

The Prefect Patriots Offseason Plan

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It is completely fair to say as a Patriots fan to say that this past season was horrible. With Brady and Gronk departing for Tampa Bay and another Lombardi Trophy, the contingency plan for Tom Brady's departure was not acceptable for Patriots fans. The quarterback room led by Cam Newton was terrible. They played like high school JV starters and seemed clueless on passing reads and how to clock manage games. Last season is over and we're on to the next season. The problem is, what do the Patriots do this offseason?

Resignings

First place they should start with is key FA's that you **must** resign.

- Starting center and anchor on the offensive line David Andrews must stay in order for the patriots to win now. A long term deal around the \$8 million a year for 3-4 years would be fitting and for both parties. If they can't strike a deal, watch for Andrews to get Franchise tagged.
- Starting Guard Joe Thuney played under the franchise tag last year and never signed a long term deal. His value has increased and is valued around \$15 million a year according to spotrac.com. A deal around \$12-14 a year for 4-5 years might help Thuney stay around.
- J.C. Jackson has begun to make a name for himself as a ball hawking CB. At 26 years old and coming off 2 impressive campaigns, Jackson has earned himself a nice payday and a long term deal. I would give him anywhere from 8-10 million a year for 5 years, close to what Gilmore got when he came to New England at 65 million over 5 years.

Some players that would be nice to keep on team friendly deals:

- James White
- Rex Burkhead
- Jason McCourty
- Lawrence Guy
- John Simon
- Adam Butler
- Jermaine Eluemunor

Everyone else can walk and Patriots fans shouldn't lose sleep over.

Restructures/trades/cuts

Alright for the restructures/trades/cut candidates I have a lot of big names, but bear with me here to start before I lose you on emotional investing on these players.

- Stephon Gilmore- cap hit \$15 million. Now I can already hear some complaints about moving on from Gilmore a year removed from winning DPOY. However with Gilmore losing his speed and ability to cover fast receivers on deep verticals or the new horizontal routes, developed by the Chiefs and Buccaneers, shows he doesn't have the speed needed as the primary cornerback. With J.C. Jackson and Jonathan Jones stepping up and developing into a great young core in the defensive backfield, it might be the perfect time to leverage Gilmore down or trade him.

- Dont'a Hightower- cap hit \$8.6 million. Coming off his opt out season, prior discussions about restructuring his contract and a year away free agency, I believe moving on from Hightower might be their best option. Yes, agreed, the linebacking core of the Patriots stunk last year, the need for younger, faster, more explosive linebackers should be their top priority to address the issue. Hightower's presence in the middle might have been missed and he does still have a hit sticking ability that leaves people with nightmares, he's turning 31 and lacks the speed to cover speedy running backs. Trading Hightower to move up in the draft or for more draft capital would free up a lot of money.

- Marcus Cannon- cap hit \$9.6 million. Just cut him. The dead money hit is only \$2.5 million and with the emergence of Onwenu, it's just too much for a back up tackle. However the need for tackles is always there in the NFL, a trade partner shouldn't be hard to find given there's a lot of teams looking to protect young QB's.

- Patrick Chung- cap hit \$5.1 million. Restructure it down. Coming off a year absence and being 34 years old causes for some concern especially with him not being needed with McCourty, Phillips and Duggar being your safeties.

- Mathew Slater- cutting him saves \$3 million roughly.

- Beau Allen- cutting him saves \$2 million

- Brandon Bolden- cutting him saves \$1.5 million.

Making these moves would help free up enough money to re-sign the big free agents on the Patriots and keep all \$65 million free to bring up new free agents.

Free agency shopping list by positions

WRs

- Chris Godwin
- Allen Robinson

- JuJu Smith-Schuster
- Kenny Galloday
- Marvin Jones
- Rashad Higgins
- Allen Lazard
- Dede Westbrook

Although not a lot of big names, some of these players are great receivers that can get separation and can thrive in a new setting as a WR1 or WR2

TEs

- Hunter Henry
- Jonnu Smith
- Gerald Everett
- Richard Rodgers
- Jared Cook
- Tyler Kroft
- Jordan Reed

Bill loves tight ends that can do both run blocking and receiving, however he might need to sacrifice the former for the latter. Henry, Smith or Everett could be a serious weapon for the Patriots.

LBs

- Lavonte David
- Shaquil Barrett
- Leonard Floyd
- Olivier Vernon
- Melvin Ingram
- K.J. Wright

The list goes on and on but if the Patriots can land any on these top linebackers, Bill could have another new and scary defense like we've seen recently.

The QB situation

I haven't forgotten about one of the worst quarterback rooms in league history as of recent. There are three options to improve this group and we'll cover each of them.

Free agents

With Dak Prescott most likely being tagged, only 5 real names stick out to me. **Mitch Trubisky**, who has shown flashes and what looks like someone who would thrive off a real supportive coaching staff and weapons could make a career revival with New England. The always timeless and ageless wonder, **Ryan Fitzpatrick**, who could complete his AFC East roulette wheel. A **Jacoby Brissett** could be a possibility. **Andy Dalton** who would have probably worked out better last year than Cam Newton. Lastly, and personally the most intriguing, **Blake Bortles**. The former 5th overall pick was less than 8 minutes away from leading the Jacksonville Jaguars to a Super Bowl and looks like he can finally command a NFL offense if given a chance.

Drafting

Outside of Trevor Lawrence, there seems no real consensus on who's the next best quarterback. Zach Wilson? Justin Fields? Trey Lance? Mac Jones? I think one of the best moves Bill could do is trade up in the draft with the 15th pick and possibly Marcus Cannon or Dont'a Hightower and draft maybe the best athlete in the draft, Kyle Pitts. At 6' 6 and 240lbs with a 4.66 40 yard dash unofficially, Pitts has everything needed to be an elite tight end and even be one of the best receivers in the game. Now I know this is about improving at Quarterback, so why not get Pitts college QB, Kyle Trask, in the third round? At 6' 5 240lbs Trask is drawing quarterback comparisons of Kirk Cousins, a pocket passer that can take off and run when needed. Although he needs to work on his velocity on the ball, he rarely makes a bad read and reads his progressions at a young age. He's a gritty player and plays whistle to whistle. Watch for him to be a great quarterback when given the chance by a team.

Trades

Finally, the best for last. The trading market for a new QB. With Wentz, Goff and Stafford already moved, that only leaves 3 QB's left. Jimmy Garoppolo, Deshaun Watson, and Russell Wilson. While Jimmy G might be the easiest to get, he seems to not have the stuff of a great quarterback now and can never stay healthy. Deshaun Watson is going to cost you a fortune to get, somewhere of 4 first round picks, a couple later rounds, and a NFL ready player. While you check all those boxes, Houston seems reluctant to grant his request to be traded and with his no trade clause, it might be even tougher if he doesn't want to come to New England. Russell Wilson might be the best quarterback available on the market currently. Although the Seahawks are only listening

to deals, a package of 2 first rounders, 2 seconds, Stephon Gilmore and Dont'a Hightower will clear up cap room, fill holes for the Seahawks as well as make the Patriots younger and better.

Although the offseason has only just begun, the pure joy and possibilities it brings with it makes it the most fun part of the year. Beantown Takes looks forward to seeing how this offseason plays out for New England as well as the rest of the league and the hope of a big shake up certainly would be nicer than the status quo for so long. Please feel free to send an email with comments, questions, or your own takes, hopes, ideas for the Pats to do this offseason! We'd love to discuss them and get other perspectives on your side of this team.