

## **NFL: Off the Field**

By Shaka G.

Entering the 2013 season there are many fans that strongly believe nothing goes on in the offseason. Nevertheless, you have a fast pace Free Agency, the Annual NFL Draft, various NFLPA meetings and Mandatory Team Training Camp. Along with players, coaches and general managers be fired and hired as we speak!

In recent weeks, some of the biggest and most entertaining teams have let go some of their most terrible and finest players for a wide range of reasons. Some teams released players for good draft picks, Such as Minnesota Vikings trading Percy Harvin to the Seattle Seahawks for a 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> round pick. Other teams allowed players to test the Free Agency Market because they weren't happy with that organization, such as former New York Giants DE Osi Umenyiora, who chose to go to the Atlanta Falcons for a multiyear deal.

As a “DIE HARD” New York Jets fan I was more than happy to see them cut certain players that were no longer needed. Such as, LB Calvin Pace, LB Bart Scott, S Eric Smith, RB Shonn Greene, T Jason Smith, and the big man in the middle DT Sione Po’uha. I personally think the team should cut QB Mark Sanchez or draft more linemen to help at least his blind side. These were all players that made little to no effort on the field or they were injury prone. The Jets are definitely in a rebuilding mode especially if CB Darrelle Revis chooses to go to another team. Let’s just hope he doesn’t go to any team inside the AFC East (Miami Dolphins, Buffalo Bills & New England Patriots). If he does go to a team inside the division, that team would have no choice but to give up 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> round picks. That would give the Jets two 1<sup>st</sup> round picks and two 2<sup>nd</sup> round picks which is what any team would die for. But trading “Revis Island” will always come back to haunt you. Hopefully with those draft picks in the first round the Jets go for some pass rushers. OLB/DE or a NT/DT. I can’t remember the last time I saw a Jet sack a QB, on purpose.

On the other hand there are teams that shouldn't have let go so many players. Superbowl Champion Baltimore Ravens retired, released and or traded 8 starters. WR Anquan Boldin was traded to the NFC Champion San Francisco 49er's for a 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> round draft pick. DE Paul Kruger chose not to resign with the Ravens and accepted a much wealthier check from division rival Cleveland Browns. ILB Dannelle Ellerbe also chose to leave B- More for a new look with the Miami Dolphins, I'm pretty sure he's getting "Rey Lewis In His Prime" money. Longtime C Matt Birk retired his 15 year career. CB Cary Williams was traded to Philadelphia Eagles for a 3<sup>rd</sup> round draft pick. SS Bernard Pollard was released and picked up a week later by the Tennessee Titans. FS Ed Reed recently signed a 3 year, multimillion dollar deal with the Houston Texans and, let's not forget future Hall of Fame LB, Ray Lewis who retired his 17 year career at the end of the Superbowl victory. With all these starters leaving you would think the Ravens would have traded high for first round picks.... No... Their highest pick is the 32<sup>nd</sup> overall pick. Which I think they'll take a FS or a ILB.

In earlier news, the NFL passed a new rule that states, no Running Back or any offensive player may be able to lead forward with the crown of the helmet. This rule was obviously passed to prevent player safety. Some players such as Minnesota Vikings RB Adrian Peterson strongly disagrees with the rule. "For over 90 years of the NFL's existence, RB's were always able to drop their head and shoulder's low to get the extra yardage. Now it's like we're WR's out of the back field." Peterson said Tuesday while on WNST-AM in Baltimore. In my opinion, I think this is the NFL's way of transforming to a 100% passing league. Whereas the famous "Ground & Pound" that Jets Head Coach Rex Ryan elaborated on so often, is now becoming irrelevant. This is why the Jets are switching to a West Coast offense where they throw the ball 95% of the time and only run the ball in Goal Line and tough yardage situations. Such as Green Bay Packers, New England Patriots, Denver Broncos, etc. Hey I guess we can use RB's on the opposing defenses' Blitz packages.

On February 25, 2013, there were speculations that certain players wanted to come out of the closet and reveal their true feelings towards

gay players. NFLPA President Domonique Foxworth stated that the NFLPA held quite a few meetings with different organizations to educate our players to ensure nobody is shocked when that player or players make that announcement. Foxworth also went on to state “I believe there are some gay players in the league as we speak and they have been here for years. I also strongly believe there are some gay players in the Hall of Fame.” Now to go as far as calling out Hall of Famers that paved the way for a(African American) player to speak for the NFLPA and play for the NFL will be a huge burden on his hands

Many athletes throughout all sports refer to March as “March Madness. I strongly agree. The season hasn’t even started yet and already there is a war going on. Let’s just hope when it does start that guys are ready to play football and talk less. Gay or not