: RB Earl Campbell)

Buccaneers receive: 1978 first-rounder (No. 17: QB Doug Williams), 1978 second-rounder (No. 44: OG Brett Moritz), 1979 third-rounder (No. 78: DE Reggie Lewis), 1979 fifth-rounder (No. 133: QB Chuck Fusina)

Trading up for the 1977 Heisman winner helped push the Oilers from perennial also-ran into contender, reaching consecutive AFC Championship Games. For the "Luv ya Blue" Oilers, Campbell produced one of the greatest sizzle reels in NFL history while leading the league in rushing his first three seasons. With Williams under center, the Buccaneers — just two years removed from 0-26 ignominy — reached the NFC Championship Game.

4. 1977 - Cowboys for Dorsett

Cowboys receive: 1977 first-rounder (No. 2: RB Tony Dorsett)

Seahawks receive: 1977 first-rounder (No. 14: OT Steve August), 1977 second-rounder (No. 30: OG Tom Lynch), 1977 second-rounder (No. 41: LB Terry Beeson), 1977 second-rounder (No. 54: Traded to Cowboys)

Believing that Dorsett was the missing piece to attaining a Lombardi Trophy, the Cowboys pulled off a blockbuster move to draft the player who would help the team become champions in his rookie season. When Dorsett retired, he was second on the NFL's all-time rushing yardage list behind Walter Payton. The Seahawks were entering their second year of existence and needed to continue to fill out the roster with capable players, and posted their first winning record a season later.

3. 1985 - 49ers for Rice

49ers receive: 1985 first-rounder (No. 16: WR Jerry Rice), 1985 third-rounder (No. 75: RB Ricky Moore)
Patriots receive: 1985 first-rounder (No. 28: C Trevor Matich), 1985 second-rounder (No. 56: DE Ben Thomas), 1985 third-rounder (No. 84: DB Audrey McMillian)

Talk about the rich getting richer. The defending Super Bowl champion 49ers — coming off one of the most dominant seasons in league history — made a bold move for a small-school receiver who would go on to be the greatest ever at his position. The Patriots didn't get much out of the selections they received from the 49ers, which might explain why New England went from appearing in the Super Bowl during the 1985 season to 1-15 five years later.

2. 2001 - Falcons for Vick

Falcons receive: 2001 first-rounder (No. 1: QB Michael Vick)
Chargers receive: 2001 first-rounder (No. 5: RB LaDainian Tomlinson), 2001 third-rounder (No. 67: CB Tay Cody), 2002 second-rounder (No. 48: WR Reche Caldwell), WR Tim Dwight

Having absolutely whiffed on the Leaf selection three years prior, the Chargers were once again in dire need of a quarterback. So were the Falcons, who were willing to deliver a bounty of picks and players to the Chargers to move up four spots for Vick, who was one of the league's most exciting players until a suspension for his role in a dog fighting operation derailed his career. The Chargers, meanwhile, had a draft that would transform the franchise into a contender during the first decade of the 2000s. After taking Tomlinson, the Chargers used the first pick of the second round to draft Drew Brees, who one day will join Tomlinson in the Hall of Fame.

1. 1999 - Saints for Williams

Saints receive: 1999 first-rounder (No. 5: RB Ricky Williams)
Redskins receive: 1999 first-rounder (No. 12: Traded to Bears), 1999 third-rounder (No. 71: Traded to Bears), 1999 fourth-rounder (No. 107: LB Nate Stimson), 1999 fifth-rounder (No. 144: Traded to Bears), 1999 sixth-rounder (No. 179: Traded to Broncos), 1999 seventh-rounder (No. 218: Traded to Broncos), 2000 first-rounder (No. 2: LB LaVar Arrington), 2000 third-rounder (No. 64: CB Lloyd Harrison)

How the Redskins didn't turn this bounty of picks into an early-2000s dynasty is one of pro football's great mysteries. Washington did utilize that No. 12 pick in a trade with the Bears to move into the No. 7 spot to take Champ Bailey, who should be enshrined into the Hall of Fame in the very near future. Williams didn't live up to expectations in New Orleans, but the Saints did manage to get two first-rounders from the Dolphins in a trade in 2002. This trade is also one of the big "what ifs?" in Bengals history. Cincinnati balked at the opportunity to take all of Mike Ditka's picks, and instead drafted quarterback Akili Smith in one of the greatest draft boondoggles of all time.

NFL wants investigation of “widespread fraud” in concussion settlement

By Mike Florio
Pro Football Talk
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Amid claims that the NFL unreasonably is delaying the payment of claims in the concussion settlement, the NFL is fighting back. Aggressively.

The league on Friday requested the appointment of a Special Investigator, who would explore allegedly “widespread fraud” in the effort to secure payment.

“We want to ensure that players and their families receive the benefits they deserve,” attorney Brad Karp said in a statement released by the NFL on Friday. “Fraud threatens the integrity of the settlement and the prompt payment of legitimate claims. There is significant evidence of fraudulent claims being advanced by unscrupulous doctors, lawyers and even players. The appointment of a Special Investigator was specifically contemplated in the agreement, and will provide important additional tools to assist the independent, court-appointed administrators in identifying fraudulent claims and related misconduct.”

It’s a strong allegation, suggesting not simply that former players are accidentally under the impression that they have one of the qualifying conditions but that they are deliberately trying to fall within the confines of the concussion settlement — and that others are aiding and abetting the process.

The court papers submitted in connection with the request for a Special Investigator include specific allegations of fraud. The league contends that one law firm representing over 100 former players “coached” them on the procedure for answering questions during neuropsychological evaluations and “directed at least one retired player to show up for his evaluation hungover and on Valium.” The league also claims that a firm representing more than 50 class members secured a higher fee if the former players were diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease (which results in a higher recovery under the concussion settlement), and that “virtually all” of those players were evaluated by a pediatric neurologist, who diagnosed 75 percent of them with Alzheimer’s.

The league also alleges that evidence exists of specific coaching of former players to help them “beat” the psychological testing in order to secure payment, that one neuropsychologist claimed to have spent, on two different occasions, 130 hours evaluating players in the same 24-hour period, and that 21 medial reports submitted by the same neuropsychologist showed identical vital signs for each of the players.

The paperwork submitted by the NFL further includes allegations of former players directly committing fraud. Consider this quote regarding an unidentified (for now) former player: “A Retired NFL Football Player diagnosed with purported Alzheimer’s Disease in June 2016 at the age of 54 claimed that he had stopped coaching football by the time of his evaluation due to his severe cognitive impairment. Yet, subsequent to his evaluation, the same retired player participated in multiple videotaped interviews in which he discussed — without any apparent difficulty — his current head coaching duties, and as recently as October 2017, was interviewed by reporters about his ongoing role as a head football coach.” (There may be enough clues in there for a person with advanced Google skills to figure out who the former player may be.)

Here's another: "A Retired NFL Football Player diagnosed with purported Alzheimer's Disease in July 2015 at the age of 39 claimed to have significant cognitive impairments that made him incapable of even doing errands without assistance. Yet, information available from public sources shows that the same retired player is the head coach of a minor league football team, a developmental football coach and a motivational speaker. When that player submitted a form to the Claims Administrator asking for his employment history subsequent to his diagnosis, he concealed his coaching position."

And another: "A Retired NFL Football Player diagnosed with purported Level 2 Neurocognitive Impairment (i.e., moderate dementia) in December 2016 at the age of 32 reported that he was unemployed, had significant issues with memory and completing tasks and frequently would go into a room and forget why he was there. That retired player concealed that he was working as a registered wealth manager for a large investment firm."

And another: "A Retired NFL Football Player diagnosed with purported Level 2 Neurocognitive Impairment (i.e., moderate dementia) in January 2017 at the age of 32 claimed that he was unable to work in any capacity due to his cognitive impairment. Videos available online show that same player giving lengthy and fully coherent motivational speeches, often without the assistance of notes, on numerous occasions subsequent to the supposed diagnosis."

The 20-page submission from the NFL, undoubtedly directed to the court of public opinion as much as it is to the court presiding over the settlement, paints a troubling picture of alleged fraud, countering the argument that the NFL, faced with unlimited potential liability, is dragging its feet and contesting claims under the notion that every single penny saved becomes a penny earned. Whether it's the NFL unfairly opposing claims or specific former players (and/or those who stand to make money from them) unfairly trying to get a piece of a pie that will be as big as it needs to be, these problems need to be fully explored and resolved. Whether it's the NFL's fault, specific former players' fault, or both, this complication delays the efforts of truly eligible former players to get the money they deserve.

Bruce Arians will accept a broadcasting gig soon

By Mike Florio
Pro Football Talk
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Someone had better get ready to hit the bleep button.

Former Cardinals coach Bruce Arians, who has a reputation for colorful (and at times profane) language, will become an in-game analyst during the 2018 football season.

Via Bob McManaman of the Arizona Republic, Arians currently is weighing two offers. He expects to make a decision within the next two weeks.

Unless one of the offers is from ESPN for Monday Night Football, Arians will likely choose between becoming one of the Sunday afternoon color analysts on FOX or CBS.

Arians retired from the Cardinals after five seasons as the team's head coach. He was named coach of the year twice, both as head coach of the Cardinals and in 2012, when he served as interim head coach of the Colts, while former coach Chuck Pagano battled leukemia.

If Arians applies the same candor to broadcasting that he used when coaching, things could get very interesting in the booth — and during production meetings with coaches and players that Arians possibly will be criticizing in unvarnished fashion.

Richie Incognito asks to be released from his contract

By Mike Florio
Pro Football Talk
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Richie Incognito wants out of the contract he just signed last month.

Incognito, who re-did his deal with the Bills on March 15, only to say he was firing his agents and then say he was retiring, now says he wants the Bills to cut him.

“Please release me from my contract,” Incognito wrote on Twitter, in a message directed at the Bills. “Contact Athletes First for further updates. Thank you for your service.”

That he’s telling the Bills to contact Athletes First is odd, given that he fired them as his agents over Twitter 10 days ago.

What seems to have happened is that Athletes First negotiated a new contract for Incognito, he now wishes he hadn’t signed that contract, he knows he can’t get out of the contract by retiring because then he’d have to pay back his signing bonus, and now he wants the Bills to cut him so he doesn’t have to pay his signing bonus.

If the Bills don’t grant his wish, Incognito can un-retire and show up to the Bills’ offseason program, which starts tomorrow. Things could get even more interesting then.

Aqib Talib on landing in LA: I wanted to be comfortable

By Lakisha Jackson

NFL.com

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When Aqib Talib found out he might play for a different team in 2018, he wanted to make sure he landed somewhere that was familiar.

That was either New England, where he had success with Bill Belichick, or Los Angeles to play for his former defensive coordinator Wade Phillips.

"Well, I'm in the later half of my career and I just wanted to be comfortable. Wherever I went, I wanted to be comfortable and there was no time in the NFL where I was more comfortable playing football than with Wade Phillips," Talib told the team website. "He's like a guru at putting guys in position to succeed. So if I was going to go somewhere I wanted to be comfortable and I'm definitely comfortable here in L.A."

Talib racked up 71 tackles, 25 passes defensed, six interceptions and one Super Bowl ring while playing under Phillips for two years in Denver.

"He is a future Hall of Fame D-coordinator. So, anytime you get to share a meeting room with him everyday, you're going to gain knowledge. He just taught me a lot about being a Pro, how to prepare for the game, and using my strengths on the field. That's a huge part of the reason why I wanted to come play for him."

The five-time Pro Bowler is now part of a defense that will feature another newcomer in cornerback Marcus Peters, safety Lamarcus Joyner and defensive tackle Aaron Donald. These names alone are enough to make the Rams serious Super Bowl contenders in 2018 and that's enough to get Talib looking forward to the season.

"Man, I'm very excited just to be in L.A., the weather, just to be back with coach Wade and be with a nice team like this. This a great team, a great organization," he said. "So a competitive team to be a part of a competitive team and make this run towards the Super Bowl is a blessing."