

# NFL OFFSEASON PREVIEW 2019



**The Cap Explosion in  
The NFL**

**Free Agents 2019 for  
All 32 Teams**

**The Falcons Look  
to Improve Line  
Play**

**The Six-Time  
Champion Patriots  
Offseason**

**680 The Fan's Carlos Medina aka "Front Office Los"  
breaks down all 32 NFL teams with in-depth  
analysis and research covering the  
2019 offseason.**

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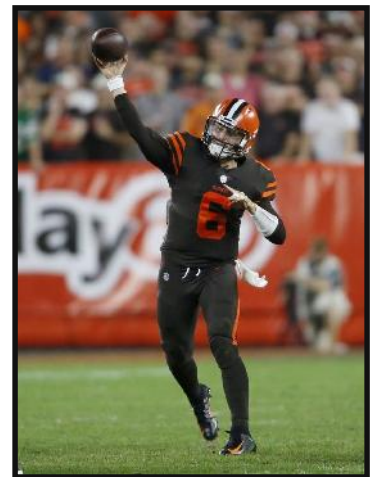
# THE 2019 OFFSEASON

The Cap Explosion

## This Cap Creates Flexibility

Welcome to the 2019 NFL Offseason. This is the point where every NFL team has the chance to significantly alter their upcoming season with shrewd moves in both free agency and the draft. Just last year several teams made significant moves that proved to be major factors during the 2018 season.

- The Super Bowl Champion New England Patriots traded receiver Brandin Cooks to the Los Angeles Rams for a first round pick. The Patriots added a left tackle and were free to use their own pick on running back Sony Michel. Cooks would have a 1,200 yard season for the NFC Champion Rams.
- The Chicago Bears created offense by signing receivers Allen Robinson and Taylor Gabriel along with tight end Trey Burton for their young quarterback. The Bears would go on to win the NFC North.
- The Cleveland Browns traded for and signed receiver Jarvis Landry and proceeded to draft quarterback Baker Mayfield. The Browns had their most successful season in years.
- The Indianapolis Colts signed tight end Eric Ebron who had been considered a bust during his time in Detroit. Ebron put together the best season of his career and helped Andrew Luck as he returned from injury. Ebron was one of the few free agents to receive a Pro Bowl berth.
- The Los Angeles Rams would add significant pieces to their defense by trading for cornerbacks Aqib Talib and Marcus Peters from Denver and Kansas City respectively. The team would also add veteran defensive tackle Ndamukong Suh to pair with Aaron Donald.



This offseason only two NFL teams (Jacksonville and Philadelphia) are over the cap heading into the start of the new season. Both can easily get under it. With the additional revenue streams coming into the league, the cap is going to jump to somewhere in the neighborhood of \$190 million dollars.

For NFL fans, that means money to keep your own talent in-house. That means money to be active in free agency or to take on sizable contracts in the trade market. This offseason will reward the teams who have stayed flexible and smart with their contracts as well as those who have drafted well in years past.

# NFC SOUTH 2019



**New Orleans Saints**  
GM: Mickey Loomis  
Coach: Sean Payton  
2018 Record: 13-3

**Atlanta Falcons**  
GM: Thomas Dimitroff  
Coach: Dan Quinn  
2018 Record: 7-9

**Carolina Panthers**  
GM: Marty Hurney  
Coach: Ron Rivera  
2018 Record: 7-9

**Tampa Bay Buccaneers**  
GM: Jason Licht  
Coach: Bruce Arians  
2018 Record: 5-11

## TEAM BY TEAM PREVIEWS

**The Saints window for a championship is still open despite back-to-back playoff heartbreaks.**

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**New Orleans**  
**2019 Offseason**  
**Off. Rank: 8th**  
**Def. Rank: 14th**

**2018 Record: 13-3**

**Projected Cap Space: \$15 million**



## Two Heartbreakers in Two Years

### Key Free Agents

- **Mark Ingram, RB** - Has never had more than 230 carries during a season in his career. Has averaged well over four yards per carry during his career. 29 years old.
- **Teddy Bridgewater, QB** - The organization dealt a third round pick for his services. They can re-sign him as the heir to Drew Brees. Just 26 years old.
- **Alex Okafor, DE** - Recorded four sacks and hit incentives to earn his free agency.
- **Jermion Bushrod, T** - Has not decided if he will play another season in the NFL. Currently a veteran of 12 seasons. Dealt with a thumb injury that limited him in 2018.
- **Dez Bryant, WR** - A practice injury kept him from ever appearing in a game. Has stated he wants to return to New Orleans.

The New Orleans Saints have won 24 games combined over the past two seasons. The Saints have won two playoff games, and lost two playoff games. But it's the way in which their seasons have ended that makes this group resilient.

After having their 2017 season end against the Vikings with the Minneapolis Miracle, the Saints bounced back to put together the best season of any team in the NFC. A 13-3 record and home field advantage had the Saints ready to head to another Super Bowl.

Then the no-call on Rams cornerback Nickell Robey-Coleman happened. And now it's back to the drawing board for a team that's close to playing for a championship.

Drew Brees turned 40 years old this past season and was his usual brilliant self for much of the early part of the season. But late in the season Brees started to look a little more human as he and the offense slowed down. While injuries to the offensive line were blamed, there was more going on. The Saints scored 30 points just once in their final six games.

The Saints are now a year-to-year football team. As long as Drew Brees is healthy and head coach Sean Payton is calling plays their window is open. But the salary cap is beginning to squeeze the Saints once again, as their talented 2017 draft class will be eligible for new contracts after this season.

So the time is now, minus the heartbreaker.

## Targets for Release/Restructure

**Kurt Coleman, FS:** The veteran safety did not play enough in 2018 to justify his cap hit in 2019. Coleman played in all 16 games and started nine, but was on the field for just 35% of the snaps. His cap hit for 2019 is \$7M. That's just not going to work for a team that has to maximize this window. Cap savings: \$4M

Atlanta Falcons  
2019 Offseason  
Off. Rank: 6th  
Def. Rank: 28th

2018 Record: 7-9

Projected Cap Space: \$29 million



## A Season of Anomalies?



There is two ways of looking at the 2018 Atlanta Falcons and both would be correct. The Falcons were a mediocre team that couldn't stop anyone when it was needed. The Falcons were also the 2nd most injured team in the NFL in terms of man games lost.

The injury situation for the Falcons took away two of their top defensive players in linebacker Deion Jones and safety Keanu Neal during the first game of the season. What followed were injuries to safety Ricardo Allen, guards Andy Levitre and Brandon Fusco, and top defensive tackle Grady Jarrett. Not to forget starting running back Devonta Freeman, who rushed for just 68 yards in 2018.

The Falcons would be right to believe that

with better health in 2019 a return to contention can occur. There is a lot more right with this team than there is wrong. But the Falcons are deficient on both lines of scrimmage.

Head coach Dan Quinn has said that he needs to fix three spots on his offensive line. Despite a respectable 37 sacks in the passing game, the defensive line and linebackers were unable to deal with the opponent's running game. The Falcons gave up 4.9 yards per carry, ranking them 28th in the NFL.

For the Falcons front office and Dan Quinn, it really comes down to which team you believe you have heading into 2019. The mediocre one, or the injured one.

### Key Free Agents

- Grady Jarrett, DT - The best defensive tackle on the market when factoring in age and production in 2018. Had a career high in sacks with six last season. Should command nearly \$17M in average value.
- Tevin Coleman, RB - Was set to have a big season but offensive line issues never had it materialize. Recorded 800 yards rushing and 1,076 from scrimmage.
- Robert Alford, CB - A former starter in Atlanta for six seasons. Has not played to his 2016 level.
- Matt Bryant, K - Set to be 44 years old. Missed games, not kicks in 2018.
- Derrick Shelby, DE - Rotational piece who has had trouble staying healthy during his tenure in Atlanta.

## Targets for Release/Restructure

Vic Beasley, DE: The most complicated contractual situation for this team in years. The former top 10 NFL Draft pick has had a big season in the past but has just 10 sacks over the past two seasons combined. Costing nearly \$13M in 2019, that's too much for a guy of his production. Ideally, the team extends him or re-signs him at a lower number. Cap savings: \$12.8M

Brooks Reid, DE: For a player on the wrong side of 30 years old, the ability to be on the field and producing is key when your cap charge rises. Played just 41% of the snaps last season. Cap savings: \$4.5

(-image source si.com)

**Carolina**  
**2019 Offseason**  
**Off. Rank: 10th**  
**Def. Rank: 15th**

**2018 Record: 7-9**

**Projected Cap Space: \$13 million**



## A Painful Second Half

### Key Free Agents

- Thomas Davis, LB - Started 2018 by missing the first four games due to a PED violation. Long time captain and franchise leader in tackles. Will not be re-signed by the team.
- Ryan Kalil, C - Retired after 12 seasons with the team. Panthers must now find a new center for Cam Newton.
- Eric Reid, S - Started 13 games and recorded 71 tackles. The Panthers would like to bring him back for 2019. *(signed three year deal on 2/11)*
- Devin Funchess, WR - The former second round pick caught 44 passes in 2018 and scored four touchdowns. 161 receptions over four seasons.
- Taylor Heinicke, QB - The status of Cam Newton and his shoulder creates some value for Heinicke. May need to start the 2019 season.

The Carolina Panthers at one point in the 2018 season looked to be one of the best teams in the NFC. A 6-2 start to the season had them looking strong in the NFC playoff race and ready to grab a home playoff game. But that was until linebacker TJ Watt and the Steelers game happened.

Watt landed a brutal hit on Panthers quarterback Cam Newton that altered the course of the Panthers season.

Newton would struggle with a shoulder injury the remainder of the season and eventually would be shut down as the team fell out of contention. The 6-2 start to the season was bookended with a 1-7 finish.

Cam Newton has had shoulder surgery and

will be out for an unknown amount of time. And whether he can still be the physical force under center remains to be seen. One of the bright spots of the season was that Newton completed a career high 67.9% of his passes. He was comfortable taking what he was given and using the weapons around him.

Head coach Ron Rivera survived the collapse and is now looking to rebuild several positions. Offensive line has to be the priority as the Panthers have issues with the lack of health from left tackle Matt Kalil and the retirement of center Ryan Kalil. Edge rusher and safety are also areas of concern.

The 2019 Panthers need a good start, and finish.

## Targets for Release/Restructure

Matt Kalil, LT: Unable to play in 2018 due to a right knee injury. Kalil has not played well in years and has had trouble staying healthy. If the Panthers believe he can't get healthy, he will be designated as a June 1st cut. Cap savings: \$7.8M

Torrey Smith, WR: Had the worst season of his career in 2018. Recorded just 17 receptions, playing in 11 games. Cap savings: \$5M

(-image source usatoday.com)

**Tampa Bay**  
**2019 Offseason**  
**Off. Rank: 3rd**  
**Def. Rank: 27th**

**2018 Record: 5-11**

**Projected Cap Space: \$11 million**



## A Leader Comes to Town

### Key Free Agents

- Kwon Alexander, LB - The 2017 Pro Bowler missed 10 games in 2018 due to injury. Consistent 90+ tackle player when healthy.
- Peyton Barber, RB - A 16 game starter in 2018. Rushed for 871 yards but just 3.7 yards per carry. Totaled nearly 1,000 yards from scrimmage after catching 20 passes.
- Donovan Smith, LT - Has been available for all four years of his career. But projects as just an average to slightly-below average at his position. Better at pass protection than run blocking.
- Ryan Fitzpatrick, QB - Dependable veteran quarterback who can help a team if the starter goes down for a couple of weeks
- Brent Grimes, CB - Veteran who finally saw his ability to intercept the football drop in 2018. Turns 36 before season begins.



Despite being one in the past, Buccaneers quarterback Jameis Winston was one of two quarterbacks who started in the NFL last season but were not voted as a team captain.

It makes sense as Winston missed the start of the season due to a suspension. But after his return, the team was still a group with talent but not leadership. The offense would get up and down the field, but the W's were not part of the results.

The Dirk Koetter era in Tampa is over. Now starts the era of a coach who is widely recognized as one of the best leaders of men in the NFL. Bruce Arians now leads the Buccaneers. His status as a two-time NFL Coach of The Year makes him the lead dog

in any lockerroom he steps into. His swagger and style have made him a favorite amongst veteran and younger players alike. Arians is exactly the type of man the Buccaneers needed to lead this franchise.

There's work to be done for this 5-11 team. Despite their yards and point totals, the Buccaneers need to improve on their offensive line. Buccaneers quarterbacks were sacked 41 times, among the worst in the league.

The defense needs improvement as well. New defensive coordinator Todd Bowles will bring his attacking defense to Florida.

The Buccaneers need leaders. Whether it comes from QB or head coach.

## Targets for Release/Restructure

Vinny Curry, DE: Signed a three year deal worth \$23M dollars in 2018 and delivered a 2.5 sack season. Pass rusher was unable to get after the quarterback with any consistency. Set to count \$8M against the cap. Cap savings: \$8M.

Beau Allen, DT: The emergence of Vita Vea has made Allen's spot on the roster questionable. He simply makes too much money for a 3rd tackle if the team intends to hold onto Gerald McCoy. Cap savings: \$5M.

# NFC EAST 2019

## TEAM BY TEAM PREVIEWS

**The Cowboys and Eagles continue to alternate division championships with young quarterbacks.**

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**Dallas Cowboys**  
GM: Jerry Jones  
Coach: Jason Garrett  
2018 Record: 10-6

**Philadelphia Eagles**  
VP Football: Howie  
Roseman  
Coach: Doug Pederson  
2018 Record: 9-7

**Washington Redskins**  
GM: Scott McCloughan  
Coach: Jay Gruden  
2018 Record: 7-9

**New York Giants**  
GM: Dave Gettleman  
Coach: Pat Shurmur  
2018 Record: 5-11



**Dallas**  
**2019 Offseason**  
**Off. Rank: 22nd**  
**Def. Rank: 7th**

**2018 Record: 10-6**

**Projected Cap Space: \$50 million**



## A Young Step Forward

### Key Free Agents

- DeMarcus Lawrence, DE – Another strong season has Lawrence set for either another franchise tag or a long term contract. Made \$17M in 2018. Looking for more per year.
- Cole Beasley, WR – Recorded 65 receptions in 2018 to bounce back from a lack of targets in 2017. 3rd down specialist who wins from the slot.
- David Irving, DT – A disruptive force on the field, Irving has been unable to stay on the field due to suspensions and injury. A high-ankle sprain basically ended his 2018 season after returning from suspension.
- Tavon Austin, WR – An abdomen injury limited Austin to just an eight catch season during his seven games of action. Was explosive down the field when healthy, averaging 17.5 yards per catch.

The Dallas Cowboys are NFC East champions for the second time in three seasons. But this team was different from some of the more recent versions of the Cowboys.

This Cowboys team was a defensive football team. Dallas rode a front seven led by defensive end DeMarcus Lawrence, linebackers Jaylon Smith and Leighton Vander Esch to a top 10 ranking. Lawrence now enters this offseason once again as a target for the franchise tag if a long term deal can not be reached.

After winning a playoff game but being eliminated by the Rams in the divisional round, the Cowboys are looking for this young team to take another step. Dallas was

The youngest team in the playoffs and the third youngest overall in the league. The development of quarterback Dak Prescott and the offense continues to be the focus of attention. Scott Linehan is out as the offensive coordinator and former Cowboys quarterbacks coach Kellen Moore is in.

The Cowboys will be without a first round pick due to the trade for receiver Amari Cooper. But the team does have plenty of cap space to take care of their own or reach into free agency for a key piece.

Quarterback Dak Prescott is entering the final year of his deal and will soon need an extension.

These Cowboys have been to the playoffs. The next step is the NFC title game.

## Targets for Release/Restructure

Sean Lee, LB – Will turn 33 at the start of training camp. Missed nine games in 2018 because of hamstring injuries. Lee has missed 14 games over the past two seasons. Cap savings: \$7M

Terrance Williams, WR: Played in just two games before a foot injury and suspension ended his season. Finished with just two catches for 18 yards in 2018. His position on the team will be challenged by the rehab of Allen Hurns and the draft. Cap savings: \$2.2M

(-image source usatoday.com)

**Philadelphia**  
**2019 Offseason**  
**Off. Rank: 14th**  
**Def. Rank: 23rd**

2018 Record: 9-7

Projected Cap Space: \$13 million over



## Intrigue Under Center

### Key Free Agents

- Brandon Graham, DE – Recorded four sacks in 2018. A player who's now 31 years old and will command a quality contract.
- Golden Tate, WR – The midseason addition cost the Eagles a 3rd round pick to add to the offense. Caught 74 passes between Lions and Eagles.
- Jay Ajayi, RB - Young and talented, but missed most of 2018 with an ACL injury. Concern over the longevity of his knee plummeted his stock in the NFL Draft.
- Ronald Darby, CB - Has been the most talented cornerback on the roster since coming over in a trade with Buffalo. May be the best young veteran in free agency at his position.
- Jordan Hicks, LB – A talented player who has had trouble staying on the field during his four year career. Missed four games in 2018, to go along with missing nine games the previous season.

After celebrating a Super Bowl victory a season ago, the Philadelphia Eagles returned largely intact and looked to make another run at a championship. The team got back a healthy franchise quarterback in Carson Wentz early in the season, and couldn't possibly suffer the same bad luck injuries as 2017.

But that's not how the NFL works at times.

The 2018 season finished with backup quarterback and former Super Bowl MVP Nick Foles under center again as the team won a playoff game before losing to the Saints in the divisional round. Wentz missed the playoffs with a back injury, adding to one of the most intriguing stories in the NFL this offseason.

The Eagles front office has stated publicly that Carson Wentz is the quarterback in 2019 despite the performance of Nick Foles over the past two postseasons. A playoff win over the Saints may have tipped the scales publicly in favor of Foles, but the loss allows the team to create a clean breakup...sorta.

Foles intends to purchase his free agency by paying the organization two million dollars. That will create a scenario in which the Eagles must decide to either let Foles walk away, or use their franchise tag in order to hold his rights in trade.

Quarterback hungry teams would be interested, but at what cost? The Eagles will have to figure all of this out in order to make another run in 2019.

## Targets for Release/Restructure

Nick Foles, QB – An incredibly unique situation. The Eagles hold a \$20M contract option but Foles must mutually accept it. If he does not, he must pay the team \$2M in order to secure his free agent status. The Eagles may still franchise tag him. Cap savings: It's complicated.

Jason Peters, LT – Peters is still playing at a high level, but the 37 year old may choose to retire from the game. Doing so would help get the Eagles under the cap as they are one of just two teams in the league who are over heading into 2019. Cap savings: \$8M

(-image source si.com)

**Washington**  
**2019 Offseason**  
**Off. Rank: 28th**  
**Def. Rank: 17th**

**2018 Record: 7-9**

**Projected Cap Space: \$14 million**



## A Gruesome Situation

### Key Free Agents

- HaHa Clinton-Dix, S – Came to the team via trade during the season. Did not play a level that would demand a big contract. The Redskins situation at safety may require the team to pay more than they should to keep him.
- Adrian Peterson, RB – Had his first 1,000 yard season rushing since 2015 this past season. Will be 34 years old before the start of 2019 training camp.
- Preston Smith, OLB – A good player who has never had big sack numbers but has been able to create pressure on the quarterback. A good complimentary pass rusher. As healthy as it gets. Has appeared in all 64 games over his four year career, starting 50.
- Jamison Crowder, WR – Had a down year in 2018 due to injury. Caught just 29 passes after 66, 67 and 59 in his previous three seasons. Just 25 years old.

On November 11th of 2018, the Washington Redskins were 6-3 and sitting in first place in the NFC East. But a week in the NFL can change everything. A week later, quarterback Alex Smith would suffer a gruesome leg injury and the Redskins would finish the season 1-6 over their final seven games.

Alex Smith reportedly will not be able to play in 2019 and the team is planning to perhaps see him again in 2020. This presents several problems for the Redskins who have a limited amount of cap space this offseason. Cutting Smith is not realistic as his cap hit would hammer the franchise for most of 2019 and 2020.

But as the highest paid player on the team, not having Smith in 2019 forces the team to

build a roster with one arm tied behind their back.

Due to their 7-9 record in 2018, the Redskins hold the 15th overall pick in the first round of the NFL Draft. That is not an ideal place to draft a quarterback of the future. But given the circumstances, the Redskins will have to find one over the next couple of seasons. Colt McCoy will be the starter in 2019, but a younger option with talent will be needed especially if Alex Smith is unable to play again.

The Redskins in 2018 were set to win their first NFC East division title since 2012. But this league is brutal. And the Redskins were reminded of that in the span of seven days last November.

## Targets for Release/Restructure

Alex Smith, QB – Alex Smith isn't going anywhere because of the contract that he signed in 2018. His four year deal has enough guaranteed money left on it that it would cost the Redskins \$42M to cut him. But a restructure may be in order to create additional cap space. Cap savings: \$16M

Vernon Davis, TE – The 35 year old tight end caught just 25 passes in 2018. The Redskins have a limited amount of cap space, and could have to choose between Davis and tight end Jordan Reed.

(-image source huffingtonpost.com)

**New York**  
**2019 Offseason**  
**Off. Rank: 17th**  
**Def. Rank: 24th**

**2018 Record: 5-11**

**Projected Cap Space: \$27 million**



## The Right Pick for The Franchise?

### Key Free Agents

- Landon Collins, FS – One of the best young safeties in the NFL. Has shown the ability to play in the box or play as a centerfielder. Set to receive a sizable contract or the franchise tag. His deal should approach the \$70-80M mark. The chances of him reaching free agency are very small.
- Mario Edwards, DE – The former second round pick was claimed before 2018. His reputation for inconsistency persisted in New York.
- Corey Coleman, WR (RFA) – The former first round pick has bounced around before making some plays with the Giants. Will require a qualifying offer to secure his services.
- Curtis Riley, DB - The former cornerback was used at safety but had issues with tackling. Still had some success in coverage and recorded four interceptions in 2018.

The 2018 New York Giants made the decision in the NFL Draft to forgo the selection of a young signal caller and select running back Saquon Barkley. Fast forward 10 months, and you'll find that the Giants and Barkley were rewarded with the AP Offensive Rookie of The Year. But the glaring problem still remains for this team. What are they going to do at quarterback?

Eli Manning is now 38 years old and put together a 21 touchdown, 11 interception season in 2018. While Manning is not a hinderance to winning, he is a roadblock to building for the future. The problem of what to do in a post-Manning era was ignored last offseason but is once again the top challenge for this offseason.

The Giants hold the 6th pick in the first round of the 2019 NFL Draft. The challenge for the Giants is that unlike last year, there is no plethora of highly rated draft prospects at quarterback. This year features a mix of intriguing players but no sure-fire top quarterback picks.

Beyond quarterback play, the Giants moved to a 3-4 defense and failed to rank amongst the top half of the league in total defense. The additions made in free agency in 2016 are starting to play like older veteran players who are losing a step.

The Cowboys and Eagles sit atop the NFC East. The Giants have the weapons to play with them. But the rebuild is coming soon. It's only a matter of when.

## Targets for Release/Restructure

Jonathan Stewart, RB – Stewart is due a bonus of \$500,000 on the third day of the league year. Considering his use after being injured in 2018, there is little reason to believe the Giants will pay that bonus. Cap savings: \$2.5M

Connor Barwin, LB – Was signed to be a “hold the fort” type veteran in order to help the younger linebackers making the transition to the 3-4 defense. Was not a factor as the season wore on. Cap savings: \$1.5M

# NFC NORTH 2019

## TEAM BY TEAM PREVIEWS

**The Bears now own the North as an elite group emerges.**

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**Chicago Bears**  
GM: Ryan Pace  
Coach: Matt Nagy  
2018 Record: 12-4

**Minnesota Vikings**  
GM: Rick Spielman  
Coach: Mike Zimmer  
2018 Record: 8-7-1

**Green Bay Packers**  
GM: Brian Gutekunst  
Coach: Matt LaFleur  
2018 Record: 6-9-1

**Detroit Lions**  
GM: Bob Quinn  
Coach: Matt Patricia  
2018 Record: 6-10

**Chicago**  
**2019 Offseason**  
**Off. Rank: 21st**  
**Def. Rank: 3rd**

**2018 Record: 12-4**

**Projected Cap Space: \$20 million**



## A New Monster Emerges in The NFC



### Key Free Agents

- Bryce Callahan, CB - Has proven to be a solid player for the Bears secondary. Ability to play both inside and outside. Started 12 games in 2018 before December injury. Probably the top priority for the Bears this offseason.
- Kevin White, WR - Officially a bust as a top 10 NFL Draft pick. White caught 25 passes during his four year Bears career. Chicago declined his fifth year option and he will now be free to restart his career elsewhere. At 6'3 215lbs, still a physical specimen.
- Adrian Amos, S - 13 game starter in 2018 who had a solid season. Should command a quality contract. Probably not enough cap space to keep him.
- Aaron Lynch, DE - Played on a one year contract in 2018. Recorded three sacks last season as a reserve pass rusher. Provides quality depth at DE/OLB.
- Josh Bellamy, WR - A reserve who provides depth and some special teams ability. A dirty work grinder of a player.

If the 2018 Chicago Bears could be summed up in two words, they would be these: creative and tenacious.

Anchored by an elite defense that made life tough on opposing quarterback, the Bears complimented it with a creative offense to win the NFC North division title. The only blemish on an otherwise outstanding season was the wildcard round loss to the Philadelphia Eagles.

Rookie coach Matt Nagy and the front office made key additions to make 2018 happen. While the trade for linebacker Khalil Mack from Oakland grabbed the headlines, shrewd moves such as the signings of receivers Allen Robinson and Taylor Gabriel gave young quarterback Mitchell Tribisky the

weapons to challenge opposing defenses. Tight end Trey Burton and rookie receiver Anthony Miller rounded out the offensive overhaul.

The Bears window is now as Tribisky currently is underpaid by starting quarterback standards. But taking another step forward will depend on his ability to become more consistent from week to week. Tribisky tossed 24 touchdown passes against just 12 interceptions, but his talent leaves room for growth. A Pro Bowl season for the young starter was a nice consolation prize.

The Bears will be favored to win the NFC North once again as their the most well rounded team in the division. Expect more offensive creativty...and defensive tenacity.

## Targets for Release/Restructure

Jordan Howard, RB: Running backs like Howard do not get extensions at this point in their careers anymore. But his late season performance could garner a new deal. Just 24 years old.

Cody Whitehair, C/G: An interior stalwart for the Bears, Whitehair has started all 48 games of his three year NFL career. The former second round pick enters the final year of his deal in 2019 and will require an extension over the next 12 months. With his experience and performance, he will command a big contract in free agency if he gets there.

(-image wgnplus.com)

**Minnesota**  
**2019 Offseason**  
**Off. Rank: 20th**  
**Def. Rank: 4th**

**2018 Record: 8-7-1**

**Projected Cap Space: \$7 million**



## Change, and The Step Back Season

### Key Free Agents

- Anthony Barr, LB - Consistently plays a ton of snaps during his Vikings career. A four-time Pro Bowler who can play on every down in coverage and as a pass rusher. May be a target for the franchise tag.
- Sheldon Richardson, DT - Put together a solid 2018 that should get him a contract with multiple years and guaranteed money. Recorded 4.5 sacks. Will not be the best DT on the open market, but his youth and production will make him costly.
- Latavius Murray, RB - Has become a solid complimentary back who can run hard and catch the ball out of the backfield. Can start if needed as he has done that in the past.
- Tom Johnson, DT - A player who has been productive while playing in a limited amount of snaps. Recorded 4.5 sacks in 2018. Age is a factor as Johnson will be 35 by the start of 2019. Rotational defensive lineman at this point in his career.

Chemistry, outside of New England, can be one of the most maddening issues in the NFL. Making a change to a coordinator can turn one of the best, or worst offenses into the complete opposite. For the Minnesota Vikings in 2018, making a change at quarterback to a better player got disappointing results.

After leading the Vikings to an 11-3 record in his starts last season, Case Keenum moved on to Denver to start for the Broncos. In came the biggest free agent on the market last offseason in quarterback Kirk Cousins.

For all of the talent that Cousins has it has not translated into consistent winning on the field. His 34-37-2 career record speaks to a player who fills the stat sheet but is always

missing that “it” factor. If you can actually define what “it” is in the NFL.

Vikings receivers Adam Thielen and Stefon Diggs each had career seasons as both went over 1,000 yards. But the Vikings offense took a step back in terms of points and yards from 2017.

Falling from 13-3 to 8-7-1 in 2018, the Vikings clearly lost something. Maybe it was the toughness of their style of play? Maybe it was their quarterback was riding a magical season where everything he tried was working? Maybe it was just their year?

Chemistry in the NFL can not be defined. But you know it when you see. And it shows up in W’s and L’s.

## Targets for Release/Restructure

Everson Griffen, DE: Griffen dealt with mental health issues in 2018 that limited him to 11 games. Griffen was productive recording 5.5 sacks, but the question remains if he can be trusted moving forward with a cost of more than \$11M in cap space. Cap savings: \$11.3M

Andrew Sendejo, SS: The very physical safety dealt with injuries in 2018 playing in just five games. His body may be breaking down after years of punishing physical play. Cap savings: \$5.5M

**Green Bay  
2019 Offseason  
Off. Rank: 12th  
Def. Rank: 18th**

**2018 Record: 6-9-1**

**Projected Cap Space: \$32 million**



## Moving On From a Champion

### Key Free Agents

- Clay Matthews, LB - The 10 year veteran recorded a career low 3.5 sacks in 2018. Set to be 33 years old this season, the best years of Clay Matthews' career are behind him.
- Randall Cobb, WR - Started just six games in 2018 while playing in nine. Injuries were a concern all year. Cobb survived the purge of veterans last offseason. Has reportedly yet to have the Packers talk to him about a new contract.
- Muhammad Wilkerson, DT - Missed the remainder of the season after an ankle injury early in the season. Was on just a one year deal, and will probably have to prove his health on a short term deal again. Will be 30 in October.
- Byron Bell, G - Started nine games and played in 2018. Has bounced around the league as a quality veteran who can perform in short stints.
- Justin McCray, G - Won a starting guard job but ended up losing it when a shoulder injury lingered throughout the season. Played in 12 games.

Former Green Bay Packers coach Mike McCarthy took over as the head of the team back in 2006. Over the years, McCarthy would accumulate a record of 125-77-2 and won a Super Bowl in 2010. A victory of that magnitude can buy you a lot of time with an NFL Franchise.

It most certainly did as McCarthy spent the better part of eight seasons trying to get the Packers back to a championship level. They had shots in 2011 and 2014, but injuries to quarterback Aaron Rodgers over the past two seasons basically sank the Packers' seasons.

Now the reigns of the franchise have been turned over to Matt LaFleur. The former Titans offensive coordinator and Rams

offensive coordinator (non-play calling role) gets the chance to work with Aaron Rodgers and deliver on some of the frustrations Rodgers had with the Packers offense. In a league where quality playcallers are scheming receivers open, the Packers receivers were asked to physically beat the defender. That mentality has become "old school" in today's NFL.

LaFleur does fit the mold of the current NFL fascination with finding the next boy-genius...ala Rams coach Sean McVay. LaFleur is 39 years old, so he has the right first number next to his age for this copy cat league.

But he is replacing a championship coach. So the pressure is on immediately.

## Targets for Release/Restructure

Jimmy Graham, TE: Caught 55 passes but just two touchdowns in 2018. Graham is due a \$5M bonus just after the start of the league year and a workout bonus that will take his cap number to \$12.6M. Cutting him saves a significant amount. Cap savings: \$9M

Bryan Bulaga, RT: Bulaga has been good when healthy and available but that has been his challenge of late. The 30 year old has now missed 13 games over the past two seasons. Cap savings: \$6.6M

(-image source usatoday.com)



**Detroit**  
**2019 Offseason**  
**Off. Rank: 24th**  
**Def. Rank: 10th**

**2018 Record: 6-10**

**Projected Cap Space: \$32 million**



## A Change of Identity

### Key Free Agents

- Ezekiel Ansah, DE - After following up a 12 sack season in 2017 with an injury plagued 2018, the Lions want to bring him back. Establishing his value though will be the problem. Turns 30 years old before the start of training camp.
- Eli Harold, LB - Was traded to Detroit after San Francisco gave up on him. Recorded four sacks in 2018, a career high. Still has the ability to develop into a quality pass rusher. Just 25 years old, former 3rd round pick.
- Zach Zenner, RB - Returned to the team after a back injury and averaged a career best 4.8 yards per carry. Scored three touchdowns on the ground and should be an option for a team looking for a veteran backup.
- Levine Toilolo, TE - Caught 21 passes and one touchdown in 2018. The value of Toilolo is that he is a proven blocker as a tight end but can still pose a threat in the red zone as a receiver. Turns 28 this summer.

The Detroit Lions are trying. The organization knows what is said about them and is doing their best to change how they play football, and eventually how they're perceived.

For years the Lions have been an aerial circus that looked to out-score opponents. That made a lot of sense given their investment in quarterback Matthew Stafford and various receivers over the years. It's hard to change the identity of a football team. And so the Lions are trying.

Hiring Matt Patricia from the New England Patriots was part of that identity change. And while the record at the end of 2018 said 6-10, the change is what matters. Detroit is going to be refreshing if they can turn it

around and win. That remains to be seen.

The Lions have invested in their offensive line in order to become a different type of team. The front office has used three top 100 picks over the past three drafts on offensive linemen.

Taylor Decker, Graham Glasgow and Frank Ragnow were drafted to make this team a more punishing group up front. Running back Kerryon Johnson was drafted in the 2nd round last year in hopes of finally having another 1,000 yard rusher. Johnson got 641 yards on the ground in 2018.

The Lions are changing. Or at least they are trying to change. Becoming a physical football team can take time.

## Targets for Release/Restructure

Glover Quin, FS: The 33 year old safety may be reaching the end of his career. Chose to stay away from the team last offseason to spend more time with his family. His ability to cover ground has fallen off of late. Cap savings: \$6.2M

TJ Lang, G: The veteran guard has yet to have a full season in Detroit since signing with the team in 2017. Missed 10 games in 2018. Set to count more than \$11M dollars against the cap. Cap savings: \$8.8M

(-image source cdnewsday.com)

# NFC WEST 2019

## TEAM BY TEAM PREVIEWS

**The West gave the NFL two playoff teams in 2018,  
including the kings of the NFC.**

**Follow Carlos Medina on Twitter @frontofficelos**



**Los Angeles Rams  
GM: Les Snead  
Coach: Sean McVay  
2018 Record: 13-3**

**Seattle Seahawks  
GM: John Schneider  
Coach: Pete Carroll  
2018 Record: 10-6**

**San Francisco 49ers  
GM: John Lynch  
Coach: Kyle Shanahan  
2018 Record: 4-12**

**Arizona Cardinals  
GM: Steve Keim  
Coach: Kliff Kingsbury  
2018 Record: 3-13**

Los Angeles  
2019 Offseason  
Off. Rank: 2nd  
Def. Rank: 19th

2018 Record: 13-3

Projected Cap Space: \$38 million



## NFC Champions...and Questions

### Key Free Agents

- Ndamukong Suh, DT - The 32 year old interior player was solid in run defense in 2018 while recording 4.5 sacks. Played on a one year deal in 2018.
- LaMarcus Joyner, FS - The former second round pick recorded one interception. Has a history of missing games due to injury.
- Rodger Saffold, G - The longest tenured Ram has discussed returning at a discounted contract. The 16 game starter in 2018 has 114 starts during his career.
- Dante Fowler, DE - Obtained in a mid-season trade from the Jaguars, the former top 5 pick recorded two sacks during his eight games with the Rams. Will probably be looking at a one year deal in order to improve his overall value for next offseason. Just 24 years old.

The Los Angeles Rams announced to the NFL world in 2018 that they have arrived. The team aggressively added last offseason and went 13-3 on their way to a Super Bowl loss to the New England Patriots. With a young core, they should be here to stay...right?

The future comes down to what you believe the team has in quarterback Jared Goff. The third year player and former number one overall pick had an outstanding season and has a rare ability to throw the football with pace and accuracy. But he can also be confused and made to look like the 2016 version of himself.

Head coach Sean McVay has installed an

offense that limits the personnel packages and pushes for simplicity and execution over exotic looks. It was the mind of Patriots coach Bill Belichick that exposed the Rams and Goff in the Super Bowl.

So what's next? Running back Todd Gurley had an outstanding season but disappeared in the playoffs after a late season injury. While the core of the team will return, several important veterans are now entering into free agency and expect to garner attention from other teams.

The ability for the Rams to stay on top will come down to their quarterback and coach reaching the next level of their abilities. The NFL constantly adjusts to your success. The Rams must adjust to their own.

## Targets for Release/Restructure

Mark Barron, LB: Generally the Rams are in good shape cap wise because there are not many Mark Barron-type contracts on the roster. Barron plays his role as a large safety playing linebacker who has some coverage ability. But he's not above-average at any one role. Barron is set to count nearly \$9M against the Rams cap. That's a lot given the players they want to re-sign. Cap savings: \$7.2M

Seattle  
2019 Offseason  
Off. Rank: 18th  
Def. Rank: 16th

2018 Record: 10-6

Projected Cap Space: \$60 million



## The Window is Open Again

### Key Free Agents

- Earl Thomas, FS - Set to leave Seattle for the final contract of his career. One of the best in the NFL but has suffered broken legs in two of the past three seasons. Previously wanted a \$10M dollar a year deal.
- Frank Clark, DE - Will be back in Seattle in 2019. Clark will either receive a new contract or the franchise tag in order to secure his services. Recorded 13 sacks in 2018.
- KJ Wright, FB - The veteran linebacker has spent all eight seasons of his career with the Seahawks. Turns 30 years old in training camp. Has discussed publicly that he wants to stay in Seattle.
- DJ Fluker, G - Was a solid part of the Seahawks running game in 2018. A late season hamstring injury marred his otherwise quality season.

The most important position for any NFL team is to have a franchise quarterback. Not just because the franchise quarterback is a key factor to winning football games week-in and week-out, but because he allows for multiple shots at a Super Bowl during his career.

Russell Wilson is now into the second championship window of his career. From 2012-2016 the Seahawks went 56-23-1 and won the Super Bowl while appearing in another. But 2017 and 2018 were years of change as Richard Sherman, Earl Thomas and Kam Chancellor were transitioned off the roster. The Legion of Boom is done. But the Seahawks have been reborn.

The 2018 team was not unlike the early

years during the career of Russell Wilson. The Seahawks offense focused on a strong running game and an offensive line that created havoc for opposing teams. Wilson was asked to do less on the ground than in previous seasons, and the Seahawks benefitted from it.

A playoff team again in 2018, Seattle now gets to be what head coach Pete Carroll envisioned. A team that he can mold and coach without the concern of what star players think. Yes, the cycle of success will create new stars for Seattle. But not just yet.

There are moves to be made this offseason. Free agency is threatening the Seattle lines of scrimmage. But despite that threat, they do have the franchise quarterback issue solved.

## Targets for Release/Restructure

Kam Chancellor, S: Had \$5.2M dollars of his 2019 salary become guaranteed on February 8th, 2019. Chancellor has not played since 2017 but had portions of his salary in 2018 and 2019 guaranteed against injury but not retirement. Chancellor can now retire and the team can actually cut him without incurring large cap penalties. Cap savings: \$8M

San Francisco  
2019 Offseason  
Off. Rank: 16th  
Def. Rank: 13th

2018 Record: 4-12

Projected Cap Space: \$54 million



## Promise Fulfilled in 2019?

### Key Free Agents

- Jimmie Ward, FS/CB - The former first round pick has played all over the secondary including cornerback. Good player. Perhaps just not great at any one spot. Has had difficulties with availability during his career. Has only played a 16 game season once. Has never made 16 starts during a season.
- Robbie Gould, K - Has had his career reborn with the 49ers as he's hit 72 of 75 field goal opportunities since joining the team. The price of dependable kicking will make him in demand.
- Antone Exum, S - Started seven games and proved he can be a fill-in starter and special teams player.
- Mike Person, G - Held off competition to play right guard for the entire season. Veteran player who has shown versatility during his career on the interior offensive line.

The 2018 San Francisco 49ers were a team that was filled with promise. A 1-10 start for the 2017 team during head coach Kyle Shanahan's first season reinforced that this was going to be a tough rebuild. But a trade for former Patriots quarterback Jimmy Garoppolo turned the team around.

Garoppolo won all five of his starts, sending the 49ers into 2018 with a fast finish to end 2017 with a 6-10 record. The team got aggressive last offseason adding former Seahawks cornerback Richard Sherman and former Vikings do-it-all running back Jerick McKinnon.

Garoppolo got his 137.5 million dollar extension last offseason, and that was about the last time the 2018 49ers were dealing

with good news. McKinnon suffered a knee injury leading into the opening game of the season that cost him all of 2019. Garoppolo would be lost to a knee injury for the season in week three, and Sherman had his first career NFL season without an interception. The 49ers were certainly right to feel snake bit.

This rebuild was never going to be easy. GM John Lynch and Kyle Shanahan were given long term contracts because this was going to take time to fix. The 49ers do have some cornerstones to build around on the offensive and defensive lines.

The promise showed by the 49ers at the end of 2017 is on hold. With their cap space and picks, it may just be waiting for 2019.

## Targets for Release/Restructure

Gary Gilliam, RT: Set to count \$5M against the cap in 2019, that is simply not going to happen. Gilliam was only able to get on the field for 80 snaps in 2018. While he provides some help as a backup lineman, the cost is too high. Cap savings: \$5M

Pierre Garcon, WR: The 49ers hold a club option for 2019 including a \$3M bonus that pays out on the first day of April. Garcon has only had one 100 yard receiving game over the past two seasons and has had trouble staying healthy. He may survive this year as his cap savings are not significant. But 2020 he will certainly not. Cap savings: \$1M

Arizona  
2019 Offseason  
Off. Rank: 32nd  
Def. Rank: 20th

2018 Record: 3-13

Projected Cap Space: \$57 million



## Yearning For Another Era

### Key Free Agents

- Larry Fitzgerald, WR – The 35 year old receiver caught 69 passes in 2018. The future Hall of Famer will play in 2019, as he decides whether to play on a year-to-year basis. (*signed one year deal for \$11M*)
- Mike Lupati, G – Has had a difficult time staying healthy over the past two seasons. Lupati missed six games in 2018 after missing all but one in 2017.
- Deone Bucannon, OLB – May need a change of scenery in order to be utilized correctly. Did not play a lot in the Cardinals 4-2-5 defense. A scheme change may make his return more likely.
- Phil Dawson, K – Finished 2018 on injured reserve and had a career-worst field goal percentage of 62.5%
- JJ Nelson, WR – Has blinding speed but has never been able to consistently put everything together. Just seven receptions in 2018.

The Steve Keim-Bruce Arians era with the Arizona Cardinals is over. As 2018 head coach Steve Wilks and the team stumbled to a 3-13 record, it must have felt so far away. Arians had retired after 2017 due to health concerns, putting the team in a state of flux.

From 2013-2015 under Arians and Keim, the team put together a record of 34-14. While the team lived around .500 in 2016 and 2017, the disappointment of what the Cardinals looked like as a team in 2018 caused management and ownership to move on from Wilks after just one season.

The Kliff Kingsbury era is now beginning in Arizona. As Kingsbury fits the trend of what NFL teams are currently obsessed with finding...a young playcaller who can

out-scheme his opponent. Kingsbury is 39 and will turn 40 in training camp, but his reputation for creative offense landed him the offensive coordinator role at Southern Cal for a few weeks before the NFL came calling. It will be his job to get the very best out of young quarterback Josh Rosen. Or make the determination that Rosen can't play.

The Cardinals hold the #1 overall pick in the upcoming draft and are expected to take the best defensive player on the board. In a drafted loaded with defensive line talent that does make sense.

Arians is now back in the NFL in Tampa as he feels healthy again. The Cardinals hold the #1 overall pick. 2013-2015 does indeed feel like a lifetime ago.

## Targets for Release/Restructure

Patrick Peterson, CB – The All-Pro asked for a trade during the season in 2018 but the team chose to hold onto him. While Peterson publicly apologized for the request and stated that he wants to be Arizona, a trade to aid this rebuild does make sense in order to acquire more draft capital. Cap savings: \$11M

Jermaine Gresham, TE – Had just nine receptions in 2018 and was basically kept on the bench despite being active by the end of last season. Cap savings: \$6.5

# AFC SOUTH 2019

## TEAM BY TEAM PREVIEWS

**The AFC South is now controlled by young signal callers with the ability to make plays.**

**Follow Carlos Medina on Twitter @frontofficelos**



**Houston Texans**  
GM: Brian Gaine  
Coach: Bill O'Brien  
2018 Record: 11-5

**Indianapolis Colts**  
GM: Chris Ballard  
Coach: Frank Reich  
2018 Record: 10-6

**Tennessee Titans**  
GM: Jon Robinson  
Coach: Mike Vrabel  
2018 Record: 9-7

**Jacksonville Jaguars**  
GM: Dave Caldwell  
Coach: Doug Marrone  
2018 Record: 5-11

Houston  
2019 Offseason  
Off. Rank: 15th  
Def. Rank: 12th

2018 Record: 11-5

Projected Cap Space: \$68 million



## Focused Up Front

### Key Free Agents

- Jadeveon Clowney, DE - Set to receive the franchise tag if no long term deal can be negotiated. The Texans will look to use the tag on another player if they can get Clowney done.
- Tyrann Mathieu, FS - Rebuilt his value on the open market with a strong 2018 season. Will command a quality contract
- Kareem Jackson, CB - The nine year veteran had a strong 2018 campaign. Flexed to safety on occasion. Pro Bowl alternate.
- Brandon Dunn, NT - The interior force of the Texans defense who controls his gap and allows for those around him to make plays.
- Christian Covington, DE - A productive 2018 also included a career high 3.5 sacks. Made three starts and played in 12 games.

There is good news and bad news for Texans General Manager Brian Gaine. The third GM in team history inherits a team that won the AFC South and had a terrific comeback season from previously injured quarterback Deshaun Watson. Again, that's the good news.

But there is some bad news for Gaine. The Texans have perhaps the most difficult offseason in the league this year considering the number of key veterans who are reaching free agency. Players such as Jadeveon Clowney, Tyrann Mathieu and Kareem Jackson are all set to hit the open market. Clowney will no doubt receive the franchise tag, but the rest will create tough decisions for Gaine and the Texans.

Then there is the issue of what's happening on the offensive side of the football. The offensive line and quarterback Deshaun Watson combined to get sacked 62 times in 2018. That total led the league. While the offensive line will need a makeover, Watson will have to become better at getting rid of the football sooner. Watson often held onto the football as he sought to hit the big play.

Head Coach Bill O'Brien has proven he can win in Houston. With a record of 42-38, O'Brien has had the Texans competing for the playoffs every season with the exception of Watson's injury season in 2017. But the next step is what everyone is waiting to see. After an 11-5 season in 2018, the team needs to get to that next level.

## Targets for Release/Restructure

Kevin Johnson, CB: Missed most of 2018 with a serious concussion. Johnson has now had three since entering the league in 2015. While he's been medically cleared to return to football, the Texans are left to decide if his large cap charge and medical history make him too expensive for a team who has multiple free agents that have to be re-signed. Cap savings: \$9M

(-image source espn.com)



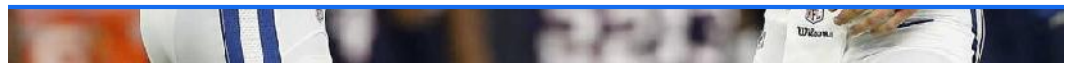
Indianapolis  
2019 Offseason  
Off. Rank: 7th  
Def. Rank: 11th

2018 Record: 10-6

Projected Cap Space: \$122 million



## Back in The Mix



### Key Free Agents

- Pierre Desir, CB - Played his best football over the past two years in Indianapolis. Was the Colts best cover corner in 2018.
- Adam Vinatieri, K - Dependable in 2018 despite a rare post season miss. Connected on 93.6% of his attempts. Will turn 47 next season.
- Ryan Grant, WR - Caught 35 passes this past season, his first for the Colts. Made \$5M in 2018, will have a tough time commanding that much again in 2019.
- Matt Slauson, G - Journeyman guard who can start or be a primary backup. Started five games for the Colts before getting hurt this past season.
- Margus Hunt, DL - Put together a career best five sack season in 2018 and made plays throughout the season. Hunt is 31, but entered NFL as 26 year old rookie.

This time a year ago the Indianapolis Colts were a broken team with an uncertain future. They had just completed a 4-12 season, didn't have a franchise quarterback, and had an offensive line that couldn't protect anyone.

Fast forward to this offseason. Quarterback Andrew Luck had a phenomenal year returning from a shoulder injury that was potentially career ending. Luck tossed 39 touchdown passes while accumulating 4,593 passing yards. The Colts went 10-6, won a playoff game and now sit on the most cap space in the NFL this offseason.

The Colts front office would certainly take a replay of last offseason where their acquisitions changed the immediate future of

the team. Rookie offensive linemen Quenton Nelson and Branden Smith changed the entire demeanor and performance of the Colts line. Rookie linebacker Darius Leonard proved to be among the various best defensive rookies in 2018. Another offseason of adding these types of impact pieces could have the Colts in Super Bowl contention.

The Colts are in the enviable position of not having any major free agents of note. Cornerback Pierre Desir hits free agency after two quality years with the Colts and has been their best cover corner. Getting him back will be an offseason goal.

The Colts are back. A big offseason could launch them into Super Bowl contention as training camps open this summer.

## Targets for Release/Restructure

Eric Ebron, TE: The former first round pick found himself in a great situation and delivered a Pro Bowl season. Ebron caught a career high 66 passes including 13 touchdowns. Ebron is due to make \$5.5M next season in what will be the final year of his deal. The Colts have the room to re-sign key players before their deals end in order to secure better cap situations.

Tennessee  
2019 Offseason  
Off. Rank: 25th  
Def. Rank: 12th

2018 Record: 9-7

Projected Cap Space: \$68 million



## Solid, Not Spectacular



The 2018 Titans missed out on the NFL Playoffs after reaching them in 2017. But that doesn't mean that 2018 was a failure. First year coaches tend to struggle in the NFL. Titans coach Mike Vrabel created a standard in 2018 while still winning football games.

First year NFL coaches have a difficult time winning the locker room. This may have been the biggest victory for Vrabel as both the veterans and younger Titans bought into his relentless style and hard-nosed play. Again, missing the playoffs was a disappointment. But Titans ownership was willing to take a step back in order to eventually move forward.

Elbow injuries to quarterback Marcus

Mariota caused him to miss three starts. But 2019 will be the most critical season for Mariota thus far in his career. The former second overall pick will be a free agent after the season, and the team is setting up their offensive staff to ensure that Mariota gets his best chance to shine.

Arthur Smith has been promoted to offensive coordinator in order to keep from installing an entirely new offense after Matt LaFleur left the team for the Packers head coaching job. A move made for Mariota and the benefit of the offense.

The 2019 Titans and their quarterback will be judged by a much tougher standard. But that's exactly what Mike Vrabel is getting his team ready for.

## Targets for Release/Restructure

Johnathan Cyprien, S: Went down for the season due to a torn ACL. Has missed 21 games over the past two seasons and is set to count \$6.7M against the cap in 2018. The Titans will have to decide whether to bring Cyprien back at that number or move forward with Kenny Vaccaro who played Cyprien's role in 2018. Cap savings: \$5.2M

### Key Free Agents

- Derrick Morgan, DE - Career hit a wall in 2018 as his sack total fell to just a half sack for the season. Recorded 7.5 in 2017. Morgan turned 30 years old in January.
- Bennie Logan, DT - Has played the past two seasons on one year deals. Was able to get some push in the run game. Veteran piece.
- Kenny Vaccaro, SS - Stout in run defense. Rebuilt some value from last offseason. Should be able to command a multi-year deal but is not among the stronger coverage safeties.
- Brynden Trawick, SS - Special teams weapon who can play limited snaps with the regular defense.
- Quinton Spain, G - Lost his starting job late in the season for a game. Has started 48 of the 50 games he's played in during four year career in Tennessee.

(-image source inquistr.com)

Jacksonville  
2019 Offseason  
Off. Rank: 27th  
Def. Rank: 5th

2018 Record: 5-11

Projected Cap Space: \$7 million over



## So...What Happened?

### Key Free Agents

- TJ Yeldon, RB - Combined for 901 yards from scrimmage in 2018. Rushing and receiving threat. Will only be 25 years old when training camp opens up. Former second round pick.
- Donte Moncrief, WR - Caught 48 passes and three touchdowns in 2018. Made the most of his one year deal in Jacksonville.
- Patrick Omameh, G - Started 11 games and played in 14 during the season. Should provide depth to his next team.
- AJ Cann, G - A 59 game starter during his four seasons in the NFL. Will look to cash in on starting experience on the open market.
- Tyler Shatley, G - Started seven games while appearing in 16 games. Has been a spot starter during his five seasons in Jacksonville.

A year ago the Jacksonville Jaguars were a team that had just played in the AFC Championship Game and had one of the most talented rosters in the NFL. The Jaguars started 2018 going 3-1. Everything was going to plan.

Then October and November happened.

What followed was a seven game losing streak that sank the Jaguars season and ended any ideas of returning to the playoffs. Every NFL fan probably has the same question...what happened?

It starts at quarterback where Blake Bortles delivered his worst touchdown pass performance since his rookie season. After giving Bortles an extension that made him a

bargain if he played well, what Jacksonville got was one of the most mediocre quarterbacks in the league. Bortles cap hit for 2019 is set to be \$21M.

Couple mediocre quarterback play with the injuries to various players on offense, and you got a team that played solid defense but simply couldn't move the football regularly. The 2017 version of the defense was dominant enough to cover up any offensive issues. The 2018 version wasn't up to that standard.

The Jaguars spent on free agents in recent years and were rewarded with a deep playoff run. But the cost vs production for these players will have them cut soon. That's easier to explain than the Jags 2018 season.

## Targets for Release/Restructure

Marcell Dareus, DT: Will have to restructure his deal in order to stay with the team. Has been unable to get to the quarterback in recent years but has been able to play against the run. Cap savings: \$10.5M

Malik Jackson, DT: Jackson's production fell off in 2018 with his lowest sack total in five seasons. His cap figure of \$15M is the fourth highest on the team heading into the 2019 season. Cap savings \$11M

# AFC EAST 2019

## TEAM BY TEAM PREVIEWS

**The Patriots are Super Bowl Champions again as the AFC East continues to give them help.**

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**New England Patriots**  
**Coach: Bill Belichick**  
**2018 Record: 11-5**

**Miami Dolphins**  
**GM: Dennis Hickey**  
**Coach: Brian Flores**  
**2018 Record: 7-9**

**Buffalo Bills**  
**GM: Doug Whaley**  
**Coach: Sean McDermott**  
**2018 Record: 6-10**

**New York Jets**  
**GM: Mike Maccagnan**  
**Coach: Adam Gase**  
**2018 Record: 4-12**

New England  
2019 Offseason  
Off. Rank: 5th  
Def. Rank: 21st

2018 Record: 11-5

Projected Cap Space: \$23 million



## Six-Time Champions

### Key Free Agents

- Trey Flowers, DE - The versatile defensive lineman plays the run well and recorded 7.5 sacks to lead the team in 2018.
- Trent Brown, LT - Filled the role and played well as Tom Brady's blindside protector.
- Cordarelle Patterson, WR - Played receiver, running back and return man with the Patriots.
- Stephen Gostkowski, K - Hit 84.4% of his field goal opportunities in 2018. Contract demands will dictate if he stays or goes.
- Malcom Brown, DT - A good player who's been dependable starting 51 games during his four seasons in New England. Former first round pick.
- Eric Rowe, CB - Was set to be a starter this season before he missed 12 game with a groin injury. Former 2nd round pick with intriguing size.

Tom Brady, Bill Belichick and the New England Patriots enter another offseason as champions. As one of two NFL franchises with six Super Bowl wins, they have solidified their position as the best franchise in league history.

While it took Pittsburgh 35 seasons to win six championships, it took New England just 18. For envious fans out there, that's the kind of stat that will make you sick. Accomplishing this feat with the same coach and quarterback certainly feels ridiculous given the nature of change in the NFL.

We have grown to take for granted the amount of change that happens to the Patriots each offseason and how they adapt and continue to produce championship level

results. While the rest of the AFC East gets some blame in this for it's ineptitude, the Patriots get a bulk of the credit.

This offseason the Patriots have their starting left tackle prepared to head to free agency for the second consecutive season. Their top pass rusher is a free agent, as is their kicker and both starting defensive tackles. Throw in the distinct possibility of tight end Rob Gronkowski retiring, you realize the amount of changing coming to New England.

No matter. They just adapt. They do the job.

For the better part of 20 years in the NFL it's been sunrise, death, taxes and Tom Brady/Bill Belichick. Until they decide it's over, it's not going to be.

## Targets for Release/Restructure

Rob Gronkowski, TE: After rumors of offseason trades over the past two offseasons, "Gronk" may finally be at the end of his career after nine seasons and a multitude of injuries that have cost him some of his explosive agility. One of the greats at his position. Cap savings: \$9.8M

Dwayne Allen, TE: Caught 3 passes for 27 yards for the entirety of the 2018 season. Played in 13 games and made eight starts. The Patriots typically don't have contracts like this on their roster where the production doesn't come close to the cap number. Cap savings: \$7.4M

(-image source rollingstone.com)

## Miami

2019 Offseason

Off. Rank: 31st

Def. Rank: 29th

2018 Record: 7-9

Projected Cap Space: \$13 million



## The Teardown Season is Here



### Key Free Agents

- Cameron Wake, DE - The 37 year old pass rusher is looking to stay in Miami. The new defense under Brian Flores will dictate what direction the team will go. Now a situational pass rusher. Recorded six sacks in 2018.
- Ja'Wuan James, RT - One of the more consistent players for the Dolphins on the offensive line. A good, but not great player. Should command a quality multi-year contract.
- William Hayes, DE - Suffered a torn ACL while trying to be compliant with the new NFL QB sack/hit rules of 2018. Had recorded two sacks in three games up to that point.
- Brock Osweiler, QB - Went 2-3 as the Dolphins starter in 2018. Completed 63.5% of his passes and proved that he can be a capable backup and spot starter. Should get a quality contract.

If you have ever heard the phrase “tearing it down to the studs” then know that there may not be a better description for what the Miami Dolphins intend to do in 2019. For those of you unlucky enough (including me) to have had to “tear it down to the studs” you know it can be a long and frustrating process.

The Dolphins started the process with the firing of head coach Adam Gase and the hiring of Patriots defensive playcaller Brian Flores. But a change of philosophy or attitude is not enough for this franchise. The Dolphins are going much further than that.

Reportedly the team plans to part ways with quarterback Ryan Tannehill who has been injured in two of the past three seasons.

While Tannehill’s production in 2018 wasn’t alarming, the fact that he’s never led the Dolphins to the playoffs is the reason why the team is moving on from the former top 10 pick. Tannehill’s career numbers suggest a winning quarterback, but his 42-46 record demonstrates that something is missing.

The Dolphins intend to tear this thing down and start over with a new quarterback. This certainly could come in the first round this season where the team holds the 13th overall pick. Or it could come in 2020 where the Dolphins are expected to hold a much higher pick.

The house is being torn down in Miami in 2019. The culture will go in first, then the players. All built up from the studs.

## Targets for Release/Restructure

Ryan Tannehill, QB: The organization could move on from Tannehill next offseason for significantly more cap savings. But if reports are correct and the team intends to begin a rebuild in 2019, then cutting Tannehill makes sense. Cap savings: \$13M

Andre Branch, DE: Recorded just 1.5 sacks in 2018 during his 14 games of action. Branch’s sack totals have fallen for three consecutive years. Cap savings: \$7M

Buffalo

2019 Offseason

Off. Rank: 30th

Def. Rank: 2nd

2018 Record: 6-10

Projected Cap Space: \$84 million



## Help Wanted

### Key Free Agents

- Kyle Williams, DT - Retiring after 13 seasons in the NFL, all in Buffalo. A pro's pro.
- John Miller, G - A 16 game starter during his first two seasons in Buffalo. Was relegated to the bench in 2017 before starting 15 games in 2018.
- Jordan Phillips, DT - Claimed after the Dolphins released him, Phillips played in 12 games in 2018 and stuffed running lanes with his size. A first and second down player only.
- Jordan Mills, G - Has started 48 games in Buffalo over the past three seasons. Has performed at a very average level.
- Ryan Groy, C - Started six games in 2018. Interior depth offensive lineman.
- Vontae Davis, CB - The 10 year veteran retired at halftime of a game last September. Still funny.

The Buffalo Bills decided that in order to take a step forward, they had to take a step back in 2018. After being a playoff team in 2017 for the first time since 1999, the organization realized that the team had reached it's limit. They needed more.

The Bills gave up two second round picks in order to move up and select quarterback Josh Allen. Allen was the most physically gifted quarterback in the 2018 draft, but needed the most refinement of the top available signal callers.

Allen started 11 games and went 5-6. But he has yet to shake his inaccuracy issues as he completed 52.8% of his passes. Allen threw 10 touchdown passes and 12 interceptions in 2018.

While Allen looked like a rookie at times, he also made throws that very few quarterbacks in the league can make. For the Bills organization in 2019, offseason victory means getting Allen more support.

There may not be an offensive line in the NFL under more scrutiny then the Bills. The team could replace four starters from last season as only Dion Dawkins looks to remain. The run blocking for this group as a whole was one of the worst in the NFL.

Allen and the offense could also benefit from a big-body playmaker at receiver. Anything that helps the offense would be welcomed.

There is going to be a ton of personnel change in Buffalo. They need all the help.

## Targets for Release/Restructure

LeSean McCoy, RB: Turning 31 years old before the start of training camp, McCoy started 13 games in 2018 and rushed for the lowest average yards per carry in his career with 3.2. McCoy's 514 rushing yards were also a career low for a season. Cap savings: \$6.4M

Charles Clay, TE: Caught just 21 passes in 2018 and struggled when asked to perform more as a blocker than a pass catcher. Has never played 16 games during his eight year career. Cap savings: \$4.5M

New York  
2019 Offseason  
Off. Rank: 29th  
Def. Rank: 25th

2018 Record: 4-12

Projected Cap Space: 102 million over



## Productive and Young

### Key Free Agents

- Henry Anderson, DE - Led the Jets in sacks after coming over in a trade with the Colts. Recorded seven sacks.
- Morris Claiborne, CB - Was the Jets best corner in 2018. The former top 10 pick continues to get one year deals for good money rather than multi-year deals with less financial risk.
- Brandon Copeland, LB - Had a good season as a backup and situational pass rusher. Recorded five sacks in 2018.
- Josh McCown, QB - The role of veteran backup in the NFL has changed to almost a golfer-caddy relationship. McCown has been important to Sam Darnold's development.
- Daryl Roberts, CB - Position flexible veteran who can play safety if needed. Quality replacement starter and depth piece for injury.

To say that the New York Jets “went young” in 2018 would be an understatement. The team used the third overall pick in the 2018 draft to select quarterback Sam Darnold out of Southern Cal. At the time, Darnold was still months away from turning 21.

After 13 starts in 2018 and a record of 4-9, Darnold demonstrated that he could play in the NFL at such a young age. Darnold completed 57% off his passes and tossed 17 touchdown passes against 15 interceptions. With that sort of promise demonstrated, the Jets have set out to find as much support for Darnold as possible. Hence the hiring of new head coach Adam Gase.

Gase's reputation for being a developer of quarterbacks and putting them in position to

succeed dates back a decade in the NFL. From Jon Kitna in Detroit to Tim Tebow in Denver, Gase has been able to get the very best out of his quarterbacks. Landing the Jets job after being fired by the Dolphins was aided by a reported recommendation from Peyton Manning.

The Jets job is easy to figure out. Win...and developed Darnold into a franchise quarterback who can help the team compete for a decade. The Jets are currently in a great cap situation with a young quarterback and manageable contracts. The opportunity is there to make them a winner.

There will be more growing pains in 2019. But the Jets and their quarterback are growing into something interesting.

## Targets for Release/Restructure

Leonard Williams, DE: The Jets have more than enough cap space to absorb Williams' \$14.2M salary for 2019 and still get any offseason goals taken care of. But Williams reportedly has been concerned whether or not he could be traded and has yet to have any talks on a contract extension. With a new defense in place, the Jets seem to be in “wait and see” mode on Williams before offering him a contract extension.

(-image source espn.com)



# AFC NORTH 2019

## TEAM BY TEAM PREVIEWS

**Young quarterbacks have taken the division by storm, while the older signal callers look to rebuild around them.**

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**Baltimore Ravens**  
GM: Eric DeCosta  
Coach: John Harbaugh  
2018 Record: 10-6

**Pittsburgh Steelers**  
GM: Kevin Colbert  
Coach: Mike Tomlin  
2018 Record: 9-6-1

**Cleveland Browns**  
GM: John Dorsey  
Coach: Freddie Kitchens  
2018 Record: 7-8-1

**Cincinnati Bengals**  
GM: Mike Brown  
Coach: Zac Taylor  
2018 Record: 6-10

Baltimore  
2019 Offseason  
Off. Rank: 9th  
Def. Rank: 1st

2018 Record: 10-6

Projected Cap Space: \$34 million



## A New Direction

### Key Free Agents

- Terrell Suggs, OLB - The seven-time Pro Bowler has publicly stated that he plans to play in 2019. Suggs recored seven sacks in 2018. Ravens icon.
- John Brown, WR - Recorded 42 catches for 715 yards and five touchdown receptions. Brown's season changed dramatically once Lamar Jackson took over at quarterback as the passing game suffered.
- CJ Mosley, LB - A good but not elite inside linebacker. The determination of Mosley's value in the market will be the deciding factor on whether he returns or not.
- Za'Darius Smith, OLB - The 26 year old recorded a career high 8.5 sacks in a breakout 2018. Is set to receive a quality contract in Baltimore or with another team that's hungry for a versatile pass rusher.

The 2018 Ravens are a tale of two different teams. There's the story of the defensive-oriented team who found themselves with a record of 4-5 heading into their bye week. Then another team that emerged as a running team who won six of seven games down the stretch to win the AFC North.

Rookie quarterback Lamar Jackson became the face of the Ravens as a player who played an exciting brand of football with his legs and highlight runs. Combined with the top ranked defense in the league, the Ravens became a team that no one wanted to play down the stretch.

After a wildcard round exit from the playoffs, it's now clear that the Ravens will be moving forward with Jackson at

quarterback but his development will determine just how far this team can go.

Jackson finished 2018 as a 58% passer who threw for only 200 yards once in seven starts. Teams who have enjoyed success from running quarterbacks over the last decade have found difficulties moving forward once the league makes adjustments. If Jackson can take the next step, then he'll keep the league on edge moving forward.

The Ravens defense will be challenged this offseason by the amount of their free agents. Terrell Suggs, CJ Mosley and Za'Darius Smith are all free agents.

But ultimately this thing comes down to Jackson and his development.

## Targets for Release/Restructure

Joe Flacco, QB: The team has moved on to Lamar Jackson as their starter of the future. Flacco could be traded as his cap number will only be \$18.5M for his next team. But for the Ravens, Flacco is set to count \$26.5M against the cap. Cap savings: \$10.5M

Jimmy Smith, CB: A four game suspension to start the season certainly didn't help after he returned and didn't play to his 2017 level. The Ravens could choose to gamble on a return to a previous production level, but that will cost them \$13.2M in cap space. Cap savings: \$9.5M

Pittsburgh  
2019 Offseason  
Off. Rank: 4th  
Def. Rank: 6th

2018 Record: 9-6-1

Projected Cap Space: \$12 million



## Big Changes Coming in Pittsburgh

### Key Free Agents

- Le'Veon Bell, RB - Will move on this offseason after taking 2018 off in a contract dispute. The Steelers will get the benefit of a cap recoup.
- Ramon Foster, G - The 33 year old had a solid 2018. The team could bring him back despite younger players waiting for their opportunity.
- Daniel McCullers, DT - Played in 15 games and started to play his best football.
- Jesse James, TE - Put together another solid season catching 30 passes and two touchdowns. Has caught 120 passes in his four years with Pittsburgh.
- LJ Fort, LB - Solid rotational linebacker who played in 15 games and recorded 48 tackles.
- Ryan Shazier, LB - Wants to continue his rehab and comeback. Would have to be re-signed in order to do so with the team's medical services.

The Pittsburgh Steelers were can't miss television in 2018. The problem is that for a team who missed the playoffs last season, the drama was about what was happening off the field rather than on it.

It started with running back Le'Veon Bell, who decided that he would not report to the team for the entirety of the season after being hit with the franchise tag for a second consecutive year. The drama continued as receiver Antonio Brown reportedly left a game early after missing a walkthrough the day before.

While team ownership has publicly stated that it would be difficult seeing Brown return to the team in 2019, trading a star of his caliber is always difficult when trying

to receive equal value. Brown is one of the best at his position in the game.

A silver lining for the Steelers is that young players such as receiver JuJu Smith-Schuster and running back James Connor emerged with career years. Both players proved that they have the ability to surround quarterback Ben Roethlisberger with quality weapons if the team is forced to move on from Bell and Brown.

Despite having a veteran quarterback, the Steelers are not one of the older teams in the NFL. The team is the 13th youngest in the league, and will continue to get younger this offseason.

Big changes are on the way in 2019.

## Targets for Release/Restructure

**Marcus Gilbert, RT:** Gilbert has not been able to stay healthy over the past two seasons despite his reputation of being one of the better right tackles in the league. Gilbert has played in just 12 games since the start of 2017. Knee and leg injuries have now begun to hamper his play regularly. Cap savings: \$4.9M

**Antonio Brown, WR:** Brown will have a difficult time returning to the Steelers after his end of season behavior. The team will look to trade Brown in order to receive some value if the situation can not be fixed. Whether by trade or release, Brown counts nearly the same amount against the cap at \$22M. Cap savings: \$960k

(-image source usatoday.com)

Cleveland  
2019 Offseason  
Off. Rank: 13th  
Def. Rank: 30th

2018 Record: 7-8-1

Projected Cap Space: \$75 million



## Finally, Hope in Cleveland

### Key Free Agents

- Tyrod Taylor, QB - The 29 year old starter is a lower-tier starter in the league but has proven that he can win games. Would be ideal as a bridge starter to a younger player or a veteran backup.
- EJ Gaines, CB - Spent the season in Cleveland getting two starts and appearing in six games. Will be looking for another backup CB deal.
- Breshad Perriman, WR - The former first round pick from 2016 was able to demonstrate some of his downfield ability in 2018. Perriman caught 16 passes for a receiving average of 21.3 yards per catch.
- Greg Robinson, LT - The former second overall pick in the NFL Draft had the best season of his career in 2018. The former draft bust may have found a home in Cleveland playing in this offense.

The Cleveland Browns won one game from 2016-2017. A record of 1-31 during that time established a losing atmosphere that seemed to hang over every aspect of the organization.

To combat this, in stepped new general manager John Dorsey. Dorsey proceeded to trade for receiver Jarvis Landry, draft quarterback Baker Mayfield and eventually fire head coach Hue Jackson.

The Browns finished 2018 with a record of 7-8-1. The team's young talent went on a roll as the offense suddenly became formidable and the defense became more opportunistic. Rookie quarterback Baker Mayfield tossed 27 touchdown passes against 14 interceptions while posting a

6-7 record during his 13 starts. Mayfield's success led to the hiring of Browns offensive coordinator Freddie Kitchens as the next head coach of the football team. The obvious nature of this move is to make sure the team rides or dies with the franchise quarterback and his comfort within the offense.

The Browns needed to reduce their turnovers in 2018. The team reduced their total from 41 in 2017 to 24 in 2018. But in order to take another step forward, the team will have to improve on a defense that finished 30th in the NFL.

Still loaded with plenty of salary cap space and their compliment of draft picks, the future with the Browns is now truthfully optimistic.

## Targets for Release/Restructure

Damarius Randall, CB: Set to make \$9 million dollars in the final year of his deal. Randall recorded four interceptions in 2018 after coming over to Cleveland in trade. Randall will be looking at a contract extension that would make sense to do this offseason so that his cap figure can be lowered and his future can be secured with guaranteed money.

(-image source washingtontimes.com)

Cincinnati Bengals  
2019 Offseason  
Off. Rank: 26th  
Def. Rank: 32nd

2018 Record: 6-10

Projected Cap Space: \$49 million



## A Change After Years of Status Quo

### Key Free Agents

- Tyler Eifert, TE - Simply can no longer stay healthy after appearing in four games in 2018. Has never played a full season in six year career.
- Preston Brown, LB - The always available Brown could only play in seven games in 2018. Will have to look into a one year contract in order to improve his value for next offseason.
- Cedric Ogbuehi, LT - A massive bust as a first round pick who has talent but could not be consistently put on the field for the Bengals.
- Darqueze Dennard, CB - The former first round pick has been solid, but not first round worthy with his production. Just three interceptions since being drafted in 2014.
- Andre Smith, RT - Continues to find a role in the NFL as a starter or backup RT. Should continue in that role.

After sixteen years at the helm, Marvin Lewis was dismissed this offseason as the head coach of the Cincinnati Bengals. With a record of 131-122-3, Lewis' level of success compared to previous regimes was the reason why ownership held onto Lewis for so long. Despite a playoff record of 0-7.

In comes Zac Taylor, who formerly coached quarterbacks with the LA Rams. The 35 year old Taylor continues the recent trend in the NFL of hiring younger offensive minds in hopes of developing a Sean McVay-type of vibe on the offensive side of the football.

The status of Bengals quarterback Andy Dalton is perhaps the biggest area in flux for the franchise. Dalton missed five games in 2018 and posted just a record of 4-6 in his

starts. Dalton has always been a polarizing figure with the fan base as he's good enough to win games with but has yet win a postseason game himself. Dalton's career record of 67-50-2 makes him appealing along with his age (just 31) if another team in the NFL wants to trade for an established starter.

Speaking of age, the Bengals offensive weapons are suddenly hitting that point in their careers where you have to wonder about longevity. Namely receiver AJ Green. Green played in a career low nine games in 2018 while nursing various injuries.

The Bengals are at a crossroads heading into 2019. The team has invested heavily in their own, but the new coaching regime will decide whether to stay on that path.

## Targets for Release/Restructure

Vontaze Burfict, LB: The new regime will have a decision to make on whether Burfict would be worth bringing back on a smaller contract. His current cap number of \$7.3M does not work for a player who suffered his seventh concussion of his career in 2018. Cap savings \$5.5M

Dre Kirkpatrick, CB: Ending the season on IR, the team will have to decide if Kirkpatrick is worth \$11 million dollars for 2019. Cap savings \$6.8M

(-image source theinquistr.com)

# AFC WEST 2019

## TEAM BY TEAM PREVIEWS

**The best division in the AFC featured two teams that went deep in the NFL Playoffs.**

**Follow Carlos Medina on Twitter @frontofficelos**



**Kansas City Chiefs**  
GM: Brett Veach  
Coach: Andy Reid  
2018 Record: 12-4

**Los Angeles Chargers**  
GM: Tom Telesco  
Coach: Anthony Lynn  
2018 Record: 12-4

**Denver Broncos**  
VP of Ops: John Elway  
Coach: Vic Fangio  
2018 Record: 6-10

**Oakland Raiders**  
GM: Mike Mayok  
Coach: Jon Gruden  
2018 Record: 4-12

Kansas City  
2019 Offseason  
Off. Rank: 1st  
Def. Rank: 31st

2018 Record: 12-4

Projected Cap Space: \$39 million



## A Legit Contender

### Key Free Agents

- Dee Ford, OLB - Recorded 13 sacks in 2018, and has taken down the quarterback 25 times over the past three seasons. Has not been consistent to this point in his career. Will still command a large contract.
- Steven Nelson, CB - Made plays as the best cornerback for the Chiefs in 2018. Did give up some plays but intercepted four passes this past season. Has experience playing both slot and outside corner.
- Mitch Morse, C - A very dependable pass blocker who has not given up a sack in several seasons. Has had trouble staying healthy due to concussions.
- Harrison Butker, K - Has hit 62 of his 69 attempts as a Chief. Has proven to be able to make big kicks and do it in inclement weather when necessary.

The first year of the Patrick Mahomes era was a smashing success. The 23 year old signal caller went over the 5,000 yard passing mark in 2018 and added in 50 touchdown passes to easily lead the league. Mahomes is the future of the NFL.

But after an AFC Title Game loss to the Patriots, the Chiefs are now focusing on what they have to do to take the next step towards a championship. Clearly this offseason will be about improving the defensive side of the ball.

The Chiefs are an odd situation defensively. Their defensive front is loaded with playmakers who led the NFL in sacks in 2018. But the Chiefs were also ranked 31st in total defense, as they allowed nearly as

many yards as their offense produced. The AFC Title Game was a perfect example as the Patriots were able to score touchdowns on their final three drives to beat the Chiefs in overtime.

The Chiefs have cap space but will have a ton of work to do in order to keep some of their better players on the roster. Playoff goat Dee Ford is set to be a free agent after a career year sacking the quarterback. Cornerback Steven Nelson recorded 10 pass breakups and four interceptions in 2018 and is now set to cash in.

With a new defensive coordinator in town, the Chiefs window is now. As long as Mahomes is healthy, they have a shot to win the Super Bowl each year.

## Targets for Release/Restructure

Justin Houston, OLB: Houston was productive in 2018 despite being limited to 12 games. Recording nine sacks, Houston was solid but has not recorded double digit sacks since his 2014 season of 22. His cap number for 2019 is \$21.1M which is the highest on the team. If the organization needs space to return several younger players, Houston is a good player who's being paid at a great player level. Cap savings: \$14M

(-image source dallasnews.com)

Los Angeles  
2019 Offseason  
Off. Rank: 11th  
Def. Rank: 9th

2018 Record: 13-3

Projected Cap Space: \$36 million



## Young Talent Around The Vet

### Key Free Agents

- Tyrell Williams, WR - 41 catches and 653 yards receiving along with five touchdown catches in 2018. Provided quality depth to a Charger team that wants to throw the football.
- Antonio Gates, TE - Looking to play in 2019, Gates showed up ready to play and caught 28 passes for 333 yards and two touchdowns. Reliable once again on 3rd down and in the red zone.
- Denzel Perryman, LB - Was putting together a good season before missing eight games due to injury. Was leading the team in tackles at the time of his injury.
- Jason Varrett, CB - The 2015 Pro Bowler has now missed 43 regular season games over the past three seasons. Varrett was lost on the first practice of training camp 2018. May get a flier type of deal depending on his physical.

The Los Angeles Chargers were playing the best football in the AFC as the NFL Playoffs arrived this past season.

A playoff road victory over Baltimore had the Chargers looking at their first AFC Championship Game appearance since 2008. Then the New England Patriots happened, and the magical Chargers season came to an end.

The Chargers are now a team that is filled with young veterans and talent on both sides of the football. They now have one of the better defenses in the league after posting back-to-back seasons with a Top 10 ranking. Adding rookie safety Derwin James in the draft last season turned the Chargers into a defense capable of making plays at all three

levels. As per usual, Melvin Ingram and Joey Bosa led the team in sacks providing a consistent pass rush.

Improving the Chargers for 2019 still comes down to better play from their cornerbacks. Whether thru free agency or the NFL Draft, the Chargers have to get better at covering teams in order to advance beyond the Patriots and Chiefs.

Quarterback Philip Rivers is entering the final year of his contract. Rivers is now surrounded by his best team in a decade and is set to compete over the next few seasons.

It'll take Rivers at his best to beat Kansas City and New England. If he can continue to play at his current level, they have a shot.

## Targets for Release/Restructure

Philip Rivers, QB: Rivers enters the final year of his current contract in 2019. The 37 year old will get to decide just how long he intends to play and that will dictate the type of contract he signs.

Melvin Gordon, RB: Much like Rivers, enters into the final year of his deal in 2019. Gordon is set to sign an extension if the team wishes to lower his cap charge of \$5.6M this season. Given his position, most teams around the league are choosing to let running backs play out their fifth year option.



Denver  
2019 Offseason  
Off. Rank: 19th  
Def. Rank: 22nd

2018 Record: 6-10

Projected Cap Space: \$37 million



## Another Change at The Top

### Key Free Agents

- Matt Paradis, C - Was set to cash in this off season before suffering a broken leg. Missed seven games in 2018. Will probably get to test free agency to determine market value.
- Bradley Robey, CB - The former first round pick did not excel when given a bigger role in the defense. The team will be looking for improvement.
- Shaq Barrett, LB - Produced despite a lack of playing time. Will be looking for more playing time and probably a short term deal to improve his value.
- Billy Turner, G - Played at RT when injuries hit the offensive line. Played on a one year deal in 2018.
- Max Garcia, G - Played in the final seven games of the season due to injuries on the offensive line. Was a starter early on in his career in Denver.

The Denver Broncos a short time ago were the best offense in the history of the NFL. But after a Super Bowl loss to the Seattle Seahawks, the team pivoted to a defense-first mentality.

Since winning the Super Bowl in 2015 with the best defense in the league, the Broncos have failed to win double-digit games and have finished no better than 3rd in the AFC West. Both Gary Kubiak and Vance Joseph have moved on from the head coach position.

2019 begins the Vic Fangio era in Denver, as the former Bears defensive coordinator has been tasked with rebuilding the tough mentality that has defined the Broncos in recent years but faltered under Joseph.

Fangio has been calling defenses in the NFL since 2011, including the 2012 49ers and the 2018 Bears. Fangio previously was the linebackers coach in Baltimore back in 2009. If there is one thing the man knows it's strong defense.

The offensive side of the ball will require attention as veteran quarterback Case Keenum reverted back from 2017 to his typical style of play and production. While he can serve as a veteran backup, Denver will be in need of either bringing in another veteran or drafting another quarterback high in the draft for the second time in four seasons.

The NFL rewards vision. The Broncos believe they have a winning formula.

## Targets for Release/Restructure

Darian Stewart, FS: Stewart's play has declined and he's currently being pushed by younger players on the roster. Cap savings: \$4.9M

Ron Leary, G: A solid player on the offensive line but injury will determine if they bring him back. Team doctors at the NFL Scouting Combine believed his knee would eventually break down. That prediction dropped his stock. An Achilles injury may be the start of some challenges for Leary. Cap savings: \$8.3M

(-image source denverbroncos.com)

Oakland  
2019 Offseason  
Off. Rank: 23rd  
Def. Rank: 26th

2018 Record: 4-12

Projected Cap Space: \$73 million



## A One Man Show

### Key Free Agents

- Rashaan Melvin, CB - Came on late in the season and was a quality defender against the run. Finished with 56 tackles and one interception.
- Marshawn Lynch, RB - A groin injury took Lynch out for the final 10 games of the season. Was averaging 4.2 yards per carry before his injury.
- Jared Cook, TE - Had the finest season of his career and a Pro Bowl appearance after catching 69 passes for 896 yards and six touchdowns.
- Johnathan Hankins, DT - Signed a one year deal to work as primary run stuffer. Played in 15 games, starting 14 in 2018.
- Martavis Bryant, WR - Suspended indefinitely by the NFL for violating terms of reinstatement under the program for substance abuse.

Oakland Raiders coach Jon Gruden has a reputation for depending on veteran talent and having little trust in young players. In his second stint with the Raiders, Gruden seized control of player personnel and quickly turned the Raiders into the oldest team in the NFL.

They proceeded to go 4-12.

After running off the man who built the Raiders into a respectable football team in general manager Reggie McKenzie, Gruden installed fellow NFL TV star Mike Mayock as his puppet GM. Mayock's job will be to facilitate the moves Gruden wants.

The Raiders will have three first round picks after trading away their best two players in

linebacker Khalil Mack and receiver Amari Cooper. Those players delivered playoff births for their new teams. Basically, the Raiders traded away two blue chip players in exchange for the 24th and 28th in 2019. They will also hold the Bears first round pick in 2020.

The progress of the Raiders will all be on Gruden and his personnel decisions. With a reported nine years and \$90 million dollars remaining on his contract, Gruden has the clout to take his time to build this team into a winner...if he can.

The Oakland Raiders will eventually be the Las Vegas Raiders. Whether they're contending by then is a bet that team ownership is willing to make.

## Targets for Release/Restructure

Derek Carr, QB: Considering the amount of change that has already occurred with the roster under Jon Gruden it would not be a surprise if Carr is traded to another team. The move would clear a significant amount of cap space off the roster but will create \$7.5M in dead money. Cap savings: \$15M

Jordy Nelson, WR: Played in 15 games in 2018 and was productive recording 63 catches for 739 yards and three touchdowns. Nelson is set to turn 34 before training camp. Cap savings: \$3.5M

# *About the Author*

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Carlos Medina has worked in the sports talk radio industry since 2001 as a Producer, Host and News Reporter. A graduate of Texas Wesleyan University and The University of Alabama, he has covered NFL assignments in both the Dallas and Atlanta markets. Carlos is a dedicated fan of the game and a student of NFL organizational success. He has also served as a media consultant for Atlanta-based NFL Combine training facilities teaching future NFL draftees about the business and media aspects of the NFL. His work can be heard weekdays on Sports Radio 680 The Fan in Atlanta, GA. He lives in Cumming, GA with his wife and two daughters.



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