

FOOTBALL 2014

# FACES *of* CHANGE

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# A MATTER OF TRUST

## RG3, Gruden need an open relationship to succeed

**N**ew Washington Redskins coach Jay Gruden uttered the magic word while describing Robert “SuperBob” Griffin’s offensive struggles in the preseason game against the Baltimore Ravens.

“He’s got to have a trust factor that the drop is going to match the receiver’s depth and all that stuff,” Gruden said.



THOM LOVERRO

“He’s got to let some things fly. He’s just a little bit hesitant right now, which is normal with some new concepts.”

There it is. Trust.

It’s a word that has been thrown around Redskins Park over the years, with little evidence of it.

Bust — now that’s a word we’ve also heard within this organization, with lots of evidence of that word.

But trust? That’s been a rare, but sought after commodity.

If Gruden and SuperBob can find it, this may just work.

Trust was Jim Zorn’s favorite word.

“It’s a great working relationship of trust,” Zorn said of his relationship with his starting quarterback, Jason Campbell.

Talking about a loss in the 2008 season opener against the New York Giants, Zorn told reporters about a confrontation with Campbell on the sidelines. “One of the things I screamed in his face was, ‘Don’t you know that we have to trust you? ... I’ve got to be able to trust you to come off that guy and go to the next guy who’s open.’”

Does this sound familiar?

I doubt if Jim Zorn and Jason



PRESTON KERES/SPECIAL TO THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Redskins coach Jay Gruden said it’s his job to get the most out of quarterback Robert Griffin III and there needs to be an open relationship and trust between the two of them.

Campbell had much trust left in their spirit when they both left Redskins Park.

Who knows when the “trust” went out of the relationship between SuperBob and Mike Shanahan? Most would point to the Seattle playoff debacle, when the quarterback was still on the field limping around on one leg.

But it may have happened when

SuperBob — reportedly over his objections, despite his knee injury the game before against Baltimore — sat out the Cleveland game in 2012, and instead watched Kirk Cousins lead the team to an impressive 38-21 win.

Kirk Cousins is a big trust problem with SuperBob — no fault of Cousins, who seems to trust everyone — but his

existence on the roster feeds the notion, real or imagined, that the organization is hedging its bets on SuperBob’s future as an NFL quarterback.

Trust?

“Trust is hard to come by,” the great philosopher Eminem said. “That’s why my circle is small and tight. I’m kind of funny about making new friends.”

Gruden needs to crack that circle.

He was asked in March on the NFL Network about building that trust.

“Start by being honest and open with him and not do things behind his back,” Gruden said. “I don’t know what happened last year with coach Shanahan, and when the relationship went south and if it did, or maybe the media blew it up. But obviously he’s not here anymore.

“Now it’s my job to get the most out of Robert and I honestly believe that there has to be an open relationship between quarterback and coach-playcaller ... I welcome that type of atmosphere and hopefully it will work out.”

Honest, open — this is not the modus operandi at Redskins Park.

If we are to believe SuperBob, the early days of the Gruden marriage has been bliss. We all remember that July interview with FoxSports.com, when SuperBob talked about the honeymoon.

“What I think is going to help us most this year is that everybody in that building is going to be for us being successful and for us winning,” SuperBob said. “There are no ulterior motives. That will be great. Jay has been phenomenal. [General manager] Bruce Allen has done great job of getting the right guys in that locker room. I tip my hat to them. They have given us everything we need to be successful. We’re going to work our butts off for them.”

Yet, still, nearly two months later, Gruden is talking about trust with his quarterback.

“This is going to be process,” Gruden told us as training camp opened. “It’s going to take a little time.”

He was answering a question about SuperBob adapting to a new offense.

But he was talking about trust — the magic word — as well.

• Thom Loverro is co-host of “The Sports Fix,” noon to 2 p.m. daily on ESPN 980 radio and espn980.com.

“I honestly believe that there has to be an open relationship between quarterback and coach-playcaller ... I welcome that type of atmosphere and hopefully it will work out.” — **Jay Gruden**

# Norman Rockwell and Other American Icons

These are people that influenced my life in New Rochelle, NY where Norman Rockwell lived for 25 years and where my family lived for 3 generations.

We all knew and loved the man in spite of a book trashing him in another attempt to destroy everything that is great about America! I am writing a book with a rebuttal that includes the untold stories about many others that shaped our country.

Did you ever wonder what happened to over 100 signed letters from FDR, that Harvard wanted for their archives?

Most of these people I met in my parents living room: Dr. Norman Vincent Peale, James Cash Penney, Lowell Thomas, Charles E. Wilson (Chairman of GE, FDR appointed him head of the War Production Board WW2), Carrie Chapman Catt (Woman Suffragist), Dr. James E. West (Chief Scout Executive, Boy Scouts of America), William Frank Snyder (FDR's lawyer and close friend, who also had polio, wrote his will and handled his financial affairs including Mrs. Delano, complaining to my mother: "The Roosevelt's are using my pool!"). "Buffalo Bob" Smith (It's Howdy Doody Time!). C.L. Lowes: (My grandfather started

BOND BREAD. Buying trainloads of flour for 50 plants, he waited for the price of flour to go UP so farmers could make a fair profit... he was unique! General Baking Co became General Host..."Twinkies") Richard Ellis (my brother, commercial Real Estate) and many others!

After my father died, Dr. Peale said the eulogy and inspired me to increase water properties back to what it was before "The Flood" (living to Biblical ages). After "The Flood" they didn't live as long!

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# REDSKINS SCHEDULE

**Sun., Sept. 7  
at Texans  
1 p.m., Fox**



Welcome to 2014, Robert Griffin III. Meet No. 1 overall pick Jadeveon Clowney. Washington's offense will have its hands full with Clowney and perennial All-Pro J.J. Watt, but the Texans aren't nearly as scary on the other side of the ball. RB Arian Foster is once again battling an injury and Ryan Fitzpatrick is set to take over at quarterback for new coach Bill O'Brien.

**Sun., Sept. 14  
vs. Jaguars  
1 p.m., CBS**



A meeting between two of the worst teams in 2013 could go a long way toward setting the tone for Washington in 2014. Wins in the first two games of the season would give the Redskins valuable momentum entering a tough three-game stretch, while a loss to the hapless Jaguars could set back their season before it ever really gets going.

**Sun., Sept. 21  
at Eagles  
1 p.m., Fox**



Not surprisingly, Washington's first divisional game will revolve around its biggest offseason acquisition: WR DeSean Jackson, and his return to Philadelphia. The Eagles abruptly released their star wideout this offseason because of alleged gang ties, and the Redskins happily scooped him up. Given the nature of his departure, Jackson will be determined to have a big game here.

**Thurs., Sept. 25  
vs. Giants  
8:25 p.m.,  
CBS/NFLN**



Washington will play three prime-time games in five weeks, beginning here against New York. Reports out of East Rutherford say QB Eli Manning has not looked at all comfortable in new offensive coordinator Ben McAdoo's fast-paced, West Coast offense. The Redskins' secondary will look to use that to its advantage and turn Manning's indecisiveness into interceptions, of which Manning threw a career-high 27 last year.

**Mon., Oct. 6  
vs. Seahawks  
8:30 p.m., ESPN**



Hosting Seattle will bring back unsettling memories for Redskins fans. The last time the Seahawks were in town, Washington led 14-0 at the end of the first quarter in the 2012 playoffs. Then the lead vanished, Griffin's knee buckled and an irreparable rift began to form between coach and quarterback. This time around, Griffin will have other concerns, particularly whether Washington's undersized receivers can create separation against a physical Seattle secondary.

**Sun., Oct. 12  
at Cardinals  
4:25 p.m., Fox**



The Redskins have racked up more wins in franchise history against the Cardinals (75) than any team except Philadelphia, including eight straight wins dating to 2000. But Arizona is no pushover. The Cardinals finished 10-6 in a brutal NFC West last season and feature two of the best young cornerbacks in the NFL: rising star Patrick Peterson and second-year dynamo Tyrann Mathieu, whose torn ACL should be fully healthy in time for this game.

**Sun., Oct. 19  
vs. Titans  
1 p.m., CBS**



The Redskins will lean on their pass rush throughout the season, but it will be particularly important against third-year QB Jake Locker, who is coming off a foot injury and has historically struggled against the blitz. Look for defensive coordinator Jim Haslett to dial up the pressure a little bit more than usual with hopes of forcing a few game-changing turnovers — and giving Washington momentum heading into its Monday night meeting with Dallas.

**Mon., Oct. 27  
at Cowboys  
8:30 p.m., ESPN**



The Redskins would like nothing more than to beat up on the Cowboys in Dallas in front of a national television audience. And perhaps nobody is more excited about that possibility than offseason acquisition Jason Hatcher. After recording a career-high 11 sacks for Dallas last season, the defensive end has long been looking forward to wreaking havoc against his former team. "It's going to be a little strange," he said, "but it's going to be very, very, very exciting."

**Sun., Nov. 2  
at Vikings  
1 p.m., Fox**



If there was one specific point at which Washington's 2013 season began spiraling out of control, it might have been a 34-27 loss in Minneapolis. The Redskins led 27-14 midway through the third quarter, surrendered 20 unanswered points and proceeded to lose their final seven games. This year's trip to Minnesota will end differently if the Redskins can score quickly and force the Vikings to throw late, thereby limiting Adrian Peterson's carries.

**Sun., Nov. 16  
vs. Buccaneers  
1 p.m., Fox**



The Redskins return from their bye week to face a team in transition, one with both a new coach (Lovie Smith) and new quarterback (Josh McCown). Tampa Bay's strength lies in its defense, anchored in the middle by draft-bust-turned-star Gerald McCoy and LB Lavonte David. Between 6-foot-5 receivers Vincent Jackson and Mike Evans, the Bucs could also pose distinct matchup problems for Washington's corners.

**Sun., Nov. 23  
at 49ers  
4:25 p.m., CBS**



The Redskins will face this NFC West juggernaut for the third time in four years, this time at brand-new Levi's Stadium in Santa Clara. Since Jim Harbaugh took over as coach in 2011, the 49ers have won at least 11 games each season and reached three straight conference championship games. Facing one of the league's elite defenses, Washington's offense will need to be in top form to pull out a win here.

**Sun., Nov. 30  
at Colts  
1 p.m., Fox**



Griffin and Colts QB Andrew Luck, the No. 2 and No. 1 overall picks in the 2012 draft, will meet for the first time. Though Griffin won the Rookie of the Year award, Luck has started every game in each of his first two seasons and twice led Indianapolis to the playoffs. The game will also be a homecoming of sorts for WR Pierre Garcon, who left the Colts for Washington in 2012.

**Sun., Dec. 7  
vs. Rams  
1 p.m., Fox**



The dynamics of this matchup took a turn late in the preseason, when QB Sam Bradford tore his left ACL for the second time in a year. The Rams are expected to roll with longtime backup Shaun Hill and their season could be long over by this point, making this a winnable (and perhaps must-win) game for the Redskins before their season-ending divisional stretch.

**Sun., Dec. 14  
at Giants  
1 p.m., Fox**



The Redskins will once again finish the season with a string of NFC East opponents, giving them an opportunity to make a late push for a divisional title or, at the very least, diminish a rival's playoff hopes. It starts in New York, where Washington's 2013 season ended with a thud before Mike Shanahan's dismissal the following morning.

**Sat., Dec. 20  
vs. Eagles  
TBD, NFLN/CBS**



This rare Saturday game is slated to be the first half of a doubleheader, but the NFL reserves the right to swap it with the current nightcap between the 49ers and Chargers. Washington's record, and Griffin's season, at this point will likely determine if that switch is made. If both are solid, this has all the makings of a late-season scorefest with playoff implications.

**Sun., Dec. 28  
vs. Cowboys  
1 p.m., Fox**



The NFC East has often been decided in the final weeks of the season — or, in the case of 2012, this same final game against the Cowboys at home. But even if the division is out of reach for the Redskins, there are few games they'd rather win. A victory over their nemesis in Week 17 could help wash away a disappointing season and send the Redskins into the offseason on a high note.

— Compiled by Tom Schad

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# OUR BEST GUESS

## ZAC BOYER

**REDSKINS RECORD:** 6-10  
**OFFENSIVE MVP:** Pierre Garcon  
**DEFENSIVE MVP:** Ryan Kerrigan  
**IMPACT ROOKIE:** Trent Murphy  
**BIGGEST SURPRISE:** A top-10 defense  
**BIGGEST DISAPPOINTMENT:** Jordan Reed's health  
**NFC PLAYOFF TEAMS:** Eagles, Packers, Saints, Seahawks, Bears, 49ers  
**AFC PLAYOFF TEAMS:** Patriots, Steelers, Colts, Broncos, Ravens, Chargers  
**NFC, AFC CHAMPS:** Saints, Broncos  
**SUPER BOWL WINNER:** Broncos  
**NFL MVP:** Drew Brees, Saints  
**OFFENSIVE ROOKIE OF YEAR:** Sammy Watkins, Bills  
**DEFENSIVE ROOKIE OF YEAR:** Jadeveon Clowney, Texans

## TODD DYBAS

**REDSKINS RECORD:** 8-8  
**OFFENSIVE MVP:** Alfred Morris  
**DEFENSIVE MVP:** Ryan Kerrigan  
**IMPACT ROOKIE:** Bashaud Breeland  
**BIGGEST SURPRISE:** Robert Griffin III's positive performance  
**BIGGEST DISAPPOINTMENT:** Defensive secondary continues to have problems  
**NFC PLAYOFF TEAMS:** Seahawks, Cardinals, Saints, Panthers, Packers, Eagles  
**AFC PLAYOFF TEAMS:** Patriots, Bengals, Ravens, Colts, Texans, Broncos  
**NFC, AFC CHAMPS:** Seahawks, Colts  
**SUPER BOWL WINNER:** Seahawks  
**NFL MVP:** Russell Wilson, Seahawks  
**OFFENSIVE ROOKIE OF YEAR:** Brandin Cooks, Saints  
**DEFENSIVE ROOKIE OF YEAR:** Jadeveon Clowney, Texans

## TOM SCHAD

**REDSKINS RECORD:** 6-10  
**OFFENSIVE MVP:** Alfred Morris  
**DEFENSIVE MVP:** Keenan Robinson  
**IMPACT ROOKIE:** Trent Murphy  
**BIGGEST SURPRISE:** Kirk Cousins is traded before the deadline  
**BIGGEST DISAPPOINTMENT:** Jordan Reed suffers another concussion and misses several games down the stretch  
**NFC PLAYOFF TEAMS:** Seahawks, 49ers, Lions, Eagles, Saints, Falcons  
**AFC PLAYOFF TEAMS:** Broncos, Chiefs, Patriots, Colts, Bengals, Ravens  
**NFC, AFC CHAMPS:** Seahawks, Colts  
**SUPER BOWL WINNER:** Seahawks  
**NFL MVP:** Jamaal Charles, Chiefs  
**OFFENSIVE ROOKIE OF YEAR:** Bishop Sankey, Titans  
**DEFENSIVE ROOKIE OF YEAR:** Kyle Fuller, Bears

## THOM LOVERRO

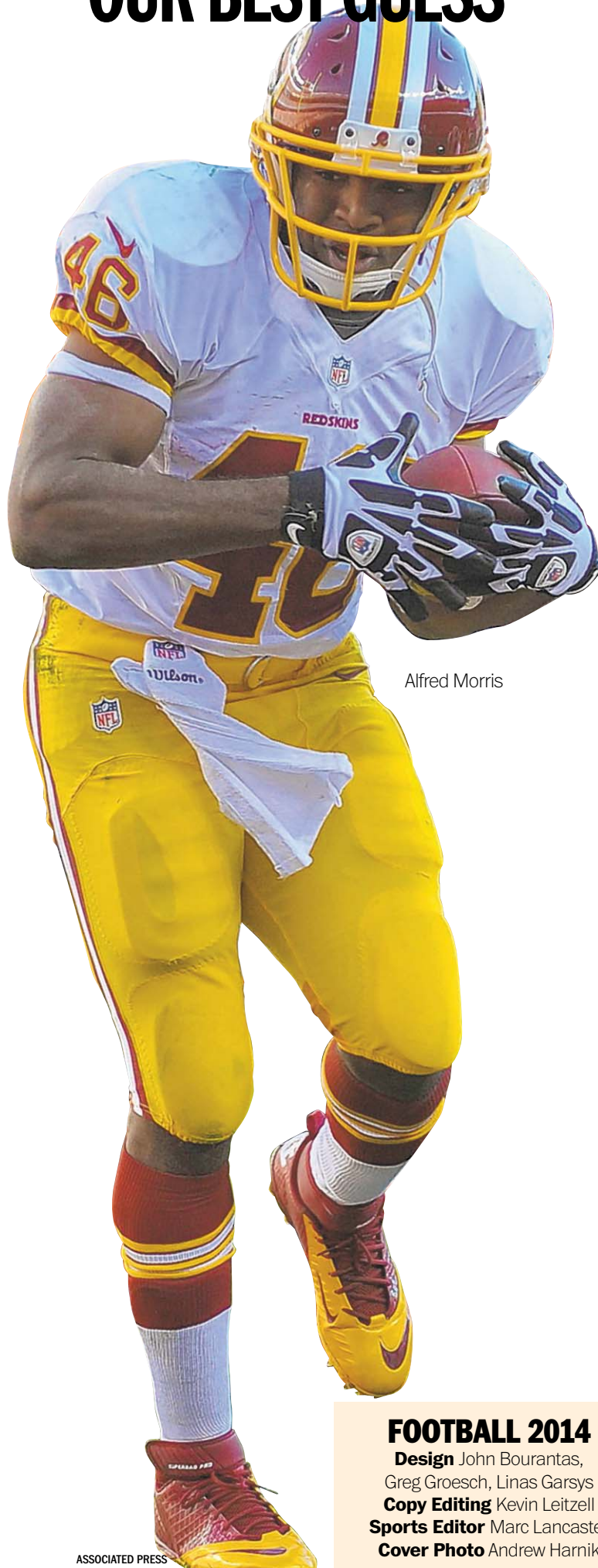
**REDSKINS RECORD:** 9-7  
**OFFENSIVE MVP:** Robert Griffin III  
**DEFENSIVE MVP:** DeAngelo Hall  
**IMPACT ROOKIE:** Trent Murphy  
**BIGGEST SURPRISE:** Bacarri Rambo  
**BIGGEST DISAPPOINTMENT:** Ryan Clark  
**NFC PLAYOFF TEAMS:** Eagles, Packers, Saints, Seahawks, 49ers, Cardinals  
**AFC PLAYOFF TEAMS:** Patriots, Ravens, Broncos, Colts, Chargers, Bengals  
**NFC, AFC CHAMPS:** Eagles, Ravens  
**SUPER BOWL WINNER:** Eagles  
**NFL MVP:** LeSean McCoy, Eagles  
**OFFENSIVE ROOKIE OF YEAR:** Brandin Cooks, Saints  
**DEFENSIVE ROOKIE OF YEAR:** Jadeveon Clowney, Texans

## DERON SNYDER

**REDSKINS RECORD:** 7-9  
**OFFENSIVE MVP:** Alfred Morris  
**DEFENSIVE MVP:** Jason Hatcher  
**IMPACT ROOKIE:** Bashaud Breeland  
**BIGGEST SURPRISE:** Defense goes from 30th in scoring last season to top-10 status  
**BIGGEST DISAPPOINTMENT:** Robert Griffin III fails to regain the magic of his rookie season  
**NFC PLAYOFF TEAMS:** Eagles, Packers, Saints, Seahawks, 49ers, Bears  
**AFC PLAYOFF TEAMS:** Patriots, Bengals, Colts, Broncos, Chargers, Steelers  
**NFC, AFC CHAMPS:** 49ers, Broncos  
**SUPER BOWL WINNER:** 49ers  
**NFL MVP:** Drew Brees, Saints  
**OFFENSIVE ROOKIE OF YEAR:** Brandin Cooks, Saints  
**DEFENSIVE ROOKIE OF YEAR:** Jadeveon Clowney, Texans

## MATT PALLISTER

**REDSKINS RECORD:** 7-9  
**OFFENSIVE MVP:** Alfred Morris  
**DEFENSIVE MVP:** Ryan Kerrigan  
**IMPACT ROOKIE:** Trent Murphy  
**BIGGEST SURPRISE:** Special teams becomes a strength  
**BIGGEST DISAPPOINTMENT:** DeSean Jackson fails to reach 1,000 yards  
**NFC PLAYOFF TEAMS:** Eagles, Packers, Bears, Saints, Seahawks, 49ers  
**AFC PLAYOFF TEAMS:** Patriots, Dolphins, Bengals, Steelers, Colts, Broncos  
**AFC, NFC CHAMPS:** Patriots, Saints  
**SUPER BOWL WINNER:** Patriots  
**NFL MVP:** Drew Brees, Saints  
**NFL OFFENSIVE ROOKIE OF YEAR:** Mike Evans, Buccaneers  
**NFL DEFENSIVE ROOKIE OF YEAR:** Khalil Mack, Raiders



Alfred Morris

## FOOTBALL 2014

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People know about the laws of physics, but did



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mankind's attempts to rule the earth and its people have consistently contradicted a *natural law of behavior!*

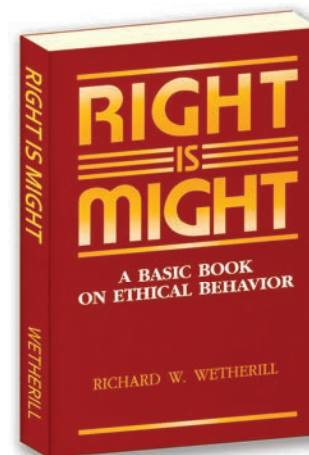
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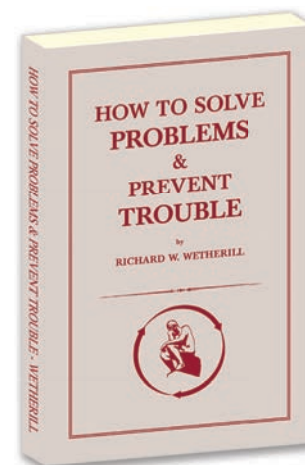
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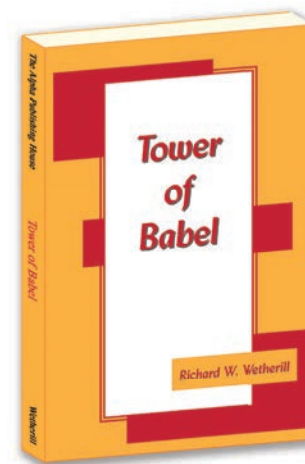
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# DRIVE TO BE A WINNER

## Unorthodox path led Jay Gruden out of his big brother's shadow to NFL

By ZAC BOYER

THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Just 350 yards separated Jon Gruden from proving a point to his younger brother, Jay, and as he made the turn down Old Saybrook Avenue, his feet pounding the pavement and sweat ringing the collar of his shirt, he began thinking of the most boastful, cavalier and, perhaps, crude way to turn back and deliver an I-told-you-so.

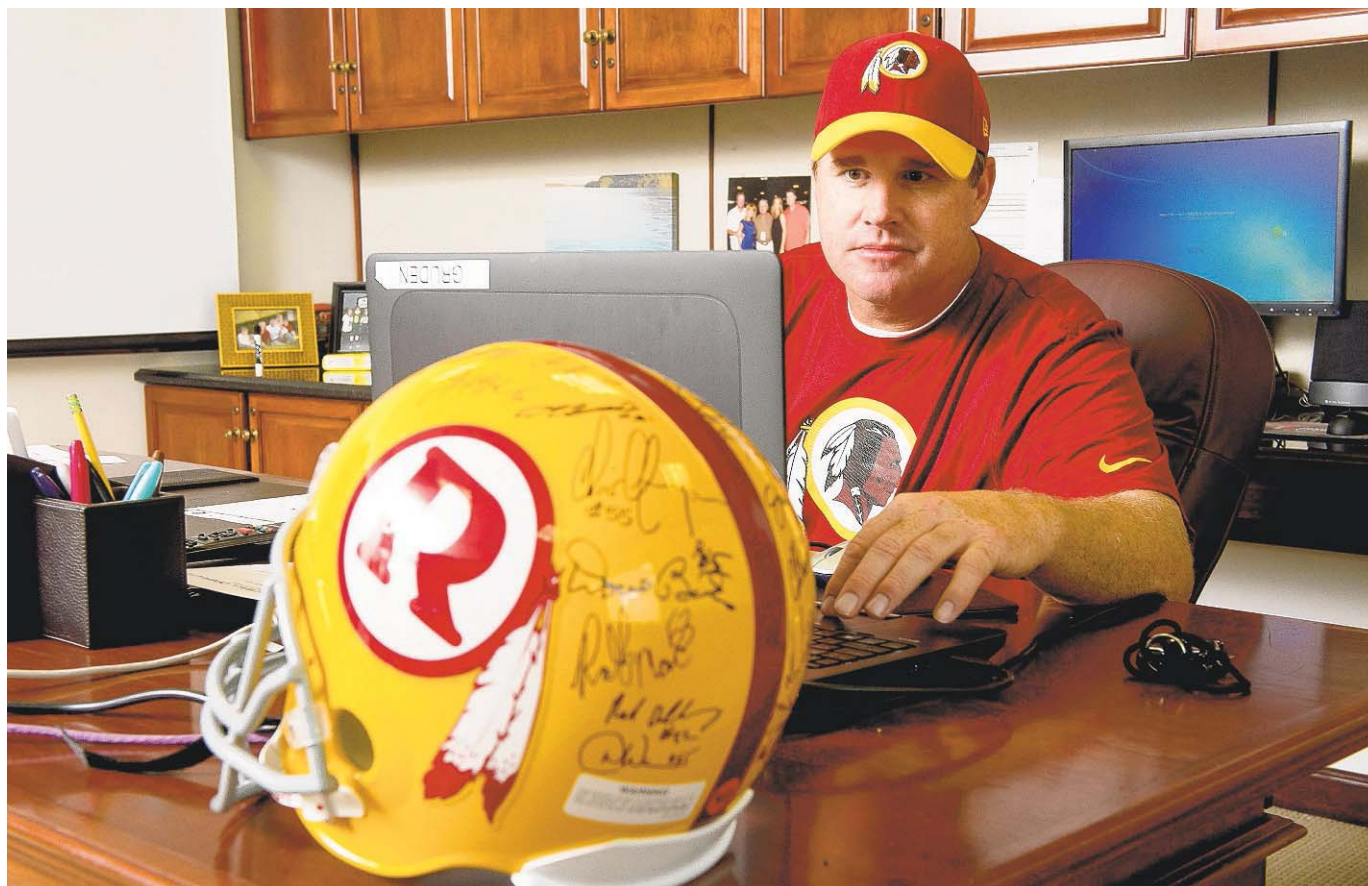
Jon was a workout warrior, a ham-and-egger, a driven athlete who tied tires to trees in the backyard of his family's home for target practice and, when that got mundane, would grab a sack of footballs, throw them alone on a field, wrangle them up and throw them back. He was committed to giving himself every advantage possible; a backup quarterback at Dayton, Jon took nearly everything personally, which is why, in his mind, nothing was ever done without purpose.

Jay was different. He had more innate talent than his older brother, which allowed him to take the path of least resistance — and often without repercussions. Tall and gangly as a kid, his teenage years showed mercy upon him in the way they can wreak havoc on others, gracing him with strength and stamina.

One day in the summer of 1983, Jon finally snapped. At his parents' home in Tampa, Florida, after completing his freshman year in college, he returned from a workout to find Jay, three and a half years younger, sitting on the couch in the living room and mindlessly staring at the television screen. Part of Jon's routine was running a lap around the neighborhood — 1.2 miles, a distance measured in those days by the odometer, not an app — and he challenged Jay to a race.

"I wanted to bury him," Jon recalls.

Off they went, counter-clockwise around the Carrollwood streets named for legendary golfers — Trevino Place and Nicklaus Circle and Palmer Drive — past the other low-slung houses and the droopy date palms and the towering slash pines,



ANDREW HARNIK/THE WASHINGTON TIMES

From the days he was throwing passes at Buccaneers practice as a youngster, to the records he set in high school, to the Arena League championship trophies he held high above his head, Jay Gruden finally gets his chance to be a head coach in the NFL with the Redskins.

lock-step with each other. There was no advantage as the brothers hung a left onto Casey Road, then one final left a tenth of a mile down onto Old Saybrook.

Their father, Jim, spotted the two in the distance. All of a sudden, Jay started getting closer. His stride lengthened. His brother looked helpless.

"Right about the halfway point, I had about a 20-yard lead, and then 40, and then I just ... killed him!" Jay says, the adrenaline still alive in his voice, the excitement lifting him out of his seat.

Jay danced in the driveway, his arms in the air like Rocky Balboa, his laughter between breaths delivering a mix of contentment and comeuppance.

"It crushed me," Jon says, a tinge of humility in his voice three decades later. "The guy did nothing all summer, and the college quarterback who worked out twice, three times a day — I got beat like a drum."

Jay has, for much of his life, lived in his older brother's shadow — first as a football player, now as a football coach. Parallels were hastily drawn in January, when Jay was hired by the Washington Redskins

to be their 29th coach, between his acceptance of such a job and the pedigree of his last name.

Yet Jay's path has been considerably more unorthodox than his brother's, almost to the extent that by endlessly tilling lower levels of football, he became the anti-Jon.

In the end, Jay's hope is that he will be remembered for one trait — one that, ironically, would again link the two in the sport's annals, one that Jon recognized on that humbling summer afternoon.

Jay wants to be a winner.

### A football education

The youngest of three boys, Jay was born in Tiffin, Ohio, a city of roughly 20,000 in the north-central part of the state that presents itself as a former glass- and porcelain-manufacturing center.

Jim, his wife, Kathy, and the two older Gruden boys, Jim Jr. and Jon, moved to the area in the late 1960s, when Jim became an assistant football coach at his alma mater, Heidelberg College.

Jay was born two years later, and two

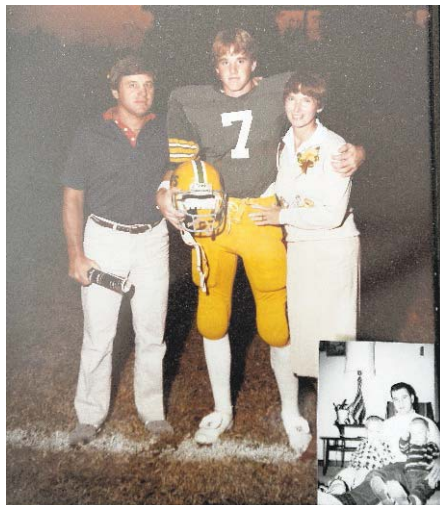
years after that, Jim got a job as an assistant at the University of Dayton, overseeing quarterbacks and running backs for coach John McVay. The Grudens moved south, then set off for Bloomington four years later when Jim joined the staff at Indiana. A 200-mile trek up U.S. Route 31 to South Bend followed three years later when Jim became the running backs coach at Notre Dame.

"I thought the moves were good for them because they learned how to get along with new people," Jim says. "It wasn't easy for them, because everywhere they went, they had to adjust and meet new people. But if you're an athlete, it's far easier."

No matter where the family settled, sports became a focus. Baseball was the boys' first love; in Bloomington, Jon and Jay were afforded a rare opportunity to play together on the same team. When they grew older, Jim and Kathy occasionally would take them to Riverfront Stadium for Cincinnati Reds games.

One night, the three boys were thrilled to find out they'd be able to take a





CLIFF MCBRIDE/SPECIAL TO THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Jay, shown with his father Jim and mother Kathy, played quarterback at Chamberlain High School in Tampa.

photograph with a Reds player. On the trip, they fantasized about getting the chance to meet Pete Rose, unaware that the player was not of their choosing, but of the team's.

When they finally made it to the upper deck, the site of the photo op, they were greeted by a wiry, fresh-faced, Venezuelan 20-something-year-old rookie — definitely not Rose. Bleached over time by the sun, the picture sits on a bookshelf in the Gruden family's living room, each of the three clearly disappointed, if not disgusted.

Leaning in behind them, arms outstretched? Dave Concepcion.

"Jay was just like, 'Where's Pete? Where's [Johnny] Bench?'" Jim says, smiling. "Davey Concepcion. They had never heard of him."

Jim Jr. was finishing up his senior year of high school — he would be named the valedictorian of his graduating class and became a radiologist — when the Grudens moved to South Bend in 1976. Their father slowly grew comfortable allowing his two younger boys to spend time around the Fighting Irish players, including, that first year, a quarterback named Joe Montana.

The benefit was two-fold: Jon and Jay would get a chance to spend time with their father while also learning that it was possible to adequately balance athletics and academics. Jay would spend many of his formative years in and around his father's teams, first with Notre Dame and, beginning in 1982, the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, ingratiating himself by taking a keen interest in his surroundings.

"He was probably one that took the most stuff in while watching and observing," recalls Doug Williams, the Bucs' starting quarterback in 1982 who went on to win Super Bowl XXII with the Redskins and is currently a Washington personnel executive.

"It wasn't like he was running up and down the sidelines and not paying attention to what was going on."

Tampa would mark the Gruden family's



CLIFF MCBRIDE/SPECIAL TO THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Jim Gruden proudly displays the photos representing the different phases in his son's football career on the wall in his living room.

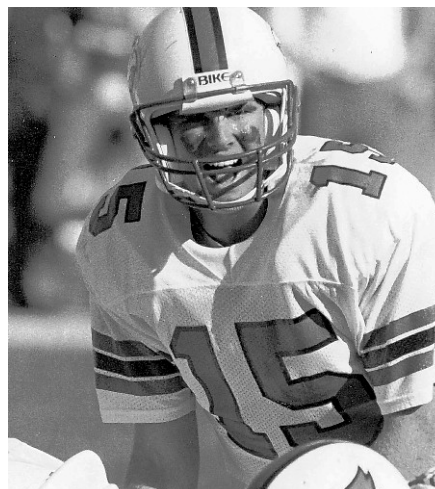
last stop, and Jay became a well-rounded athlete. He played baseball and football at Chamberlain High School — if not for the calendar, he would have pursued basketball, too — and threw for more than 1,600 yards and 14 touchdowns, according to the South Florida Sun-Sentinel.

In 1999, the St. Petersburg Times named Jay Gruden one of the 99 best high school football players in Hillsborough County history.

"He wasn't the best player on the field, but he was the kind of guy who did all the things right," said Tino Martinez, the longtime first baseman for the New York Yankees who played baseball against Jay at rival Jefferson High School in Tampa. "He wasn't a real rah-rah guy. He was just a quiet guy who did his thing the right way and played to win and played hard."

Gruden's football accolades drew the advances of Bobby Bowden and Florida State, but intrigued by the possibility of immediate playing time, Gruden instead accepted a scholarship offer to Louisville. The school had just hired Howard Schnellenberger, who righted a sinking ship at Miami and ran an appealing pro-style offense.

The Cardinals were awful his first three seasons, going a combined 8-24-1, with the lowlight a crushing hit Gruden took in a game against Florida State in 1986, his sophomore season. Two rushing defenders sandwiched his left leg as he dropped back to pass; the blow destroyed the ACL, the MCL and the cartilage in Gruden's knee,



Gruden threw for 2,605 yards and 17 touchdowns to lead Louisville to an 8-3 record during his senior season.

but he did not redshirt, returned for the opener the following season and threw four touchdown passes in a 42-40 victory over Tulane.

"I thought they tore [the leg] all the way off," Schnellenberger said earlier this year. "I didn't think he'd ever play again, but he came back."

Louisville went 8-3 during Gruden's senior season, finishing the year with a six-game win streak. He completed 58.6 percent of his passes for 2,605 yards, 17 touchdowns and 18 interceptions and figured, surely, a professional career was next.

It wasn't. Instead, Gruden's NFL career

was limited to a few days in the Miami Dolphins' training camp, where he was just another quarterback behind Dan Marino. He was quickly released, ending his shot at playing at the highest level.

Jim Gruden, fired with the rest of the Buccaneers' coaching staff in 1984, was a scout for the San Francisco 49ers during his son's senior season. He didn't even recommend signing Jay because his team had Montana and Steve Young at quarterback, but he still finds it curious that nobody else would give him a shot.

A degree in communications in hand, Jay Gruden thought he'd use it toward some kind of broadcast career, perhaps journalism. But having his one passion ripped away motivated him another way: If he couldn't play, he'd coach.

"It was the only thing I knew, football," Gruden says. "I wasn't a great student. I couldn't see myself selling insurance or running a business. I know football. I like football. I love the game. It interests me. I felt like I was good at it, both from the Xs and Os and from playing it. I knew it was what I wanted to do."

### Dream takes a detour

The cover of this year's edition of the Orlando Predators' playbook has a photo of Jay Gruden, in his No. 7 jersey, leaning into the huddle, barking out a play.

"I wanted people to know, and I still do, that the head coach of the Washington

» see **GRUDEN** | 10

## GRUDEN

From page 9

Redskins was once the head coach of the Orlando Predators — and a player — so it makes these guys believe, too,” says current Predators coach Rob Keefe.

Rarely does a summer job turn into a 17-year career, but when Gruden returned home to Tampa following the 1991 season, his second as a student assistant at Louisville, he needed to find a way to make money.

The Pittsburgh Gladiators, a team in something called the Arena Football League, announced they were moving to the new Florida Suncoast Dome in St. Petersburg. That piqued Gruden’s interest, and he was sold when he noted the schedule lasted from the first week of June to the first week of August.

It wasn’t quite the game he loved, but the game he loved hadn’t particularly loved him back.

“It paid less than college coaches but more than high school coaches,” Schnellenberger says. “He endured.”

Behind Gruden, the renamed Tampa Bay Storm went 8-2 and won ArenaBowl V, with Gruden throwing for five touchdowns and rushing for another. He returned the following season, and again, and again, playing six seasons in all for the Storm — and winning four championships.

“He wasn’t the flashiest quarterback, but he was deceptive and solid and won,” says Pat O’Hara, the quarterback of the rival Orlando Predators at the time. “He was just the best quarterback in the league, and he got it done each week. He played hurt. He led his team. People just believed when they were around him.”

Gruden had settled into a routine with the Storm, which, understandably, kept him on the payroll year-round after his first championship season. His wife, Sherry, got a full-time job in marketing for the Buccaneers — “and we had insurance, so we were good,” Gruden jokes.

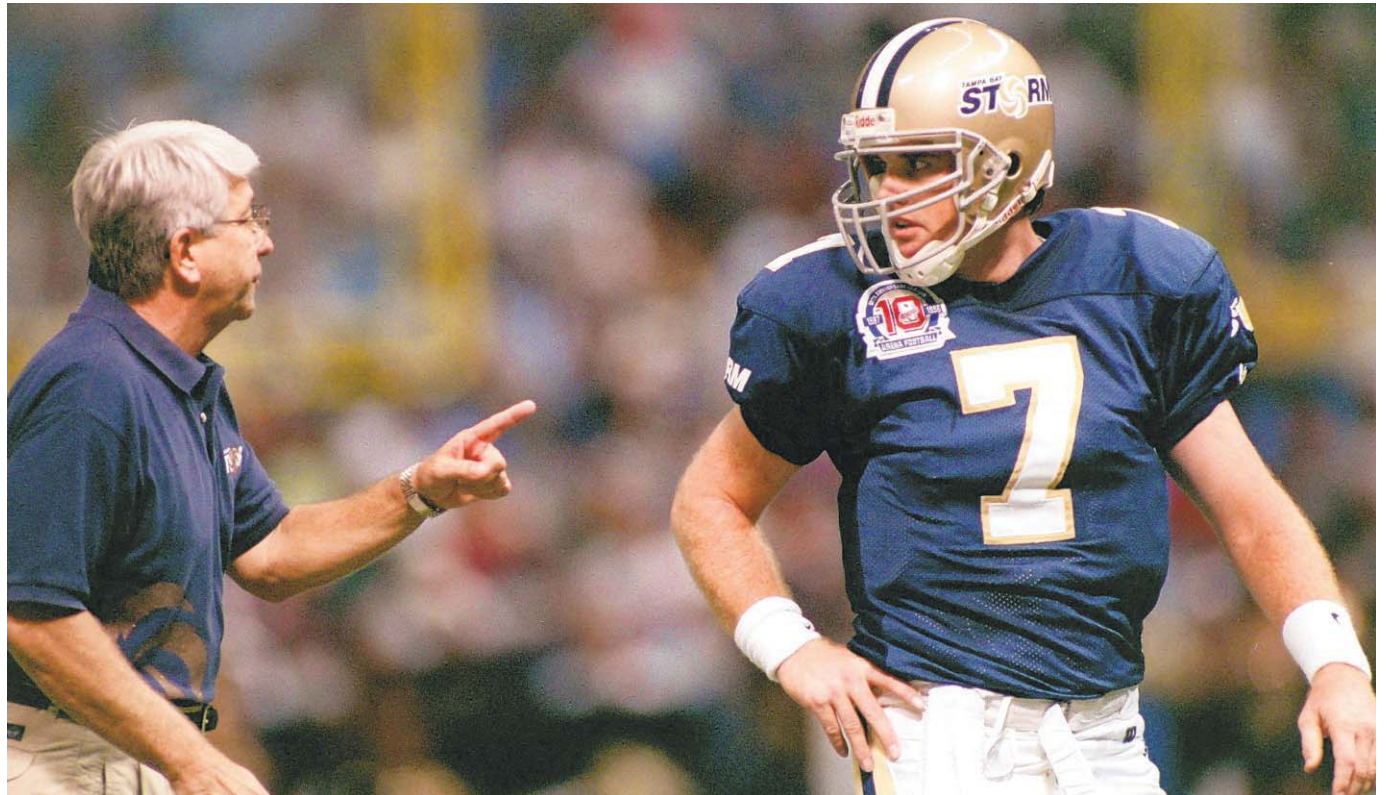
Good can always be better, and after the birth of his oldest son, JJ, Gruden had a decision to make. He was offered the opportunity to be the offensive coordinator of the AFL’s Nashville Kats — and with it, a guaranteed salary that would have been commensurate with that of a full-time, championship-winning quarterback.

Gruden was concerned about his knee — specifically, the extra stresses it took playing each week on a thin roll of carpet splayed out over a concrete floor. One more hard hit and Gruden could end up on injured reserve, which, in the Arena League, meant filing for workers’ compensation.

He took the offer.

“I would have played,” Gruden says. “If I was single, I’d still be playing in the damn thing.”

One year in Nashville took him to



BRIAN BAER/TAMPA BAY TIMES

Gruden won four championships in six seasons as quarterback for the Tampa Bay Storm and coach Tim Marcum.



JAMES BORCHUCK/TAMPA BAY TIMES

Gruden served one season as the head coach of the Florida Tuskers in the start-up United Football League. He started as the offensive coordinator under coach Jim Haslett.

Orlando, where he became the Predators’ coach in 1998. He guided his team to the ArenaBowl that year, and then again in 2000, when they finished the season 13-3.

Gruden was comfortable in Orlando. He told the Tampa Tribune in 2002 that the Arena League was “the best-kept secret in coaching.” He enjoyed the full control he had over the organization — signing players, structuring their contracts, calling the offense and defense, being involved.

Still, the itch needed to be scratched. In 2002, after quarterback Chris Wallace sustained a knee injury, Gruden took advantage of the opportunity, ending his retirement and — at least technically — handing the reins to his line coach, Fran Papasdero, for two seasons. Again, the

Predators won, with Gruden leading his team to the conference semifinals each season.

“It was definitely still the Jay Gruden show,” says Siaha Burley, currently the Predators’ offensive coordinator and a wide receiver in Gruden’s first season back under center. “Jay demanded just as much out of the people around him quarterback/coaching as he did just coaching. It meant more because he was in the heat of the battle and the heat of the game.”

Gruden was bullish on the future of the league, which was continually expanding to new markets. In 2000, it even started a minor league, Arena Football 2, that rapidly expanded through the smallest of small markets and had 34 teams two years after

it was created.

Attendance in Orlando routinely surpassed 10,000 fans a game, and Gruden had often heard rumblings that the league was on the verge of a television deal that would leave it flush with cash. By getting in on the ground floor, he figured, that money would begin to trickle his way.

When that deal was struck in 2000, it was with TNN, a cable network struggling to find its audience. Another deal was reached in 2003, this time with NBC, which asked the league move its games from the summer to the spring and hold them on Sundays to fill the post-Super Bowl football void.

That windfall never arrived, and Gruden, hoping to hedge his bets, began to canvass his options. In a stroke of fortune, his brother Jon was hired to coach the Buccaneers prior to the 2002 season, and Jay linked on as an offensive assistant, working mostly with the passing game.

“[It was] a tremendous advantage,” says former NFL quarterback Ron Jaworski, who worked as a commentator for the Buccaneers’ preseason games from 2003-2006 and, later, with Jon Gruden on the “Monday Night Football” broadcast. “It was a tremendous opportunity to work with the quarterbacks and work with the wide receivers and see how Jon was doing it and how NFL coaches were doing.”

While his brother was famous for his 3:17 a.m. wake-up call, Jay Gruden would often wake up at similar hours, driving down the I-4 corridor from his Orlando home to make it to Tampa in time for practice. He’d make that trip routinely during the NFL season for seven years, back and forth, occasionally sleeping at his parents’

home to afford him some semblance of a break.

Jim and Kathy would worry about Jay's well-being — about surviving that 90-mile trip in the dark of the night, holding their breath that he'd make it to and from his home. That first year, when the Buccaneers won Super Bowl XXXVII, he was given a championship ring — one he's kept locked in a safe and never worn, fearing he hasn't earned the right to do so.

In December 2008, the Arena League crumbled under the weight of its business model and declared bankruptcy, pushing Gruden out of a job. Less than a month later, the Buccaneers' coaching staff was fired, leaving Gruden without a second job.

That year, Jon Gruden started the Fired Football Coaches Association, a think tank where those interested in learning from other coaches could network and poach ideas. One of those coaches was Jim Haslett, who, months later, accepted a job as the coach of the Florida Tuskers, one of four franchises in the start-up United Football League.

Haslett offered Jay Gruden the opportunity to be his offensive coordinator, which, despite the team being based in Orlando, still caused the out-of-work coach some consternation.

"Hey, my first two checks cashed," Haslett told him, only half-jokingly, and Gruden was sold.

After one season, Haslett left to join Mike Shanahan in Washington as the Redskins' defensive coordinator. Gruden was promoted to head coach, but, bitten by the experience with Tampa Bay and with the Arena League, he knew he needed an escape plan.

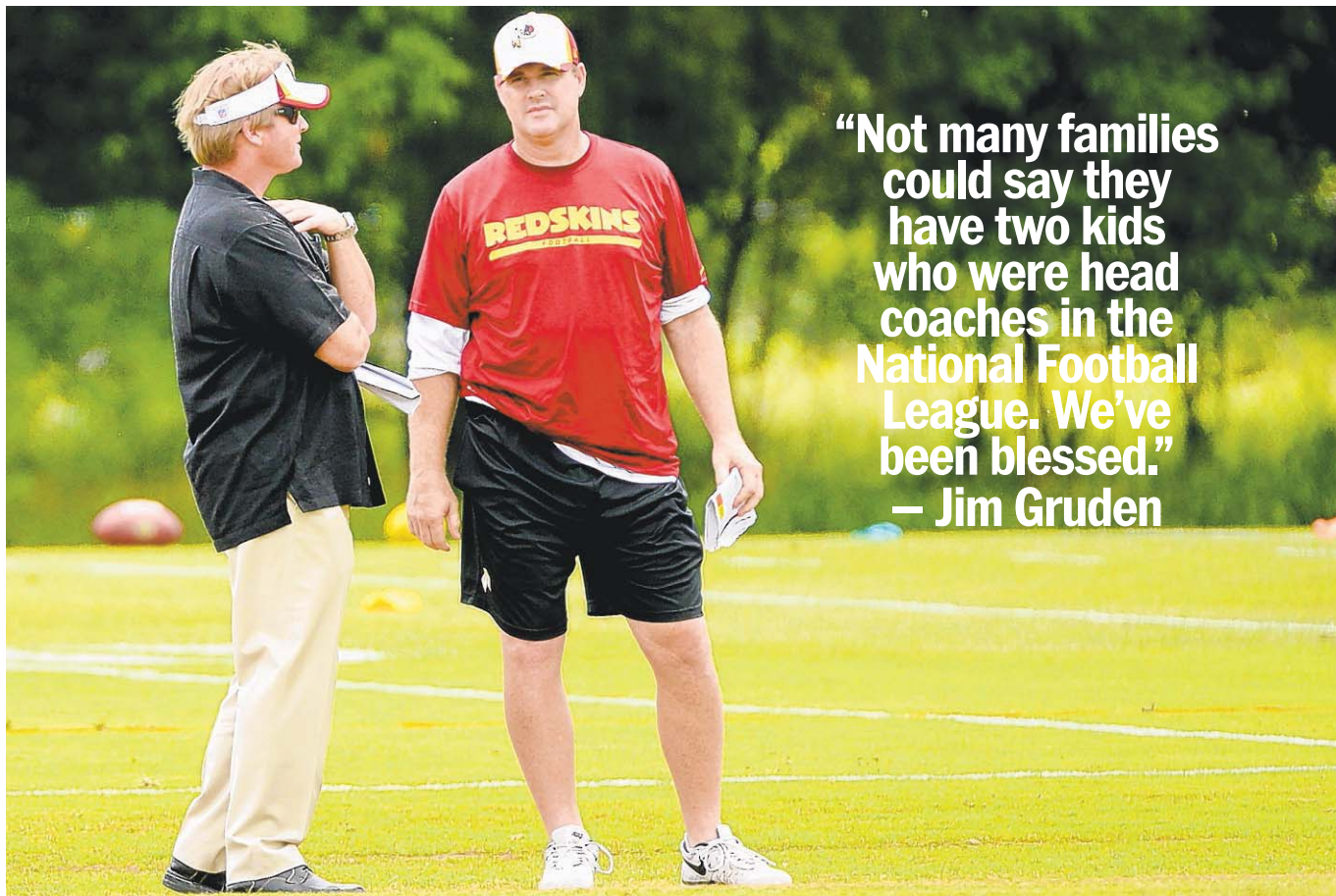
In 2011, after one season coaching the Tuskers, Gruden interviewed to become the Cincinnati Bengals' offensive coordinator. He pitched coach Marvin Lewis on how he installed an offense in the UFL that led the team to two consecutive championship games, knowing that, with the NFL lockout in full swing, he may not have much time to teach his scheme to the players.

"He understands his personnel and he's going to maximize the strength of his personnel to the fullest," says Cortez Hankton, a wide receiver who played for Gruden and the Tuskers in 2010 and is now the wide receivers coach at Dartmouth. "He was just a great guy to play for, and I could only imagine being able to play for him at the highest level."

## Thriving on competition

The tan walls of the living room in Jim and Kathy's house are spotted with photos of their sons, and Jim takes delight in pointing out how each one represents a different phase of their careers.

On one wall, opposite a patio, is a large, finished wooden bookcase, housing all measures of trinkets — the Conception photo, game balls from Jim's and Jon's



**"Not many families could say they have two kids who were head coaches in the National Football League. We've been blessed."  
— Jim Gruden**

ANDREW HARNIK/THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Gruden was an offensive assistant with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers (2002-2008) under brother Jon (left).



ASSOCIATED PRESS

For the past three seasons, Gruden was the offensive coordinator of the Cincinnati Bengals, where he guided the development of young quarterback Andy Dalton.

milestone victories, pins and mugs and glass bottles all adorned with logos from the family's coaching stops.

The side walls hold Jim Jr.'s diplomas and Jon's magazine stories and a panorama of Qualcomm Stadium when the Buccaneers defeated the Oakland Raiders in the Super Bowl. In the corner, behind the flat-screen television, next to the one of Jay in his Tampa Bay Storm uniform with the Zubaz-patterned pants, is one of Jay sitting at the table, leaning over a microphone, at his introductory news conference with the Redskins in January.

"Not many families could say they have two children who were head coaches in the National Football League," Jim says.

"We've been blessed."

Jay Gruden spent three years as the Bengals' offensive coordinator, overseeing an offense that was ranked in the bottom third of the league when he was hired to 10th in total yards in 2013.

His reputation precedes him — not necessarily as an offensive mind, but as a communicator and a motivator.

"He's got another gear that people don't know about," Jon Gruden says. "When it starts, when it's time to compete, he's got tremendous competition skills."

He's reserved, casual, cool. He's sarcastic, fiery, intense.

"A great guy with great energy," says Redskins quarterback Robert Griffin III.

"He expects a lot out of us, and that's what you want — you want your coach to expect a lot out of you. He's hard on us. He yells at us. People say, 'Oh, you're the quarterback, he shouldn't do that.' No, he was a quarterback. He understands that sometimes you need to be yelled at."

In the preseason, as Jay prepared for the Redskins' opener against New England, he spoke of wanting to make sure he was able to keep order on the sideline, that everyone was prepared for every situation. Afterward, he noticed it was he who was out of order, spending a bit too much time on adjusting offensive mistakes and forgetting he had a defense and special teams to oversee as well.

"I think one of the tougher things to do moving from coordinator to head coach is you've got everybody that you've got to have a plan for," says Lewis, the Bengals' coach. "You had a plan as a coordinator — but now you've got to have a plan for the entire football team."

The night Gruden was hired by the Redskins, as he mingled with his wife and sons, the magnitude of his opportunity finally hit him. He had waited for years for this — decades, even — from the days he was throwing passes at Buccaneers practice to the records he set in high school to the Arena League championship trophies he held high above his head.

"I was excited," Gruden says. "But I was more [thinking], 'What's my plan of attack? Where do I get started? How do I get this thing right?'"

# CONTRAST IN CULTURES

Atmosphere better under Gruden, but will results follow?

By **TODD DYBAS**  
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

**R**obert Griffin III underwent his own culture change after last season, if only for two weeks.

The firing of coach Mike Shanahan was made official the Monday following the Redskins' 13th and final loss. Players were clearing out their lockers the same day. They said goodbye to Shanahan and the rest of the departing staff. Griffin said goodbye to the mainland shortly after.

In Maui and Kauai with his wife, Rebecca, he detached himself from the change, negativity and drama.

"I was with my wife taking a vacation just to get away from everything that was going on here," Griffin said. "Because I really had no part in that and I didn't want anybody to think I had a part in that. I wanted to enjoy some time with my family. I went and did that."

The first step in changing structure and vibe is swapping out leaders. So, the Redskins started there. Shanahan's stern, veteran approach was replaced by Jay Gruden's more open and self-deprecating style. The Redskins hope that modifies on-field results.

Gruden is entering his first season as an NFL head coach. Shanahan had worked in the NFL for 30 years. When Shanahan entered the NFL as the Denver Broncos offensive coordinator in 1984, Gruden was finishing his high school football career in Tampa, Florida.

A new season, coaching change and personal pride are at work as the Redskins try to spit out the ill flavor from last season's 3-13 mess. It's less a full culture change and more of a reboot.

"You have to separate year to year," nose tackle Barry Cofield said. "Last year was rough. When you're losing, it's rough.



ASSOCIATED PRESS

The first step in changing the structure, vibe and culture of a losing team is swapping out the leaders. Redskins owner Daniel Snyder (right) fired the stern Mike Shanahan and hired open and self-deprecating first-year head coach Jay Gruden (left) in the offseason.

I don't care who your coach is, who your players are. When you're losing, it's miserable in the NFL. That's just the way this business goes."

Shanahan's battles with Griffin and owner Daniel Snyder, folded into the losing, created one of the most dysfunctional environments in the league. The Redskins finished the season by losing eight consecutive games. Griffin was benched — to protect his health, according to Shanahan — the final three games. The Redskins spent half the season being sucked down with no response to stop the slide.

"Football is a game of momentum," quarterback Kirk Cousins said. "To get the playoffs in 2012, we won, I think it was seven straight, to finish the season before going to the playoffs. Once you get on a roll like that, it becomes harder to lose and a little easier to win when you get that momentum.

"The same can be true of last year where you start to lose a few and it can become harder to find that win. The fact that football is a game of momentum made it tough last year to try and recover each and every week. I think we have the right pieces in place. We obviously have a fresh start now."

To a degree. The organization is still led by Snyder and president and general manager Bruce Allen. Five coaches were retained from the prior staff, including defensive coordinator Jim Haslett, despite the Redskins being tied for 30th in points allowed.

Players are hesitant to contrast Gruden with Shanahan. There are small differences, such as morning training camp practices in Richmond and his tone of voice in team meetings. Gruden also jokes in his press conferences about his

shortcomings, like paying too much attention to the offense during a preseason game or how he couldn't scramble during his quarterback days and would get "killed" in the pocket.

Allen also sidestepped comparisons between the coaches.

"I don't really like the comparisons," Allen said. "Coach Gruden's meetings are intense as [what] you see on the football field. [We're] trying to get better in the meeting room. I think this is going to help the team."

Griffin points out he's been through a shift in culture before. At Baylor, the team was 4-8 his freshman and sophomore seasons (he missed most of his sophomore year with an injury). It moved to 7-6 his redshirt sophomore year before finishing 10-3 his final season.

He said the Bears began to lift weights

"The fact that football is a game of momentum made it tough last year to try and recover each and every week. I think we have the right pieces in place. We obviously have a fresh start now." — **Kirk Cousins**



ANDREW HARNIK/THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Redskins tackle Barry Cofield (96) says he doesn't "care who your coach is, who your players are. When you're losing, it's miserable in the NFL. That's just the way this business goes."

more often in the offseason. Their foundation was sturdier when fall camp started.

"That's what it was about at Baylor and we figured it out," Griffin said. "We got it done. I think we're in the process of doing that here. At least to me, it feels that way having gone through it before in college. It feels like that process of changing that culture. Making that culture of longtime winning. Now, if you look at Baylor, it's a consistent winner."

Core players like Griffin, Alfred Morris and Pierre Garcon have experienced two divergent seasons in Washington. Last year's debacle followed a division-winning season.

Linebacker Brian Orakpo is entering his sixth season with the Redskins. He knows no other franchise and has a larger D.C. sample size to consider.

"We have to have a sense of identity," Orakpo said. "That's the No. 1 thing. Once we do that, I think we'll be just fine. Just build and create that identity and who we're going to be known as. Not a team just out there playing. We need to be out there being consistent, balling out, making

plays, flying around the ball on both sides of the ball."

And, where does he put the blame for last season?

"Once you lose like that, it's on everybody."

The possibility of a turnaround is not ludicrous. The NFL is structured to embrace parity. In 2011, the Indianapolis Colts were 2-14. They went 11-5 the next season. In 2007, the Miami Dolphins were 1-15. They finished 11-5 in 2008. The 1998 St. Louis Rams were 4-12 before going 13-3 in 1999 and winning the Super Bowl as the "Greatest Show on Turf." The last two years for the Redskins are an example in reverse.

"You have vets that, you know, know what it looks like," Cofield said. "Even though the season didn't go the way we wanted it to, we know how it's supposed to look. Guys have to feed off of us. We had a great start all through the spring. By the time training camp comes, you're really sharpening the tools. Really coming together as a group off the field and I think that's what we've done."

They have 16 games to prove it.



PRESTON KERES/SPECIAL TO THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Linebacker Brian Orakpo (98) says the Redskins need to "just build and create that identity and who we're going to be known as. Not a team just out there playing."

# COMEBACK ROUTE

## DeSean Jackson tries to distance himself from defenders and a muddled reputation

By Todd Dybas  
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

DeSean Jackson was born in Hollywood, then made for the NFL by fate, family and friends while growing up in South Central Los Angeles. There are people who are from there and those who most decidedly are not. Gangs fester where Jackson lived. Tattoos flood his body, including the phrase "Fear none," which runs vertically on the side of his neck, tucked just behind an ear lobe. He's often decorated by gold. He eats birthday cakes that are designed to look like a stack of \$100 bills.

This persona makes him appear a product of central casting. It also makes the narrative about who he is easy. Perhaps, too much so.

When the Philadelphia Eagles released Jackson in March after the wide receiver's best season as a professional, the stories — rumors and flat-out lies to some — came. Jackson's loyalty to his inner-city friends appeared to have finally caught up to him. The Eagles were worried about Jackson's gang ties, the stories said, and they sent him away.

Here is where Jackson, signed by the Redskins five days later, becomes an unwitting social experiment. Character assumptions are made. Tie-ins are reached for. There is some smoke, but the fire, it won't take. Yet, the smoke continues to puff. So, he shuts down. He knows this is an avalanche he can't push back at. Interviews are few. Answers are not forthcoming.

"Sometimes, things that you go through growing up or witness can have you in a shell and kind of be like distant from a lot of people," Jackson said. "That's the biggest thing I can say about coming from the areas we come from. Lot of times it's hard to trust people. You have to get an understanding for what people's motives are. It's just a part of growing and living. A part of life."

Once the gang stories attributed to anonymous sources died down, others from anonymous players sprang. News stories said Jackson was a bad teammate who did not buy into the specific and somewhat radical ways of new Eagles coach Chip Kelly. It wasn't the gangs that led to his release, they said. It was his selfishness.

Which leaves Jackson, a three-time Pro-Bowler and one of the fastest receivers in the league, a curiosity. He has a chance to redefine his public persona while with the Redskins. Silence and touchdowns can help get him there. It's unclear if he cares to.

### 'That stuff was totally not true'

"After careful consideration during this offseason, the Philadelphia Eagles have decided to part ways with DeSean Jackson. The team

informed him of his release today."

The statement was simple and fully loaded. For the first time, Jackson was pushed aside by a football team.

The anonymous pounding followed. During that time, Redskins quarterback Robert Griffin III was in Los Angeles for promotional work. Concerned, and interested in recruiting, he went to see Jackson and had dinner at his house.

"He got cut by Philly and they were spreading lies about him," Griffin said. "We sat there and had dinner and talked about everything. I could see the hurt and everything in his face. DeSean is a guy from L.A., an area with a little bit of edge. I mean it's basically the 'hood. People are afraid to say it, but it's the 'hood.'"

The reports about Jackson would have angered and stunned his father, Bill.

Jackson is the product of his hard-driving father who started pushing him toward athletics when he was scrawny and 5 years old. Bill Jackson pushed his son through high school, when DeSean starred at prep powerhouse Long Beach Polytechnic, then was a thorn in the side of California coach Jeff Tedford when Jackson was in college.

Jackson's father and inner circle of handlers/trainers were so hands-on — and at times abrasive — that minutes after Jackson was drafted, then-Eagles coach Andy Reid called and informed Jackson he didn't want any problems from his father or the others.



Bill died of pancreatic cancer in 2009. He at least saw his son achieve what was long his father's dream.

Jackson's mother, Gayle, read the stories about her son this spring. They decided little could be done to counter the budding perception. Jackson released a statement at the time saying he was not and never has been a gang member. Otherwise, they chose not to "fight fire with fire."

"That was pretty shocking," Gayle said. "That was all the superlatives you could think of. That was a real wake-up call probably is what it was. I try to not let things worry me. That you couldn't help let worry you because you never want your child or anybody you love portrayed in a bad light. So, when I heard that, those stories and accusations were disturbing."

"I also knew that you can't please the world. You can't please everybody and I can't go explaining to the whole world, my son's not like that. But what I did kind of settle in on, and find comfort from, was the fact that I know the people who know DeSean know the truth. For all those other people that don't know the truth, that's real sad."

"In this case, where they were making up all these allegations that there were gang ties and all that stuff... that stuff was totally not true."

In addition to thrusting DeSean into sports, Bill would embrace other kids in the neighborhood. If they needed a place to stay, they could stay with him. If they needed a ride to Little League because their parents worked late, he would pick them up. The latter was the case for Seattle Seahawks cornerback Richard Sherman.

Sherman grew up in Watts. Bill, often referred to as "Pop," would give him a ride to Holly Park Little League games where he and DeSean were teammates. The offseason reports of Jackson's alleged gang ties rankled Sherman.

"I feel like people are going to make the assumptions they are going to make regardless," Sherman said. "I think there are a number of players in the NFL you could make that case for, myself included."

At Redskins training camp in Richmond, Jackson was among the players pictured on signage during the walk into the facility. Most were smiling. Jackson's face is stern, just short of a sneer. The photo is representative of the edge Jackson carries, something Sherman says is crucial to crawling out of the inner-city crab bucket.

"I think that it's a real cut throat environment that we come from," Sherman said. "It's a real dog-eat-dog world. People joke about it and talk about it like they know, but you don't know unless you're there. To make it out of there, you have to have a certain mindset. You can't trust a lot of things you hear and a lot of people because a lot of times you'll be setup for failure."

Though Jackson is the only player from Los Angeles on the roster, he had one friend already in Washington. Left tackle Trent Williams got to know Jackson at this year's Pro Bowl. He told Jackson how he would love to play with him. The thought of his speed, his ability to bust a big play in an instant, made Williams giddy. They exchanged numbers and kept in touch. Not long after, the reports came out.

"I didn't validate it," Williams said. "That's the first time anybody's heard that and it just so happen to come after he got released for some odd reason. I don't know. There's something more to that situation which I don't really care to speak about."

"I never felt like I needed to have a conversation with him. The media — society in general — they're always looking for something. Especially when you're down. They're going to try to kick you when you're down."

### 'The kid next door'

There is football and karma — fate, the preordained, however you take it — to be talked about with Jackson joining the Redskins. Gayle and Bill were raised in Pittsburgh. Because of its proximity to Washington, they had family ties in D.C. DeSean was even dedicated in a D.C. church as a baby.

Asked to describe her son, Gayle is somewhat stumped. Not because she doesn't know him head to toe, but because her vision of him is not that of others.

"He's just DeSean," she says.

Getting to know exactly who that is can be a challenge. Jackson's whole life was designed around the prospect of athletic success. A speed coach worked on his stride, former NFL players taught him route breaks. In high school, he flew to Kansas City Chiefs training camp in River Falls, Wisconsin, where he caught passes from Dick Vermeil and began to believe he belonged.

He was a two-time All-American at Cal, then sat filled with anguish as the first round of the 2008 NFL draft clicked by without his name called.

After Philadelphia finally picked him 49th overall, his ascension was rapid. In 2009, he became the first player in NFL history to be named a Pro Bowl starter at two positions when he was put on the NFC team as a wide receiver and punt returner. Again last season, he went to the Pro Bowl after 82 catches for 1,332 yards marked career highs.

Aligning him with the last season's league leader in receptions, Pierre Garcon, gives the Redskins one of the best receiver combinations in the league. Jackson's speed alone should provide extra operating space for Garcon and others.

That's where Jackson and his family are hopeful the story arcs now: Back to football. Around to his appearances at the Manassas Boys & Girls Club and his effort to spread an anti-bullying message.

Jackson isn't doing much talking. At camp in Richmond, he briskly walked off the field while giving reporters few quotes. At times, he looked alone during practice, in the standard pose of a resting football player with one knee on the ground and the opposite hand gripping a facemask to use a helmet as a balance point.

Desperate manuring of his public persona does not seem a priority. Gayle is in town to help run his foundation and, though DeSean talks about doing community work, the topic is not overwhelming as if they are on an image rehabilitation assignment.

"DeSean is just like the kid next door," Gayle said. "Your brother, your cousin, your uncle. He's regular. He's no different. He just happens to have attained a level and attained a status not a whole lot of people reach. He's the same person he was before he got the fame. He just happens to have more people paying attention to what he's doing now."

Jackson's contract is slated to keep him in Washington for three seasons. Three years to let his personality out, if he chooses. Three years to make the Pro Bowl and maybe begin to trust more.

For now, Jackson will be guarded.

"It's hard to take respect from those people that don't give it," Jackson said. "If you're offering that and are willing to give it, I think coming on the other side, maybe we could appreciate that a little more. So we just kind of have to figure out, like I say, how a person is coming off and what their motives are is the biggest thing. Until you kind of figure out that, you kind of got to be distant."

# TWEAKING THE PLAYBOOK

## No intentions for wholesale changes to offense

By ZAC BOYER

THE WASHINGTON TIMES

**A**sk Jay Gruden how he would describe the offense he has put together in the months since being named coach of the Redskins, and with painstaking care, he'd run down the dimensions.

A solid zone-running game with a bit of power sprinkled in. A pocket passing game with a healthy mix of quick throws, screen passes and play action. Some boot-legs. Some zone-read. Balanced, as the coachspeak goes.

However one describes it, two things are clear: Gruden, as he has often tried to do, has tailored it to his players' strengths. And, come its full reveal for Washington's regular-season opener on Sunday at Houston, it won't look much different from what the previous coaching staff strung together in recent years.

"Everybody wants to say they're going to run the ball for 250 yards a game, but some defenses are very hard to run against, and you might get behind so you've got to have a good balance about you," Gruden said. "I think balance, diversity, is a key for this offense."

Gruden had the opportunity this spring to completely overhaul the Redskins' playbook, discarding all that the team had gained the last four years under coach Mike Shanahan and offensive coordinator Kyle Shanahan. It could have been his chance to put his signature on a phase of the game that he has overseen since he first entered coaching 17 years ago.

Instead, as he evaluated his players, he found it hard to make wholesale changes. For one, the Redskins' running game has been highly productive in recent seasons. Also, his idea for turning quarterback Robert Griffin III into a pocket passer emphasizes short drops and quick throws — something Griffin did the last two seasons.

Gruden's compromise was simple: He'd mix the zone-running game with a



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Redskins coach Jay Gruden tweaked the offense to maximize abilities and let playmakers like DeSean Jackson (right) do their thing.

tweaked passing game to maximize their abilities. Over time, he'll reserve the right to change things. Early on, it will be about letting the playmakers do their thing.

"There are a lot of different systems that you can win with and ways to play defense and ways to move the ball, but the biggest thing is, what type of team are you going to be?" said Tony Dungy, the former NFL coach and current television analyst. "Are the players buying into your way of doing it? When you get 53 guys buying into what you want to do, that's when you're going to be successful."

### Crash course in new system

The process of installing the playbook this past spring was daunting, but not difficult.

Players received their copies for the first time when offseason workouts began on April 7, and, because teams with new coaches are permitted to hold an extra minicamp, players and coaches benefited from an extra three-day crash course in late April.

The goal was to have every offensive concept installed by the team organized team activities ended in mid-June, so when players returned from a five-week hiatus for training camp, they could begin moving forward with mastering the particulars of certain scenarios.

"At first, it was, 'Come in and let's learn these base concepts that we're going to run,' and then it was, 'Boom, all right, now let's master the protections,'" Griffin said. "After that, it was, 'All right, now, let's start

looking at personnel and attacking personnel based on the match-ups that you have.' ... You put all of that stuff together by the end of OTAs and you come back to training camp and you're doing it all over again, but it's just accelerated."

Between 50 and 60 plays were installed in meetings each night for much of the first week of training camp. As days wore on, the red-zone offense, the goal-line offense, short-yardage plays, the two-minute drill and other special situations were addressed. All of that needed to be in place and understood by the end of the second week.

"It's going home, it's drawing the plays over and over, it's quizzing yourself, it's saying the plays out loud, asking the questions that come up, watching film of the

"Everybody wants to say they're going to run the ball for 250 yards a game, but some defenses are very hard to run against...."



Redskins offensive coordinator Sean McVay (right), formerly tight ends coach with the previous coaching staff, learned new offensive terminology to game plan with his quarterbacks.

plays, going back and watching Andy Dalton [Gruden's previous quarterback in Cincinnati] run the offense at a high level, watching our practice reps," Cousins said. "You know, the more you're in it, the more questions come up that can be covered and answered."

While the Redskins did not put together a game plan for their preseason opener against New England on Aug. 7 — a customary move around the league — they did make preparations for Cleveland 11 days later, mostly to better evaluate players. A game plan was put together for the preseason game at Baltimore on Aug. 22, though the three-day break between games stunted the depth of those preparations.

Once the season begins, coaches will draw from their concepts to put together a comprehensive plan for that week's

opponent. There's no specific number of plays, week-to-week, that players may be responsible for — just the entire package; a hefty responsibility.

"It's a multitude of things that you have to be ready for coach to call, because he might call a play that he never called all week in practice but you've got to know what to do on that play," Griffin said. "That's why it takes professionals to be able to do that stuff."

**Different language, similar concepts**

On multiple occasions, Gruden has found himself trying to call a running play with the terminology he used the last three seasons with the Bengals. Because offensive line coach Chris Foerster, the run-game coordinator, was retained to help maximize the team's strength,

Gruden forced himself to make the linguistic translations.

"There's no reason to change the damn words," Gruden said. "Now I have to learn the words, so on game days, I'm calling what I called in Cincinnati and Sean [McVay, the offensive coordinator] is like, 'No, it's this!' I'm like, 'Oh, yeah.' We're still evolving, still trying to find that happy medium."

The changes weren't radical enough to make it impossible to pick up. Tight end Logan Paulsen, who had a different offensive coordinator during each of his four years at UCLA, said the transition could have been far more arduous for players.

"It's from the West Coast tree, so obviously, there are some different concepts and slightly different verbiage, but for the most part, it's the same," Paulsen said.

"There wasn't a ton of new learning. It was just switching it in your mind."

That can make it simpler for the players — but then again, care must be taken by the coaching staff. When Dungy took over as head coach in Tampa Bay in 1996, he had his staff draw up an offense from scratch. When he was hired in Indianapolis in 2002, the Colts had the No. 2 offense the year before, giving him reason to keep much of what former coach Jim Mora left behind.

Ultimately, he said, how the Redskins incorporate their offense won't be as important as how Gruden oversees it.

"Sometimes it takes a year or two and you have to weed some players out who have been used to doing it a different way," Dungy said. "But the big thing a new coach wants to do is just establish, 'This is the way we're going to do things.'"

....and you might get behind so you've got to have a good balance about you. I think balance, diversity, is a key for this offense." — **Jay Gruden**



# 'A LEADER'S PRESENCE'

## Iraq War veteran brings authority to special teams

By Tom Schad

THE WASHINGTON TIMES

**A** little more than a decade ago, U.S. Army Capt. Ben Kotwica landed in Taji, Iraq, a sandy city 20 miles north of Baghdad. It was April 2004 and Operation Iraqi Freedom II was humming along. The situation on the ground was calm, at least for a while.

Then in May, the Mahdi Army attacked Sadr City. In November, Marines entered Fallujah. From the cockpit of an AH-64 Apache attack helicopter, Kotwica was often right in the middle of it all, zipping overhead at low altitudes and providing reconnaissance or cover fire. By the time he returned home in March 2005, he had logged more than 1,000 combat hours.

"I didn't want to be in combat," Kotwica said. "But I wasn't averse to pulling triggers and doing that kind of mission."

The mission Kotwica faces now is trivial by comparison. His tasks are no longer matters of life and death but of touchbacks and hang times, wedges and coverage schemes. As the new special teams coordinator of the Washington Redskins, he has been tasked with turning around what was statistically the worst unit in the league last season, according to a formula created by Football Outsiders.

Kotwica's job has changed since 2004, but he brings the same approach and attitude to coaching that he brought to his role as an officer in places such as Bosnia-Herzegovina, Korea and Iraq: Technical expertise. Meticulous attention to detail. Open communication. And above all else, a type of firm, confident demeanor befitting a military veteran.

"You do notice it," linebacker Akeem Jordan said. "I wouldn't say he's intimidating. I'd say he has a leader's presence. There's not too many times that you would doubt his judgment."

### 'I wanted to do a cool job'

Before he was a coach or an officer, Kotwica was a starting linebacker and team captain at Army. He led the Black Knights to their only 10-win season and most recent Commander-in-Chief's Trophy in 1996, and it was during his time at West Point that he also began to think about life after graduation.

"Really my thought was if I was going to be in the Army, I wanted to do a cool job," he said. "And I thought flying would be pretty darn cool. So that's what I did."

After a year coaching at West Point's preparatory school, Kotwica enrolled in flight school. Free to choose



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As an Army captain during Operation Iraqi Freedom II in 2004, new Redskins special teams coordinator Ben Kotwica was often in the middle of fighting, providing reconnaissance from the cockpit of an AH-64 Apache attack helicopter.

his preferred type of aircraft, he picked the Apache, an attack helicopter, rather than the Black Hawk, which is more commonly used for transporting troops. Or, in his words: "I went guns."

Kotwica was stationed at Fort Bragg in North Carolina before being deployed to Bosnia-Herzegovina, where he spent seven months as a platoon leader. He then returned home briefly before moving on to Korea for six months, and later Iraq.

Kotwica is careful not to reveal too many details about his time in Taji. When asked about his role in the context of the war, he says only that, "there were a variety of mission sets that we executed in Iraq." Sometimes he served as convoy security or air security for VIPs visiting the country. Sometimes he flew to gather reconnaissance or help identify targets during a conflict on the ground. And yes, sometimes, he had to pull the trigger in battle.

"The most rewarding mission was helping the guys on the ground," Kotwica said. "When we did pull triggers, I never looked at it as an opportunity to take somebody else's life. I really looked at it as an opportunity to save our soldiers' lives."

Kotwica estimates he was in the air six days a week, working toward objectives that took anywhere from two

to five hours to complete. He learned to navigate a city like Baghdad at low altitudes, sometimes dodging wires and towers in shade or darkness. And he experienced the challenges of a nonlinear battlefield, where there are no clearly marked boundaries between clusters of allied troops and the enemy.

In March 2005, Kotwica and the 1st Cavalry Division were sent home, marking the end of both his final tour and his eight-year military career. Kotwica retired with three medals and a Bronze Star.

"I loved the military. I really, really enjoyed my time there," Kotwica said. "But my time was up."

### 'How can I help you get better?'

Kotwica grew up on the south side of Chicago, the son of a military veteran who went on to become a state police officer. His parents ran what he called a "disciplined household," where everyone had responsibilities and every action had consequences.

It was here, long before Kotwica accepted his scholarship offer to West Point, that he developed his unique demeanor. The military molded his personality, but the roots were in his childhood and how he was raised by his parents.

"If I have a bad day, I want to hear about it. I don't want things to be sugarcoated or anything like that. It's not sugarcoated on Sundays. So if I need to get better, he tells me I need to get better." — **Nick Sundberg, long snapper**

"I think that I've always had somewhat of a, I don't know if the word is mature, or certain demeanor about me," he said.

That demeanor, among other things, always made Kotwica think he might be a successful coach. Even in Pop Warner leagues as a kid, coaches would pinpoint him as a future leader. "Hey Ben," they'd say. "You might want to look at this coaching thing. I think you'd be pretty good at it."

When Kotwica returned home from Iraq in 2005, he received an email and an invitation from then-Army coach Bobby Ross, asking if he'd like to coach at the academy's preparatory school. Kotwica worked as the defensive coordinator there for a season before later jumping up to the NFL and joining the New York Jets. Bob Sutton, who was New York's defensive coordinator at the time, had been the head coach at Army during Kotwica's playing days.

Kotwica didn't come from a heavy special teams background, but soon worked his way up the ladder under longtime special teams coordinator Mike Westhoff, who retired after the 2012 season. Kotwica used his time in New York to learn the finer aspects of special teams play, and he hasn't stopped learning since.

"He'll come to us and ask, 'How can I help you get better?' That's an awesome thing," said punter Robert Malone, who played under Kotwica in New York and was released by the Redskins last week. "A lot of coaches have a lot of pride and they don't get to that level, but he's a very humble coach. And he's willing to learn whatever it takes to help us."

### 'Sense of accountability'

Kotwica isn't exactly a drill sergeant, players say, but there's no confusion in what he says. First-year coach Jay Gruden said Kotwica "doesn't beat around the bush." Long snapper Nick Sundberg called it "brutal honesty."

"I like that about him," Sundberg said. "If I have a bad day, I want to hear about it. I don't want things to be sugarcoated or anything like that. It's not sugarcoated on Sundays. So if I need to get better, he tells me I need to get better."

Kotwica demands precision and exact timing in every drill at every practice. Make a mistake while covering a punt return and he will work with you to fix it. Make the same mistake a second time and, in Jordan's words, "you can tell."

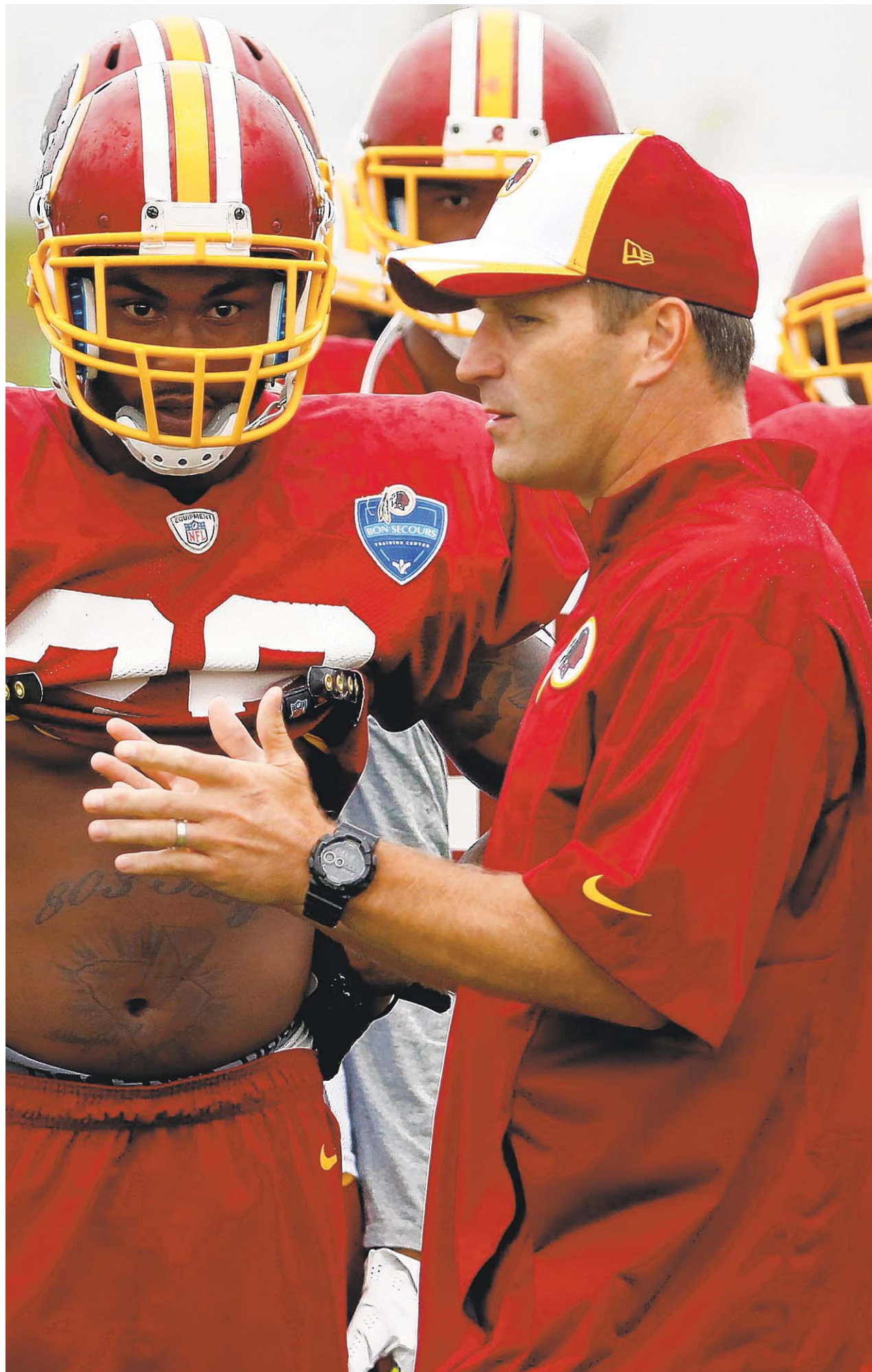
"I think players respect him a lot in that regard," Gruden said. "There's a sense of accountability amongst our players that has to be taught, and Coach Kotwica is a perfect guy to teach that."

Keith Burns, once a star special teams player who was hand-picked by former coach Mike Shanahan, oversaw Washington's dreadful special teams performance last season. Before that, Danny Smith steered the unit to mediocrity over eight years.

Sundberg said Kotwica "brings a lot to the table that we, I'll just say, lacked last season."

Whether it stems from his military background or everyday demeanor, Kotwica believes Redskins fans will see his fingerprint on special teams this season. The unit, which he has aptly dubbed "special forces," will be more physical than in years past, he said. More organized. More disciplined. And, if all goes according to plan, more successful.

"I'll tell you what, some of the schemes that he's doing with us and stuff like that, I'm excited, man," fullback Darrel Young said. "You'll see guys out there giving a lot of effort. I can promise you that."



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Redskins special teams coordinator Ben Kotwica believes fans will see his fingerprint on a unit he has dubbed "special forces." With his military background, special teams will be more physical, more organized, and more disciplined this season.



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## REDSKINS DEPTH CHART

### OFFENSE

**WIDE RECEIVER:** Pierre Garçon, DeSean Jackson, Andre Roberts, Santana Moss, Aldrick Robinson, Ryan Grant

Roberts will serve as the slot receiver, backed up by Moss. Robinson and Grant will rotate in situationally.

**LEFT TACKLE:** Trent Williams, Morgan Moses

Moses' inconsistency through the preseason forced the Redskins to keep four offensive tackles.

**LEFT GUARD:** Shawn Lauvao, Josh LeRibeus

LeRibeus has the ability to work at both guard spots but is most comfortable on the left.

**CENTER:** Kory Lichtensteiger

The starting left guard for the last three years, Lichtensteiger hasn't routinely played center in the NFL.

**RIGHT GUARD:** Chris Chester, Spencer Long

Long has seen most of his work on the right side, while Chester will be the backup center.

**RIGHT TACKLE:** Tyler Polumbus, Tom Compton

Polumbus is entering his third



PRESTON KERES/SPECIAL TO THE WASHINGTON TIMES

consecutive season as the starter, but could be pushed by Moses.

**TIGHT END:** Jordan Reed, Logan Paulsen, Niles Paul

Reed's durability will always be a question, but Paulsen is consistent, if not flashy.

**QUARTERBACK:** Robert Griffin III, Kirk Cousins, Colt McCoy

McCoy has made 21 career starts over four seasons and will serve as insurance against Griffin's health.

**RUNNING BACK:** Alfred Morris, Roy Helu, Silas Redd

Morris will be the workhorse and Helu the third-down back, while Redd earned a spot based on his preseason performance.

**FULLBACK:** Darrel Young  
Cincinnati didn't use a fullback, but Gruden said it was because he didn't have a player like Young.

### DEFENSE

**LEFT DEFENSIVE END:** Chris Baker, Kedric Golston, Clifton Geathers

Despite entering his sixth season, Baker figures to be a starter for the first time in his career.

**NOSE TACKLE:** Barry Cofield  
Backup Chris Neild was lost to injury during the preseason, but the use of sub-packages makes that role unnecessary.

**RIGHT DEFENSIVE END:**

Jason Hatcher, Jarvis Jenkins, Frank Kearse

Big things will be expected from Hatcher, whose greatest successes came last season when applying interior pressure.

**LEFT OUTSIDE LINEBACKER:** Ryan Kerrigan, Gabe Miller

There may be no more durable player over the last three seasons than Kerrigan.

**MIKE LINEBACKER:** Keenan Robinson, Will Compton  
Robinson will play in his first regular-season game in a year and a half when the Redskins face Houston.

**JACK LINEBACKER:** Perry Riley, Adam Hayward

Riley seemed destined to become the mike linebacker after London Fletcher's retirement but stayed for consistency.

**RIGHT OUTSIDE LINEBACKER:** Brian Orakpo, Trent Murphy

With a disgruntled Orakpo playing the season on the franchise tag, Murphy may be groomed to replace him.

**LEFT CORNERBACK:** DeAngelo Hall, E.J. Biggers

Biggers will be the team's slot corner and will be replaced by Porter when he's shifted outside.

**RIGHT CORNERBACK:** David Amerson, Tracy Porter, Bashaud Breeland

Entering his second year, Amerson played approximately two-thirds of all snaps as a rookie.

**STRONG SAFETY:** Brandon Meriweather, Duke Ihenacho, Trenton Robinson

Ihenacho, formerly in Denver, will be a significant upgrade with Meriweather suspended for the first two games.

**FREE SAFETY:** Ryan Clark, Bacarri Rambo

At 35, Clark has shown that one doesn't need elite speed to be able to play well as a free safety.

— Compiled by Zac Boyer

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# ENOUGH IS ENOUGH

## Too much hype over penalties, Manziel

**T**here were way too many instances of a couple of things during the NFL preseason: penalty flags and Johnny Manziel mentions.

Here's hoping for a sharp decline in at least one of them.

It's not that I crave additional coverage of Cleveland's much-ballyhooed backup QB. There's already been more than enough for no good reason. Johnny Football has morphed into Johnny Ad Nauseam.

But that's not as sickening as the ticky-tacky penalties officials called on seemingly every pass attempt in August. With the league's new emphasis on defensive-contact rules, exhibition games turned into an ugly form of flag football.

Blame it on the "Legion of Boom" that Seattle laid on NFL cover boy Peyton Manning in the Super Bowl. Blame it on the league acquiescing to the stranglehold of fantasy football. Blame it on TV executives' belief that offense sizzles and defense fizzles.

Whatever the reason, covering receivers under preseason conditions was harder than swatting flies without using your hands.

Through the first two weeks, there were 56 illegal contact penalties; through the entire 2013 regular season, there were 54.

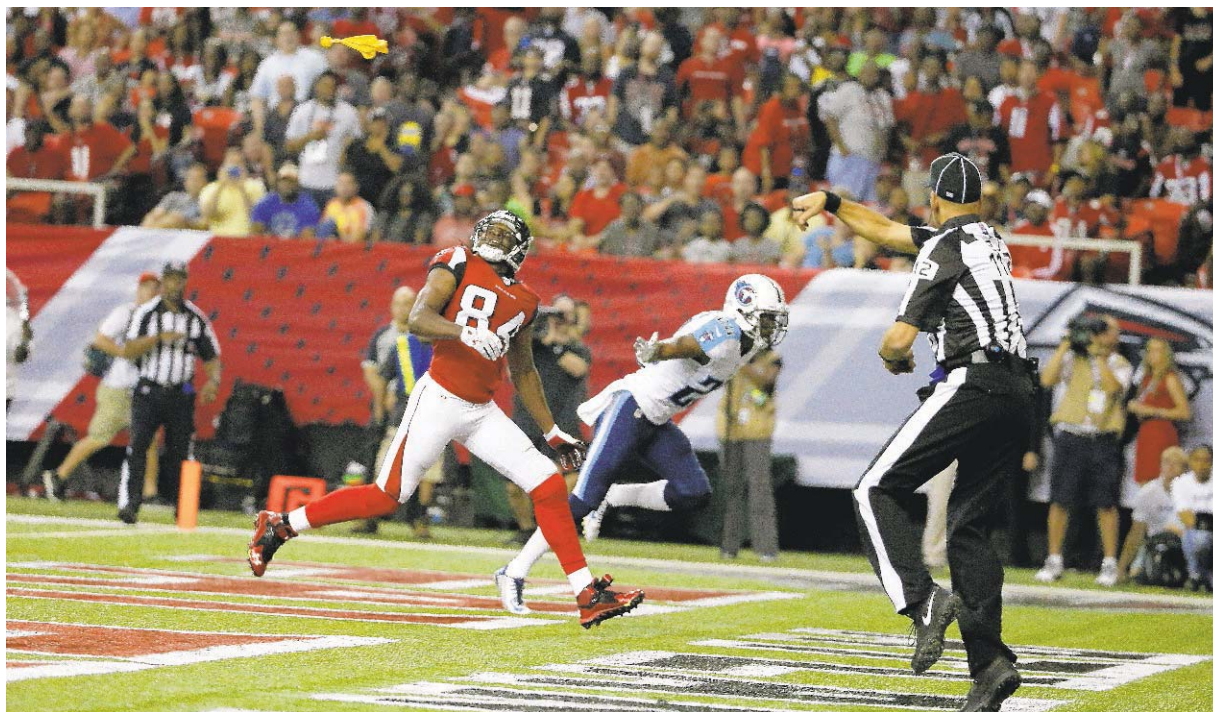
"We expected [the increase]," NFL vice president of officiating Dean Blandino said on NFL Network. "I think there's an adjustment period for our officials, for the coaches and our players. When the regular season rolls around, I think everybody will be on the same page and I think you'll see those foul totals go down."

They better, because the league is walking a thin line between thrill and overkill. As much as fans like touchdowns and electrifying plays, they don't want the NFL to resemble arena football played outdoors.

The Cleveland Gladiators scored 32 points in ArenaBowl XXVII last month. The Arizona Rattlers scored 72.

It's one thing to crack down on the vicious hits that lead to broken necks and scrambled brains. Old-timers can complain about modern players wearing ballerina dresses all they want, but the sport has evolved to err on the side of safety (except when it comes to more Thursday night contests and the push for 18 regular-season games).

Defensive backs already have a near-impossible task



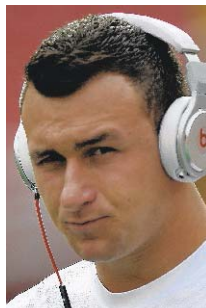
ASSOCIATED PRESS

Referees called 56 illegal contact penalties in the preseason's first two weeks, but only 54 in the entire 2013 season.



DERON SNYDER

at times, trying to hit receivers below the helmet as the receivers duck their heads ... all of which happens in fractions of seconds while both players are moving fast. But at least the goal is honorable, an attempt to protect the athletes from themselves and each other.



Johnny Manziel

That's not the case with this new focus on the jostling, bumping and hand-fighting that's typical during the course of pass routes. And wideouts are just as "guilty" as DBs. But the league seems hellbent on making the latter group totally passive in pass coverage, to the point where no yards after catch becomes the new standard for good defense.

It's not like we were slogging through a bunch of 17-10 contests and the rules needed a tweak. Of the top 11 single-season passing marks, all but two occurred between 2011 and 2013. There were 46.8 points scored in the average NFL game last season, an all-time high.

When is enough enough?

Speaking of knowing when to say when, that brings us back to Johnny.

Manziel has been the eye of a Tebowian media storm ever since the draft. See Johnny run (off to Las

Vegas to unwind). See Johnny laugh (with hangers-on in countless selfies). See Johnny score (time with the pretty ladies around him).

We just haven't seen Johnny play (well enough to justify the hype).

I really don't care what he does off the field as long as no laws are broken. He can tweet 100 pictures daily as far as I'm concerned. If he wants to be the second coming of Joe Namath, hanging out in nightclubs and embracing the playboy lifestyle, so be it.

Whether that image can work for today's quarterbacks, who are more like CEOs of Fortune 500 companies, is subject for debate. Personally, I don't think a little more personality at the position would hurt. But it's all moot if Manziel gets on the field and demonstrates the transcendent playmaking ability that was so dazzling at Texas A&M.

Hearing more won't bother me if it's accompanied by seeing more.

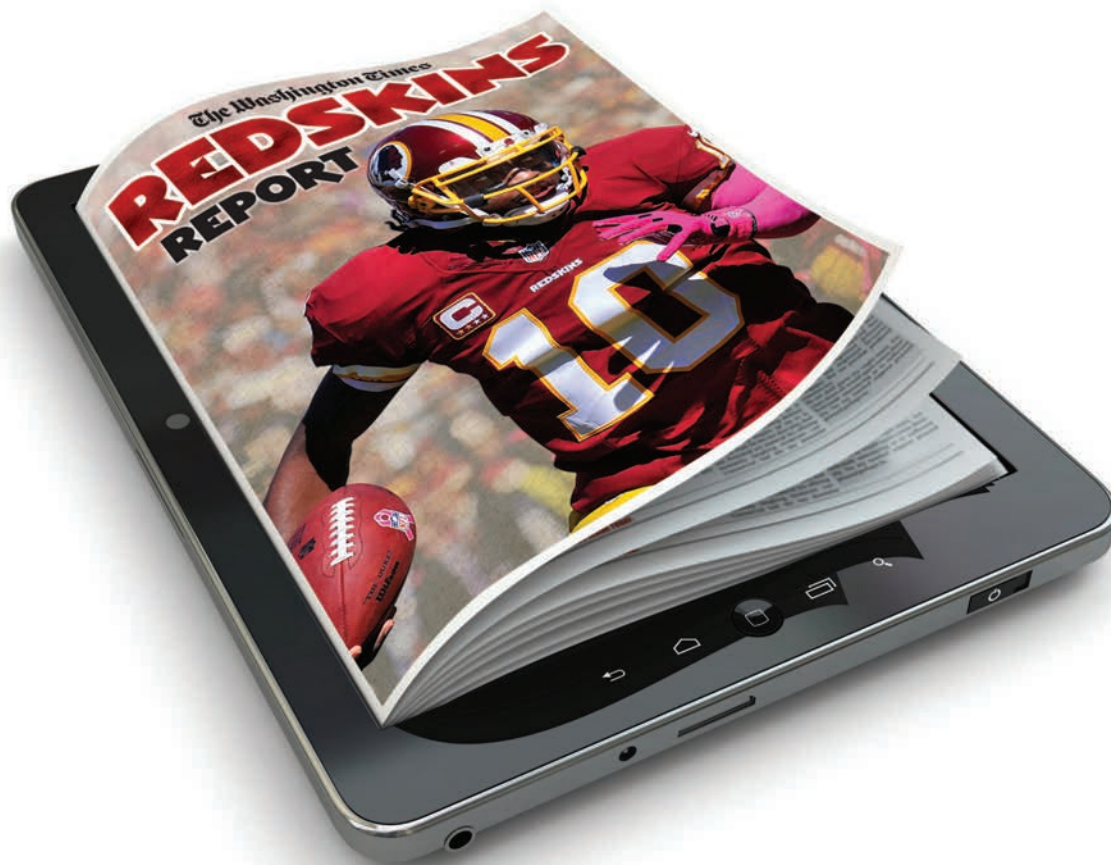
Can he be the freewheeling, improvisational gunslinger who reminds us of a young Brett Favre? Can he further the cause of read-option QBs such as Russell Wilson, Colin Kaepernick and Robert Griffin III? Can he supplant Cleveland's journeyman starter Brian Hoyer before season's end?

Let's hope so. Because that would be fun.

Certainly more fun than a flurry of yellow flags and defenseless DBs.

"When the regular season rolls around, I think everybody will be on the same page and I think you'll see those foul totals go down." — **Dean Blandino, NFL vice president of officiating**

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# LIVING IN A FANTASY WORLD

## Breaking down the impact of a new Redskins offense

**T**his past weekend included a typical Final Saturday Before The NFL Regular Season Begins.

I awoke early on fantasy football's Christmas morning, penned two lists encompassing the top 200 players — one overall and the other broken down by position —

made a batch of scrambled eggs with the perfect amount of cheese (despite what my wife says), gave half of them to my 3-year-old son and sat down to drink the day's first cup of coffee while mentally preparing myself for three straight hours of drafting.



MATT PALLISTER

By noon, the two drafts were complete, so I took my son to the park. On the way back, it just so happened that the fantasy sports radio station was about to begin its "experts fantasy draft." The boy and I took the loooooong way home.

This is my 24th year playing fantasy football. I realize some people think it's silly, but I keep playing because like watching my son on the swings, it makes me happy. It also makes me swear on occasion, but my son does that, too.

The point is, my obsession with fantasy football is nothing new. What is new, however, is the Redskins' offense, and that's what we're going to analyze on the eve of the regular season (We're not going to analyze the effectiveness of that transition).

**Robert Griffin III is no Andy Dalton:** New coach Jay Gruden was hired in large part because of his work with Dalton as the Bengals' offensive coordinator. In three years under Gruden's tutelage, Dalton — who has never been considered an elite quarterback — threw 80 touchdowns, including 33 last year. Those 33 TDs were interspersed with 20



ANDREW HARNIK/THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Redskins receiver Pierre Garcon likely won't approach triple digits in receptions again.



THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Redskins tight end Jordan Reed is worth a flier, but can he live up to his fantasy hype?

interceptions, but Dalton had enough big games to end the season as a top five-fantasy QB.

Meanwhile, RG3 struggled in his second season. Still recovering from off-season knee surgery, the explosiveness of his rookie year was gone, and many of his touchdowns came in garbage time. They still counted in fantasy, and Griffin actually put up decent numbers early on against prevent defenses in the second half of games. But eventually, it was clear that he was not the same player that won Offensive Rookie of the Year honors, and his feud with former coach Mike Shanahan culminated with him being benched for the final three regular-season games.

No matter how you break down the final numbers (16 TDs, 12 INTs, 489 yards rushing), Griffin was one of 2013's biggest fantasy disappointments.

Therefore, it is interesting that Griffin continues to be drafted as a starter in many fantasy leagues, while Dalton is barely on anyone's radar. The assumption for both is that last season was a fluke. I'm not so sure. Dalton signed a contract extension recently, he has played well in the preseason and his new offensive coordinator, Hue Jackson, is no slouch.

Griffin, on the other hand, looked terrible in the preseason. The scores might not count, but the Redskins' franchise player seems to be regressing for real. It's doubtful he'll ever regain the aforementioned explosiveness, but it has always been expected that he would succeed as primarily a pocket passer. However, he has looked uncomfortable throwing the ball, and his decision-making against the Browns and Ravens was puzzling.

Maybe the Gruden-Griffin pairing just needs time, which is fine for a first-year head coach and a young quarterback over the course of a season and beyond. But as a fantasy option, you're just digging yourself a hole if you're counting on Griffin right away.

**Alfred Morris is the key:** The third-year running back, who set the team record for rushing yards as a rookie and last season managed to gain almost 1,300 yards despite being a two-down back on a 3-13 team, is the one player who will benefit the most if Gruden is adaptable.

The Bengals were 18th in rushing last season, throwing 106 more times

than they ran during the regular season. Morris, though, is better suited as a workhorse back than either of Cincinnati's top two backs in 2013 — BenJarvus Green-Ellis and Giovani Bernard. In Morris, Gruden has the option of protecting his quarterback and giving his offense time to jell if he so chooses.

**The wide receiving corps looks great on paper:** While Pierre Garcon (113 catches in 2013), DeSean Jackson (1,332 yards, 9 TDs) and Andre Roberts (471 yards, 2 TDs) appear to be a formidable trio, it will be no small challenge to get consistent production out of all three when neither Garcon nor Jackson is a true No. 1 and Jackson and Roberts have yet to play a meaningful down with Griffin.

Garcon is likely to lead the team in receptions again, but he's never been a red-zone threat (5 TDs in 2013), and with the likelihood that he won't approach triple digits in receptions again, his overall value will be diminished. Jackson is a degree-of-difficulty receiver in more ways than one. Like Garcon, he's coming off a career year, but he's an injury risk who has been more miss than hit as a dependable fantasy option during his career.

I wouldn't be surprised if Roberts catches more touchdowns than the guy who took what was supposed to be his starting job.

**Who is Jordan Reed?:** He is the type of big, athletic tight end that has become the prototype for the position in a pass-happy NFL, and his 45 receptions as a rookie were second on the Redskins. Yet his potential is matched only by the mystery of what he can contribute to the offense.

He's been on almost everyone's sleeper list heading into the season, but consider he dealt with significant concussion issues and missed a total of seven games; his biggest game (9 catches, 134 yards, 1 TD) came against an atrocious Bears defense; and, perhaps most importantly for gauging what role he will play this year, the touted tandem of Jermaine Gresham and Tyler Eifert were fantasy busts with the Bengals in 2013.

Reed is certainly worth a flier, but it remains to be seen if he can live up to the hype as a fantasy starter.

As a fantasy option, you're just digging yourself a hole if you're counting on (Robert) Griffin right away.

# 'A GREAT EXAMPLE'

Smith fills a needed role for Ravens as fiery leader, mentor

By Jason Butt

SPECIAL TO THE WASHINGTON TIMES

OWINGS MILLS, MD.

**W**hen Michael Campanaro was an elementary school student, he'd pick up a video game controller and play as the Carolina Panthers in the Madden football franchise series.

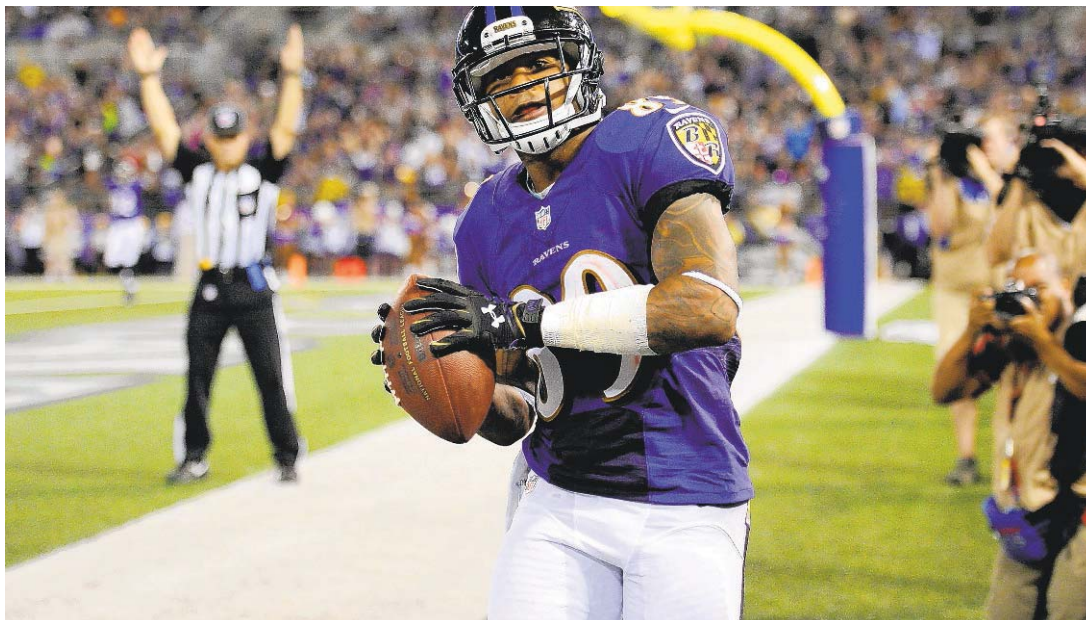
His top target to throw to, of course, was receiver Steve Smith, a diminutive 5-foot-8 receiver who seemed to outleap and outmuscle defenders on NFL Sundays and in digital form.

After the Baltimore Ravens drafted Campanaro, a 5-11 slot receiver out of Wake Forest, in the seventh round of the 2014 NFL draft this past May, the player he once grew up following from afar suddenly became his teammate.

Campanaro's early encounters with Smith made quite the impression on the youngster. Not only was Smith, 35, still moving around like a much younger receiver, he was the most studious of the bunch in the early film room sessions.

"He's the most detail-oriented guy I've been around as a wide receiver," Campanaro said. "It's crazy because he's been in the league for so long you'd think he knows it all. He has the most notes in his notebook. It's a great example to look after."

Smith is entering his 14th NFL season, his first away from Carolina. The Panthers unceremoniously cut Smith, arguably the greatest player in franchise history, after 13 years of service. The feisty attitude and gritty style of play were still there, but it was apparent the Panthers didn't think there was much of a long-term future with Smith and the franchise.



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Ravens wide receiver Steve Smith has been a welcome addition to an offense that lacked a fiery leader.

The Ravens, in need of a spark on offense after posting one of the worst seasons on that side of the ball in team history in 2013, swooped in and signed Smith to a three-year contract worth \$10.5 million.

Smith has been a welcome addition to an offense that lacked a fiery leader a year ago. He has already tried to fill a mentor role with his fellow receivers.

"It just comes [to] the point where we have to be transparent with each other and we have to be able to know each other's weaknesses, and we have to be their strengths, and vice versa," Smith said. "That's really what I'm working on with these guys, is being able to know when they need some help with some things, and also, when I need some help with some things. That's been really cool and fun to go through."

A year ago, the Ravens were one-dimensional on offense. The running game was non-existent, tallying a franchise-worst 1,328 yards for the season. Quarterback Joe Flacco threw for 3,912 yards, but tossed 22 interceptions to 19 touchdowns.

Former Ravens linebacker Bart Scott, who is entering his first year as an NFL analyst for the "The NFL Today" on CBS, said Smith could be the missing

link for an offense that has since showed signs of improvement throughout the preseason.

"I think last year Joe Flacco struggled [without] a guy that can win one-on-one battles and a guy he can trust," Scott said. "We all know how explosive Steve Smith is. I think one of his greatest attributes is his competitive nature, coming in and bringing a heartbeat on the offensive side, like [former Ravens receiver] Anquan Boldin was. They really missed that in Baltimore. He's a guy that you can throw the ball up and he'll fight for that ball. He's not going to give up on plays or allow defenders to make him look bad."

He's also teaching his fellow receivers, whose average age is 25, some tips on the field and inside the meeting room. Second-year receiver Marlon Brown, who tied a franchise rookie record with seven touchdowns in 2013, said that there's been a noticeable difference among the wideouts now that Smith has arrived.

"He'll ask a question and I'm like, 'I never would have thought of that scenario,'" Brown said. "He's been playing for so long, he's seen everything. He can pass that knowledge down to us."

Brown added that one technique Smith has harped on is

having the other receivers make sure they're coming back to a thrown ball instead of waiting for it to reach them. It's something Brown admitted he'll let happen at times, and he's been working to change at Smith's advice.

"I think anytime you get a different veteran like Steve, it helps us all out, because each person is different," Ravens receiver Torrey Smith said. "Each person plays different, and even though people have seen the same things, whether its coverages or routes or whatever, not everyone does it that same. So, to learn from him, it has been awesome for all of us."

Steve Smith should find a role as Flacco's underneath option this season in offensive coordinator Gary Kubiak's version of the West Coast offense. The new scheme and Smith's addition should provide a boost to a team that finished 29th a year ago in total offense with just 3074 yards per game.

While Torrey Smith will remain Baltimore's primary deep threat, Steve Smith should be able to get plenty of looks in the short passing game, a staple in the Kubiak offense.

"He's going to bring a defensive mentality and really open things up, if you think about it with the flexibility they have now



## RAVENS SCHEDULE

Sept. 7 Cincinnati	1 p.m.
Sept. 11 Pittsburgh	8:25 p.m.
Sept. 21 at Cleveland	1 p.m.
Sept. 28 Carolina	1 p.m.
Oct. 5 at Indianapolis	1 p.m.
Oct. 12 at Tampa Bay	1 p.m.
Oct. 19 Atlanta	1 p.m.
Oct. 26 at Cincinnati	1 p.m.
Nov. 2 at Pittsburgh-x	8:30 p.m.
Nov. 9 Tennessee	1 p.m.
Nov. 16	BYE
Nov. 24 at New Orleans	8:30 p.m.
Nov. 30 San Diego	1 p.m.
Dec. 7 at Miami	1 p.m.
Dec. 14 Jacksonville	1 p.m.
Dec. 21 at Houston	1 p.m.
Dec. 28 Cleveland	1 p.m.

x-subject to flex scheduling

THE WASHINGTON TIMES

with him and [tight end Dennis] Pitta working the seams and the middle," Scott said.

Smith seems aware that he's not the player he was during his prime in Carolina. But that doesn't mean he can't be effective for the last few years of his career. In 13 years, Smith has totaled 12,197 yards and 67 touchdowns. He won't be expected to notch the gaudy numbers he was recording in the mid-2000s, but he'll look to carry that attitude and aggression that's stayed with him to his new group of teammates.

"You can never perform at as high a level at 35 that you did at 25," Smith said. "My job is to go out there and catch what's catchable and have fun doing it. ..."

"Hopefully, I will accomplish better things statistically, but I'm living the dream. I'm a knucklehead from L.A., and I've been in the league for 14 years. I beat statistics, so I'm happy and I'm having fun. I've beaten a lot of statistics — of where I grew up, of my culture and also of the NFL itself with guys and their longevity!"



# NFC WEEK BY WEEK

## Arizona Cardinals

**Sept. 8** San Diego, 10:20 p.m.  
**Sept. 14** at N.Y. Giants, 1 p.m.  
**Sept. 21** San Francisco, 4:05 p.m.  
**Sept. 28** BYE  
**Oct. 5** at Denver, 4:05 p.m.  
**Oct. 12** Washington, 4:25 p.m.  
**Oct. 19** at Oakland, 4:25 p.m.  
**Oct. 26** Philadelphia, 4:05 p.m.  
**Nov. 2** at Dallas, 1 p.m.  
**Nov. 9** St. Louis, 4:25 p.m.  
**Nov. 16** Detroit, 4:25 p.m.  
**Nov. 23** at Seattle, 4:05 p.m.  
**Nov. 30** at Atlanta, 4:05 p.m.  
**Dec. 7** Kansas City, 4:05 p.m.  
**Dec. 11** at St. Louis, 8:25 p.m.  
**Dec. 21** Seattle-x, 8:30 p.m.  
**Dec. 28** at San Francisco, 4:25 p.m.

## Atlanta Falcons

**Sept. 7** New Orleans, 1 p.m.  
**Sept. 14** at Cincinnati, 1 p.m.  
**Sept. 18** Tampa Bay, 8:25 p.m.  
**Sept. 28** at Minnesota, 4:25 p.m.  
**Oct. 5** at N.Y. Giants, 1 p.m.  
**Oct. 12** Chicago, 1 p.m.  
**Oct. 19** at Baltimore, 1 p.m.  
**Oct. 26** Detroit (London), 9:30 a.m.  
**Nov. 2** BYE  
**Nov. 9** at Tampa Bay, 1 p.m.  
**Nov. 16** at Carolina, 1 p.m.  
**Nov. 23** Cleveland, 1 p.m.  
**Nov. 30** Arizona, 4:05 p.m.  
**Dec. 8** at Green Bay, 8:30 p.m.  
**Dec. 14** Pittsburgh, 1 p.m.  
**Dec. 21** at New Orleans, 1 p.m.  
**Dec. 28** Carolina, 1 p.m.

## Carolina Panthers

**Sept. 7** at Tampa Bay, 4:25 p.m.  
**Sept. 14** Detroit, 1 p.m.  
**Sept. 21** Pittsburgh, 8:30 p.m.  
**Sept. 28** at Baltimore, 1 p.m.  
**Oct. 5** Chicago, 1 p.m.  
**Oct. 12** at Cincinnati, 1 p.m.  
**Oct. 19** at Green Bay, 1 p.m.  
**Oct. 26** Seattle, 1 p.m.  
**Oct. 30** New Orleans, 8:25 p.m.  
**Nov. 10** at Philadelphia, 8:30 p.m.  
**Nov. 16** Atlanta, 1 p.m.  
**Nov. 23** BYE  
**Nov. 30** at Minnesota, 1 p.m.  
**Dec. 7** at New Orleans, 1 p.m.  
**Dec. 14** Tampa Bay, 1 p.m.  
**Dec. 21** Cleveland, 1 p.m.  
**Dec. 28** at Atlanta, 1 p.m.

## Chicago Bears

**Sept. 7** Buffalo, 1 p.m.  
**Sept. 14** at San Francisco, 8:30 p.m.  
**Sept. 22** at N.Y. Jets, 8:30 p.m.  
**Sept. 28** Green Bay, 1 p.m.  
**Oct. 5** at Carolina, 1 p.m.  
**Oct. 12** at Atlanta, 1 p.m.  
**Oct. 19** Miami, 1 p.m.  
**Oct. 26** at New England, 1 p.m.  
**Nov. 2** BYE  
**Nov. 9** at Green Bay-x, 8:30 p.m.  
**Nov. 16** Minnesota, 1 p.m.  
**Nov. 23** Tampa Bay, 1 p.m.  
**Nov. 27** at Detroit, 12:30 p.m.

**Dec. 4** Dallas, 8:25 p.m.  
**Dec. 15** New Orleans, 8:30 p.m.  
**Dec. 21** Detroit, 1 p.m.  
**Dec. 28** at Minnesota, 1 p.m.

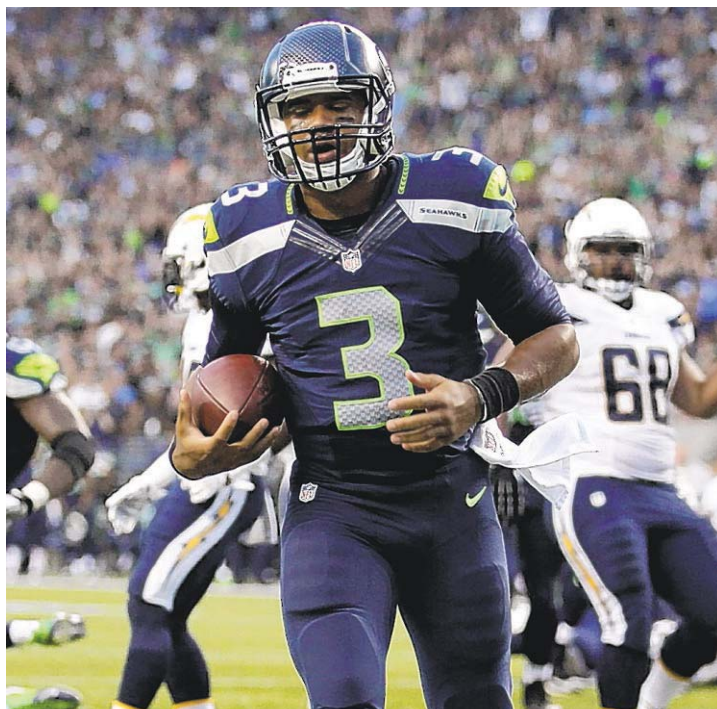
## Dallas Cowboys

**Sept. 7** San Francisco, 4:25 p.m.  
**Sept. 14** at Tennessee, 1 p.m.  
**Sept. 21** at St. Louis, 1 p.m.

**Dec. 7** Tampa Bay, 1 p.m.  
**Dec. 14** Minnesota, 1 p.m.  
**Dec. 21** at Chicago, 1 p.m.  
**Dec. 28** at Green Bay, 1 p.m.

## Green Bay Packers

**Sept. 4** at Seattle, 8:30 p.m.  
**Sept. 14** N.Y. Jets, 4:25 p.m.  
**Sept. 21** at Detroit, 1 p.m.



ASSOCIATED PRESS

The Seahawks begin their Super Bowl defense against the Packers.

**Sept. 28** New Orleans, 7:30 p.m.  
**Oct. 5** Houston, 1 p.m.  
**Oct. 12** at Seattle, 4:25 p.m.  
**Oct. 19** N.Y. Giants, 4:25 p.m.  
**Oct. 27** Washington, 8:30 p.m.  
**Nov. 2** Arizona, 1 p.m.  
**Nov. 9** at Jacksonville (London), 1 p.m.  
**Nov. 16** BYE  
**Nov. 23** at N.Y. Giants-x, 8:30 p.m.  
**Nov. 27** Philadelphia, 4:30 p.m.  
**Dec. 4** at Chicago, 8:25 p.m.  
**Dec. 14** at Philadelphia-x, 8:30 p.m.  
**Dec. 21** Indianapolis, 4:25 p.m.  
**Dec. 28** at Washington, 1 p.m.

## Detroit Lions

**Sept. 8** N.Y. Giants, 7:10 p.m.  
**Sept. 14** at Carolina, 1 p.m.  
**Sept. 21** Green Bay, 1 p.m.  
**Sept. 28** at N.Y. Jets, 1 p.m.  
**Oct. 5** Buffalo, 1 p.m.  
**Oct. 12** at Minnesota, 1 p.m.  
**Oct. 19** New Orleans, 1 p.m.  
**Oct. 26** at Atlanta (London), 9:30 a.m.  
**Nov. 2** BYE  
**Nov. 9** Miami, 1 p.m.  
**Nov. 16** at Arizona, 4:25 p.m.  
**Nov. 23** at New England, 1 p.m.  
**Nov. 27** Chicago, 12:30 p.m.

**Sept. 28** at Chicago, 1 p.m.  
**Oct. 2** Minnesota, 8:25 p.m.  
**Oct. 12** at Miami, 1 p.m.  
**Oct. 19** Carolina, 1 p.m.  
**Oct. 26** at New Orleans-x, 8:30 p.m.  
**Nov. 2** BYE  
**Nov. 9** Chicago-x, 8:30 p.m.  
**Nov. 16** Philadelphia, 1 p.m.  
**Nov. 23** at Minnesota, 1 p.m.  
**Nov. 30** New England, 4:25 p.m.  
**Dec. 8** Atlanta, 8:30 p.m.  
**Dec. 14** at Buffalo, 1 p.m.  
**Dec. 21** at Tampa Bay, 1 p.m.  
**Dec. 28** Detroit, 1 p.m.

## Minnesota Vikings

**Sept. 7** at St. Louis, 1 p.m.  
**Sept. 14** New England, 1 p.m.  
**Sept. 21** at New Orleans, 1 p.m.  
**Sept. 28** Atlanta, 4:25 p.m.  
**Oct. 2** at Green Bay, 8:25 p.m.  
**Oct. 12** Detroit, 1 p.m.  
**Oct. 19** at Buffalo, 1 p.m.  
**Oct. 26** at Tampa Bay, 1 p.m.  
**Nov. 2** Washington, 1 p.m.  
**Nov. 9** BYE  
**Nov. 16** at Chicago, 1 p.m.  
**Nov. 23** Green Bay, 1 p.m.  
**Nov. 30** Carolina, 1 p.m.

**Dec. 7** N.Y. Jets, 1 p.m.  
**Dec. 14** at Detroit, 1 p.m.  
**Dec. 21** at Miami, 1 p.m.  
**Dec. 28** Chicago, 1 p.m.

## New Orleans Saints

**Sept. 7** at Atlanta, 1 p.m.  
**Sept. 14** at Cleveland, 1 p.m.  
**Sept. 21** Minnesota, 1 p.m.  
**Sept. 28** at Dallas, 7:30 p.m.  
**Oct. 5** Tampa Bay, 1 p.m.  
**Oct. 12** BYE  
**Oct. 19** at Detroit, 1 p.m.  
**Oct. 26** Green Bay-x, 8:30 p.m.  
**Oct. 30** at Carolina, 8:25 p.m.  
**Nov. 9** San Francisco, 1 p.m.  
**Nov. 16** Cincinnati, 1 p.m.  
**Nov. 24** Baltimore, 8:30 p.m.  
**Nov. 30** at Pittsburgh, 1 p.m.  
**Dec. 7** Carolina, 1 p.m.  
**Dec. 15** at Chicago, 8:30 p.m.  
**Dec. 21** Atlanta, 1 p.m.  
**Dec. 28** at Tampa Bay, 1 p.m.

## New York Giants

**Sept. 8** at Detroit, 7:10 p.m.  
**Sept. 14** Arizona, 1 p.m.  
**Sept. 21** Houston, 1 p.m.  
**Sept. 25** at Washington, 8:25 p.m.  
**Oct. 5** Atlanta, 1 p.m.  
**Oct. 12** at Philadelphia-x, 8:30 p.m.  
**Oct. 19** at Dallas, 4:25 p.m.  
**Oct. 26** BYE  
**Nov. 3** Indianapolis, 8:30 p.m.  
**Nov. 9** at Seattle, 4:25 p.m.  
**Nov. 16** San Francisco, 1 p.m.  
**Nov. 23** Dallas-x, 8:30 p.m.  
**Nov. 30** at Jacksonville, 1 p.m.  
**Dec. 7** at Tennessee, 1 p.m.  
**Dec. 14** Washington, 1 p.m.  
**Dec. 21** at St. Louis, 4:05 p.m.  
**Dec. 28** Philadelphia, 1 p.m.

## Philadelphia Eagles

**Sept. 7** Jacksonville, 1 p.m.  
**Sept. 15** at Indianapolis, 8:30 p.m.  
**Sept. 21** Washington, 1 p.m.  
**Sept. 28** at San Francisco, 4:25 p.m.  
**Oct. 5** St. Louis, 1 p.m.  
**Oct. 12** N.Y. Giants-x, 8:30 p.m.  
**Oct. 19** BYE  
**Oct. 26** at Arizona, 4:05 p.m.  
**Nov. 2** at Houston, 1 p.m.  
**Nov. 10** Carolina, 8:30 p.m.  
**Nov. 16** at Green Bay, 1 p.m.  
**Nov. 23** Tennessee, 1 p.m.  
**Nov. 27** at Dallas, 4:30 p.m.  
**Dec. 7** Seattle, 4:25 p.m.  
**Dec. 14** Dallas-x, 8:30 p.m.  
**Dec. 20** at Washington, 4:30 or 8:15 p.m.  
**Dec. 28** at N.Y. Giants, 1 p.m.

## St. Louis Rams

**Sept. 7** Minnesota, 1 p.m.  
**Sept. 14** at Tampa Bay, 4:05 p.m.  
**Sept. 21** Dallas, 1 p.m.  
**Sept. 28** BYE

**Oct. 5** at Philadelphia, 1 p.m.  
**Oct. 13** San Francisco, 7:30 p.m.  
**Oct. 19** Seattle, 1 p.m.  
**Oct. 26** at Kansas City, 1 p.m.  
**Nov. 2** at San Francisco, 4:05 p.m.  
**Nov. 9** at Arizona, 4:25 p.m.  
**Nov. 16** Denver, 1 p.m.  
**Nov. 23** at San Diego, 4:05 p.m.  
**Nov. 30** Oakland, 1 p.m.  
**Dec. 7** at Washington, 1 p.m.  
**Dec. 11** Arizona, 8:25 p.m.  
**Dec. 21** N.Y. Giants, 4:05 p.m.  
**Dec. 28** at Seattle, 4:25 p.m.

## San Francisco 49ers

**Sept. 7** at Dallas, 4:25 p.m.  
**Sept. 14** Chicago, 8:30 p.m.  
**Sept. 21** at Arizona, 4:05 p.m.  
**Sept. 28** Philadelphia, 4:25 p.m.  
**Oct. 5** Kansas City, 4:25 p.m.  
**Oct. 13** at St. Louis, 7:30 p.m.  
**Oct. 19** at Denver-x, 8:30 p.m.  
**Oct. 26** BYE  
**Nov. 2** St. Louis, 4:05 p.m.  
**Nov. 9** at New Orleans, 1 p.m.  
**Nov. 16** at N.Y. Giants, 1 p.m.  
**Nov. 23** Washington, 4:25 p.m.  
**Nov. 27** Seattle, 8:30 p.m.  
**Dec. 7** at Oakland, 4:25 p.m.  
**Dec. 14** at Seattle, 4:25 p.m.  
**Dec. 20** San Diego, 4:30 or 8:15 p.m.  
**Dec. 28** Arizona, 4:25 p.m.

## Seattle Seahawks

**Sept. 4** Green Bay, 8:30 p.m.  
**Sept. 14** at San Diego, 4:05 p.m.  
**Sept. 21** Denver, 4:25 p.m.  
**Sept. 28** BYE  
**Oct. 6** at Washington, 8:30 p.m.  
**Oct. 12** Dallas, 4:25 p.m.  
**Oct. 19** at St. Louis, 1 p.m.  
**Oct. 26** at Carolina, 1 p.m.  
**Nov. 2** Oakland, 4:25 p.m.  
**Nov. 9** N.Y. Giants, 4:25 p.m.  
**Nov. 16** at Kansas City, 1 p.m.  
**Nov. 23** Arizona, 4:05 p.m.  
**Nov. 27** at San Francisco, 8:30 p.m.  
**Dec. 7** at Philadelphia, 4:25 p.m.  
**Dec. 14** San Francisco, 4:25 p.m.  
**Dec. 21** at Arizona-x, 8:30 p.m.  
**Dec. 28** St. Louis, 4:25 p.m.

## Tampa Bay Buccaneers

**Sept. 7** Carolina, 4:25 p.m.  
**Sept. 14** St. Louis, 4:05 p.m.  
**Sept. 18** at Atlanta, 8:25 p.m.  
**Sept. 28** at Pittsburgh, 1 p.m.  
**Oct. 5** at New Orleans, 1 p.m.  
**Oct. 12** Baltimore, 1 p.m.  
**Oct. 19** BYE  
**Oct. 26** Minnesota, 1 p.m.  
**Nov. 2** at Cleveland, 1 p.m.  
**Nov. 9** Atlanta, 1 p.m.  
**Nov. 16** at Washington, 1 p.m.  
**Nov. 23** at Chicago, 1 p.m.  
**Nov. 30** Cincinnati, 1 p.m.  
**Dec. 7** at Detroit, 1 p.m.  
**Dec. 14** at Carolina, 1 p.m.  
**Dec. 21** Green Bay, 1 p.m.  
**Dec. 28** New Orleans, 1 p.m.  
 x-subject to flex scheduling

# AFC WEEK BY WEEK

## Buffalo Bills

**Sept. 7** at Chicago, 1 p.m.  
**Sept. 14** Miami, 1 p.m.  
**Sept. 21** San Diego, 1 p.m.  
**Sept. 28** at Houston, 1 p.m.  
**Oct. 5** at Detroit, 1 p.m.  
**Oct. 12** New England, 1 p.m.  
**Oct. 19** Minnesota, 1 p.m.  
**Oct. 26** at N.Y. Jets, 1 p.m.  
**Nov. 2** BYE  
**Nov. 9** Kansas City, 1 p.m.  
**Nov. 13** at Miami, 8:25 p.m.  
**Nov. 23** N.Y. Jets, 1 p.m.  
**Nov. 30** Cleveland, 1 p.m.  
**Dec. 7** at Denver, 4:05 p.m.  
**Dec. 14** Green Bay, 1 p.m.  
**Dec. 21** at Oakland, 4:25 p.m.  
**Dec. 28** at New England, 1 p.m.

## Cincinnati Bengals

**Sept. 7** at Baltimore, 1 p.m.  
**Sept. 14** Atlanta, 1 p.m.  
**Sept. 21** Tennessee, 1 p.m.  
**Sept. 28** BYE  
**Oct. 5** at New England-x, 8:30 p.m.  
**Oct. 12** Carolina, 1 p.m.  
**Oct. 19** at Indianapolis, 1 p.m.  
**Oct. 26** Baltimore, 1 p.m.  
**Nov. 2** Jacksonville, 1 p.m.  
**Nov. 6** Cleveland, 8:25 p.m.  
**Nov. 16** at New Orleans, 1 p.m.  
**Nov. 23** at Houston, 1 p.m.  
**Nov. 30** at Tampa Bay, 1 p.m.  
**Dec. 7** Pittsburgh, 1 p.m.  
**Dec. 14** at Cleveland, 1 p.m.  
**Dec. 22** Denver, 8:30 p.m.  
**Dec. 28** at Pittsburgh, 1 p.m.

## Cleveland Browns

**Sept. 7** at Pittsburgh, 1 p.m.  
**Sept. 14** New Orleans, 1 p.m.  
**Sept. 21** Baltimore, 1 p.m.  
**Sept. 28** BYE  
**Oct. 5** at Tennessee, 1 p.m.  
**Oct. 12** Pittsburgh, 1 p.m.  
**Oct. 19** at Jacksonville, 1 p.m.  
**Oct. 26** Oakland, 4:25 p.m.  
**Nov. 2** Tampa Bay, 1 p.m.  
**Nov. 6** at Cincinnati, 8:25 p.m.  
**Nov. 16** Houston, 1 p.m.  
**Nov. 23** at Atlanta, 1 p.m.  
**Nov. 30** at Buffalo, 1 p.m.  
**Dec. 7** Indianapolis, 1 p.m.  
**Dec. 14** Cincinnati, 1 p.m.  
**Dec. 21** at Carolina, 1 p.m.  
**Dec. 28** at Baltimore, 1 p.m.

## Denver Broncos

**Sept. 7** Indianapolis, 8:30 p.m.  
**Sept. 14** Kansas City, 4:25 p.m.  
**Sept. 21** at Seattle, 4:25 p.m.  
**Sept. 28** BYE  
**Oct. 5** Arizona, 4:05 p.m.  
**Oct. 12** at N.Y. Jets, 1 p.m.  
**Oct. 19** San Francisco-x, 8:30 p.m.  
**Oct. 23** San Diego, 8:25 p.m.  
**Nov. 2** at New England, 4:25 p.m.  
**Nov. 9** at Oakland, 4:05 p.m.  
**Nov. 16** at St. Louis, 1 p.m.  
**Nov. 23** Miami, 4:25 p.m.  
**Nov. 30** at Kansas City-x, 8:30 p.m.

**Dec. 7** Buffalo, 4:05 p.m.  
**Dec. 14** at San Diego, 4:05 p.m.  
**Dec. 22** at Cincinnati, 8:30 p.m.  
**Dec. 28** Oakland, 4:25 p.m.

## Houston Texans

**Sept. 7** Washington, 1 p.m.  
**Sept. 14** at Oakland, 4:25 p.m.  
**Sept. 21** at N.Y. Giants, 1 p.m.  
**Sept. 28** Buffalo, 1 p.m.  
**Oct. 5** at Dallas, 1 p.m.  
**Oct. 9** Indianapolis, 8:25 p.m.  
**Oct. 20** at Pittsburgh, 8:30 p.m.  
**Oct. 26** at Tennessee, 1 p.m.  
**Nov. 2** Philadelphia, 1 p.m.  
**Nov. 9** BYE  
**Nov. 16** at Cleveland, 1 p.m.  
**Nov. 23** Cincinnati, 1 p.m.  
**Nov. 30** Tennessee, 1 p.m.  
**Dec. 7** at Jacksonville, 1 p.m.  
**Dec. 14** at Indianapolis, 1 p.m.  
**Dec. 21** Baltimore, 1 p.m.  
**Dec. 28** Jacksonville, 1 p.m.

## Indianapolis Colts

**Sept. 7** at Denver, 8:30 p.m.  
**Sept. 15** Philadelphia, 8:30 p.m.  
**Sept. 21** at Jacksonville, 1 p.m.  
**Sept. 28** Tennessee, 1 p.m.  
**Oct. 5** Baltimore, 1 p.m.  
**Oct. 9** at Houston, 8:25 p.m.  
**Oct. 19** Cincinnati, 1 p.m.  
**Oct. 26** at Pittsburgh, 4:25 p.m.  
**Nov. 3** at N.Y. Giants, 8:30 p.m.  
**Nov. 9** BYE  
**Nov. 16** New England-x, 8:30 p.m.  
**Nov. 23** Jacksonville, 1 p.m.  
**Nov. 30** Washington, 1 p.m.  
**Dec. 7** at Cleveland, 1 p.m.  
**Dec. 14** Houston, 1 p.m.  
**Dec. 21** at Dallas, 4:25 p.m.  
**Dec. 28** at Tennessee, 1 p.m.

## Jacksonville Jaguars

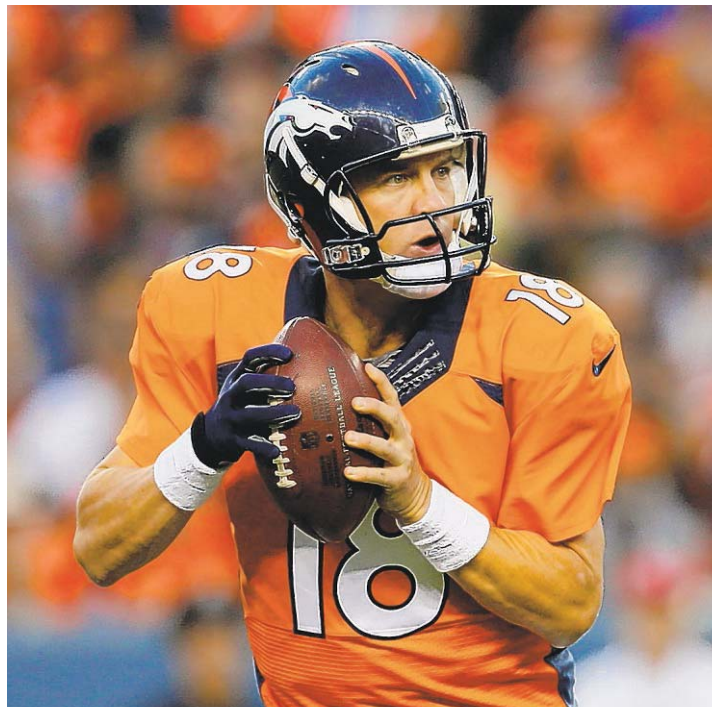
**Sept. 7** at Philadelphia, 1 p.m.  
**Sept. 14** at Washington, 1 p.m.  
**Sept. 21** Indianapolis, 1 p.m.  
**Sept. 28** at San Diego, 4:05 p.m.  
**Oct. 5** Pittsburgh, 1 p.m.  
**Oct. 12** at Tennessee, 1 p.m.  
**Oct. 19** Cleveland, 1 p.m.  
**Oct. 26** Miami, 1 p.m.  
**Nov. 2** at Cincinnati, 1 p.m.  
**Nov. 9** Dallas (London), 1 p.m.  
**Nov. 16** BYE  
**Nov. 23** at Indianapolis, 1 p.m.  
**Nov. 30** N.Y. Giants, 1 p.m.  
**Dec. 7** Houston, 1 p.m.  
**Dec. 14** at Baltimore, 1 p.m.  
**Dec. 18** Tennessee, 8:25 p.m.  
**Dec. 28** at Houston, 1 p.m.

## Kansas City Chiefs

**Sept. 7** Tennessee, 1 p.m.  
**Sept. 14** at Denver, 4:25 p.m.  
**Sept. 21** at Miami, 4:25 p.m.  
**Sept. 29** New England, 7:30 p.m.

**Oct. 5** at San Francisco, 4:25 p.m.  
**Oct. 12** BYE  
**Oct. 19** at San Diego, 4:05 p.m.  
**Oct. 26** St. Louis, 1 p.m.  
**Nov. 2** N.Y. Jets, 1 p.m.  
**Nov. 9** at Buffalo, 1 p.m.  
**Nov. 16** Seattle, 1 p.m.  
**Nov. 20** at Oakland, 8:25 p.m.  
**Nov. 30** Denver-x, 8:30 p.m.  
**Dec. 7** at Arizona, 4:05 p.m.

**Oct. 5** Cincinnati-x, 8:30 p.m.  
**Oct. 12** at Buffalo, 1 p.m.  
**Oct. 16** N.Y. Jets, 8:25 p.m.  
**Oct. 26** Chicago, 1 p.m.  
**Nov. 2** Denver, 4:25 p.m.  
**Nov. 9** BYE  
**Nov. 16** at Indianapolis-x, 8:30 p.m.  
**Nov. 23** Detroit, 1 p.m.  
**Nov. 30** at Green Bay, 4:25 p.m.  
**Dec. 7** at San Diego-x, 8:30 p.m.



ASSOCIATED PRESS

The Broncos' Peyton Manning faces his old team in the season opener.

**Dec. 14** Oakland, 1 p.m.  
**Dec. 21** at Pittsburgh, 1 p.m.  
**Dec. 28** San Diego, 1 p.m.

## Miami Dolphins

**Sept. 7** New England, 1 p.m.  
**Sept. 14** at Buffalo, 1 p.m.  
**Sept. 21** Kansas City, 4:25 p.m.  
**Sept. 28** at Oakland (London), 1 p.m.  
**Oct. 5** BYE  
**Oct. 12** Green Bay, 1 p.m.  
**Oct. 19** at Chicago, 1 p.m.  
**Oct. 26** at Jacksonville, 1 p.m.  
**Nov. 2** San Diego, 1 p.m.  
**Nov. 9** at Detroit, 1 p.m.  
**Nov. 13** Buffalo, 8:25 p.m.  
**Nov. 23** at Denver, 4:25 p.m.  
**Dec. 1** at N.Y. Jets, 8:30 p.m.  
**Dec. 7** Baltimore, 1 p.m.  
**Dec. 14** at New England, 1 p.m.  
**Dec. 21** Minnesota, 1 p.m.  
**Dec. 28** N.Y. Jets, 1 p.m.

## New England Patriots

**Sept. 7** at Miami, 1 p.m.  
**Sept. 14** at Minnesota, 1 p.m.  
**Sept. 21** Oakland, 1 p.m.  
**Sept. 29** at Kansas City, 7:30 p.m.

**Dec. 14** Miami, 1 p.m.  
**Dec. 21** at N.Y. Jets, 1 p.m.  
**Dec. 28** Buffalo, 1 p.m.

## New York Jets

**Sept. 7** Oakland, 1 p.m.  
**Sept. 14** at Green Bay, 4:25 p.m.  
**Sept. 22** Chicago, 8:30 p.m.  
**Sept. 28** Detroit, 1 p.m.  
**Oct. 5** at San Diego, 4:25 p.m.  
**Oct. 12** Denver, 1 p.m.  
**Oct. 16** at New England, 8:25 p.m.  
**Oct. 26** Buffalo, 1 p.m.  
**Nov. 2** at Kansas City, 1 p.m.  
**Nov. 9** Pittsburgh, 1 p.m.  
**Nov. 16** BYE  
**Nov. 23** at Buffalo, 1 p.m.  
**Dec. 1** Miami, 8:30 p.m.  
**Dec. 7** at Minnesota, 1 p.m.  
**Dec. 14** at Tennessee, 4:05 p.m.  
**Dec. 21** New England, 1 p.m.  
**Dec. 28** at Miami, 1 p.m.

## Oakland Raiders

**Sept. 7** at N.Y. Jets, 1 p.m.  
**Sept. 14** Houston, 4:25 p.m.  
**Sept. 21** at New England, 1 p.m.  
**Sept. 28** Miami (London), 1 p.m.

**Oct. 5** BYE  
**Oct. 12** San Diego, 4:05 p.m.  
**Oct. 19** Arizona, 4:25 p.m.  
**Oct. 26** at Cleveland, 4:25 p.m.  
**Nov. 2** at Seattle, 4:25 p.m.  
**Nov. 9** Denver, 4:05 p.m.  
**Nov. 16** at San Diego, 4:05 p.m.  
**Nov. 20** Kansas City, 8:25 p.m.  
**Nov. 30** at St. Louis, 1 p.m.  
**Dec. 7** San Francisco, 4:25 p.m.  
**Dec. 14** at Kansas City, 1 p.m.  
**Dec. 21** Buffalo, 4:25 p.m.  
**Dec. 28** at Denver, 4:25 p.m.

## Pittsburgh Steelers

**Sept. 7** Cleveland, 1 p.m.  
**Sept. 11** at Baltimore, 8:25 p.m.  
**Sept. 21** at Carolina, 8:30 p.m.  
**Sept. 28** Tampa Bay, 1 p.m.  
**Oct. 5** at Jacksonville, 1 p.m.  
**Oct. 12** at Cleveland, 1 p.m.  
**Oct. 20** Houston, 8:30 p.m.  
**Oct. 26** Indianapolis, 4:25 p.m.  
**Nov. 2** Baltimore-x, 8:30 p.m.  
**Nov. 9** at N.Y. Jets, 1 p.m.  
**Nov. 17** at Tennessee, 8:30 p.m.  
**Nov. 23** BYE  
**Nov. 30** New Orleans, 1 p.m.  
**Dec. 7** at Cincinnati, 1 p.m.  
**Dec. 14** at Atlanta, 1 p.m.  
**Dec. 21** Kansas City, 1 p.m.  
**Dec. 28** Cincinnati, 1 p.m.

## San Diego Chargers

**Sept. 8** at Arizona, 10:20 p.m.  
**Sept. 14** Seattle, 4:05 p.m.  
**Sept. 21** at Buffalo, 1 p.m.  
**Sept. 28** Jacksonville, 4:05 p.m.  
**Oct. 5** N.Y. Jets, 4:25 p.m.  
**Oct. 12** at Oakland, 4:05 p.m.  
**Oct. 19** Kansas City, 4:05 p.m.  
**Oct. 23** at Denver, 8:25 p.m.  
**Nov. 2** at Miami, 1 p.m.  
**Nov. 9** BYE  
**Nov. 16** Oakland, 4:05 p.m.  
**Nov. 23** St. Louis, 4:05 p.m.  
**Nov. 30** at Baltimore, 1 p.m.  
**Dec. 7** New England-x, 8:30 p.m.  
**Dec. 14** Denver, 4:05 p.m.  
**Dec. 20** at San Francisco, 4:30 or 8:15 p.m.  
**Dec. 28** at Kansas City, 1 p.m.

## Tennessee Titans

**Sept. 7** at Kansas City, 1 p.m.  
**Sept. 14** Dallas, 1 p.m.  
**Sept. 21** at Cincinnati, 1 p.m.  
**Sept. 28** at Indianapolis, 1 p.m.  
**Oct. 5** Cleveland, 1 p.m.  
**Oct. 12** Jacksonville, 1 p.m.  
**Oct. 19** at Washington, 1 p.m.  
**Oct. 26** Houston, 1 p.m.  
**Nov. 2** BYE  
**Nov. 9** at Baltimore, 1 p.m.  
**Nov. 17** Pittsburgh, 8:30 p.m.  
**Nov. 23** at Philadelphia, 1 p.m.  
**Nov. 30** at Houston, 1 p.m.  
**Dec. 7** N.Y. Giants, 1 p.m.  
**Dec. 14** N.Y. Jets, 4:05 p.m.  
**Dec. 18** at Jacksonville, 8:25 p.m.  
**Dec. 28** Indianapolis, 1 p.m.  
 x=subject to flex scheduling

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