



2017

OFFSEASON RECAP

CAVANAUGH BRINGS CONTINUITY TO THE OFFENSE | MANUSKY'S VISION FOR THE DEFENSE | KIRK COUSINS RECEIVES FRANCHISE TAG
JAY GRUDEN RECEIVES EXTENSION | RECAPPING ALL THE NEW COACHES AND PROMOTIONS | FREE AGENCY PREVIEW

Recapping The Redskins' Coaching Staff Changes

The Washington Redskins made several changes to their coaching staff this offseason – some out of necessity, some to change the culture – after completing consecutive winning seasons for the first time since 1996-1997. Offensive coordinator Sean McVay left to become the youngest head coach in NFL history with the Los Angeles Rams and defensive Joe Barry, after being dismissed from the team, joined him to be a linebackers coach. The team promoted from within to fill the coordinator positions as well as its head strength and conditioning coach. Here's a summary of Washington's promotions and additions this past offseason.

Greg Manusky, Defensive Coordinator

The 50-year-old was promoted to defensive coordinator on Jan. 23 after serving as Washington's outside linebackers coach during the 2016 season, guiding Ryan Kerrigan to his second Pro Bowl appearance and second season with a double-digit sack total (11).

Manusky also helped third-year linebacker Trent Murphy post a career-high nine sacks, as the Stanford product was moved back into the role after briefly being tested as a defensive end while Preston Smith started all 16 games and finished the year with 4.5 sacks and an interception.

In 2001, Manusky, a former linebacker for the Redskins, was hired as Washington's linebackers coach for where he helped LaVar Arrington earn his first of three consecutive Pro Bowl appearances.

From 2002-06, Manusky was linebackers coach for the San Diego Chargers. In 2007, Manusky was hired as the defensive coordinator for the San Francisco 49ers, a position he would



hold for four seasons.

In 2011, Manusky re-joined the Chargers, this time as defensive coordinator, and took over the same role with the Colts in 2012, a position he would hold for four seasons.

Jim Tomsula, Defensive Line Coach

Tomsula, 48, joined the Redskins on Jan. 23 with more than three decades of coaching experience, including nine seasons at the NFL level.

Prior to spending one season as head coach of the San Francisco 49ers in 2015,

Tomsula served as the 49ers' defensive line coach for eight seasons from 2007-14.

Tomsula's defensive lines in San Francisco were consistently strong against the run, as the 49ers ranked fourth in the league in rushing yards allowed per game (98.4) and second in rushing average (3.72) across his eight seasons working directly with the unit.

Under Tomsula's tutelage, defensive tackle Justin Smith was named to five consecutive Pro Bowls (2009-13) and earned All-Pro honors in 2011, 2012 and 2013.

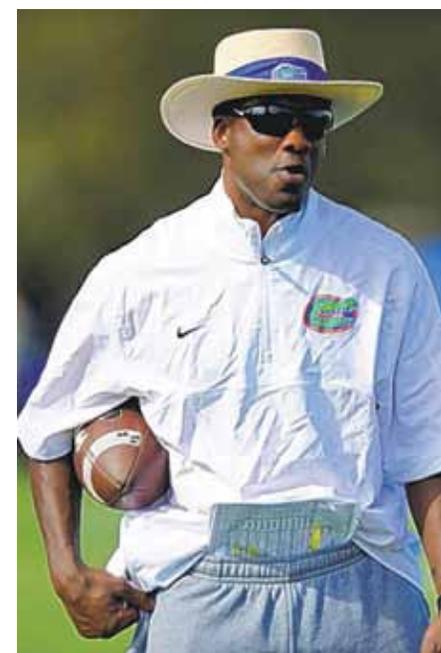
Torrian Gray, Defensive Backs

The Redskins hired Gray, 42, on Feb. 8, after serving most recently as the assistant defensive backs coach for the Florida Gators during the 2016 season.

Prior to his year at Florida, Gray served as defensive secondary/passing game coordinator for Virginia Tech (2013-15), defensive secondary coach for Virginia Tech (2006-12), assistant defensive backs coach for the Chicago Bears (2004-05), defensive backs coach for the University of Connecticut (2002-03) and defensive backs coach for the University of Maine (2000-01).

Before getting into the coaching ranks, Gray played for Virginia Tech for four seasons before being a second-round pick of the Minnesota Vikings in the 1997 NFL Draft.

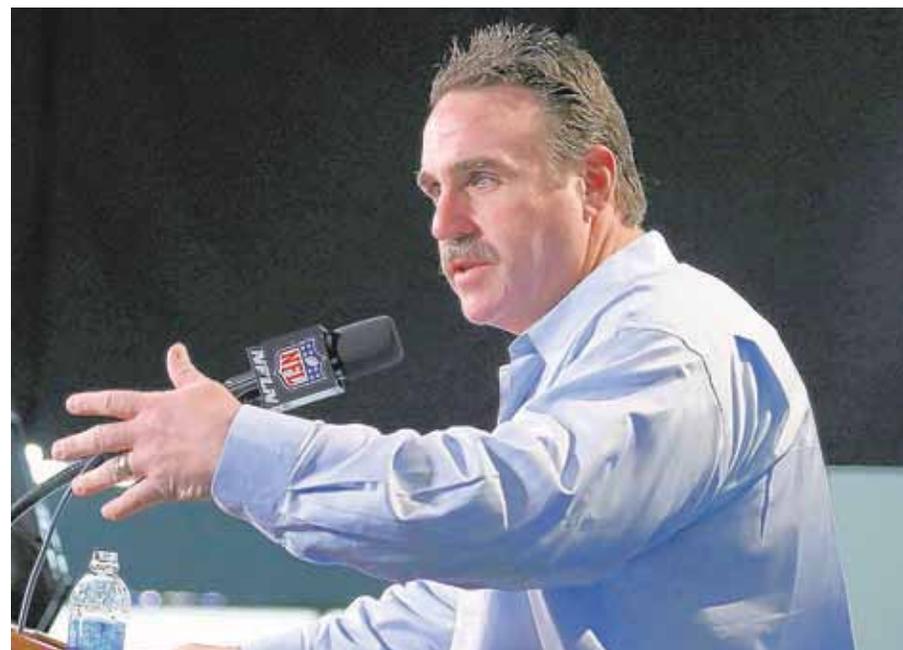
During his coaching career, Gray has



worked with 12 different defensive backs that have been selected in the NFL Draft including current Redskins cornerback Kendall Fuller and former Redskins safety Kyshoen Jarrett.

He also coached five-time Pro Bowler Kam Chancellor and Cody Grimm, the son of former Redskins guard Russ Grimm and the brother of current Redskins defensive quality coach Chad Grimm.

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Matt Cavanaugh, Offensive Coordinator

Cavanaugh, 60, brings 33 years of NFL experience as a coach and player to the role, including 14 as a quarterback with the New England Patriots, San Francisco 49ers, Philadelphia Eagles and New York Giants from 1978-91.

His résumé also includes 12 seasons as an offensive coordinator at the collegiate and professional levels.

Cavanaugh served as the Redskins' quarterbacks coach from 2015-16, presiding over the most prolific two-year passing attack in team history. The Redskins' 8,853 passing yards across those two seasons marked the Redskins most in a two-year stretch, exceeding the 8,485 posted by the 1988-89 Redskins. The Redskins posted team passer ratings of 102.0 and 97.4 in 2015 and 2016, respectively, posting passer ratings above 95.0 in consecutive seasons for the first time in team history.

Under Cavanaugh's guidance, quarterback Kirk Cousins finished 2016 with single-season team records in attempts (606), completions (406) and passing yards (4,917) and matched his team record for 300-yard passing games (seven). Cousins' also posted the third-highest completion percentage (67.0) and tied for the sixth-most passing touchdowns in a season in team history (25). He became the first quarterback in team history to average 300 passing yards per game in a season (307.3), surpassing the previous franchise mark of 269.1, set by Mark Rypien in 1989.

Kevin O'Connell, Quarterbacks Coach

Prior to joining the Redskins on Jan. 23, O'Connell, 31, spent the 2016 season overseeing special projects for the San

Francisco 49ers.

In 2015, he served as quarterbacks coach for the Cleveland Browns and worked with quarterback Josh McCown, who became the first player in Browns franchise history to throw for 300-or-more yards in three consecutive games.

Prior to coaching, O'Connell spent time with the Patriots, Lions, Jets, Dolphins and Chargers during his five year NFL career (2008-12).

He was a four-year team captain

at San Diego State from 2004-07, appearing in 40 games and finishing his career ranked third in school history in completions (664), fourth in passing yards (7,689) and fifth in passing touchdowns (46).

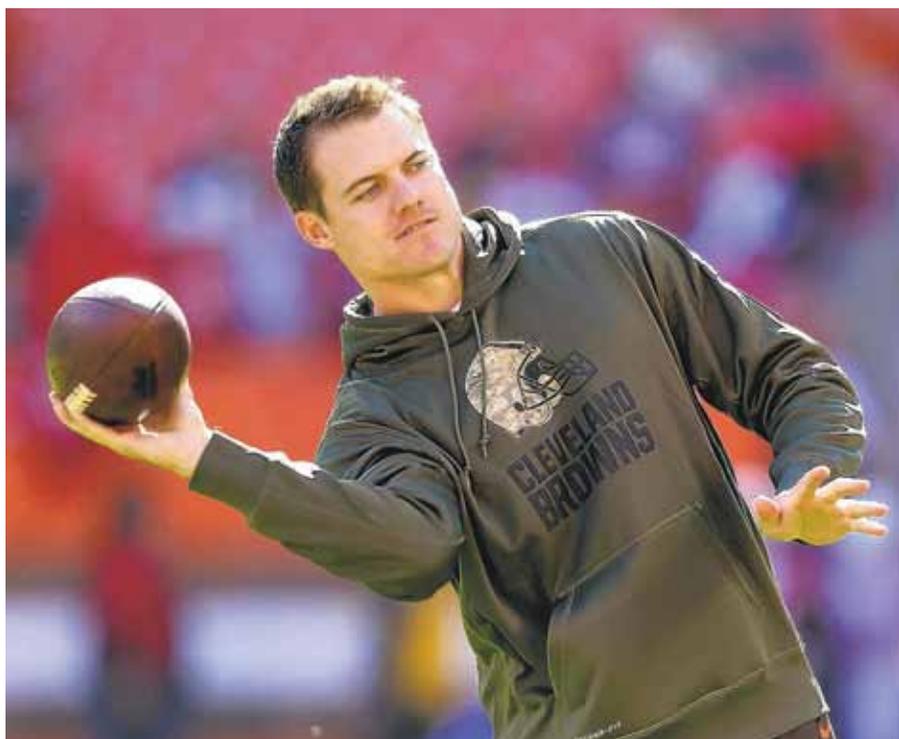
Chad Englehart, Head Strength and Conditioning Coach

Englehart, 31, assumes his new title after serving as the Redskins' assistant strength and conditioning coach for the

last seven seasons.

Prior to joining the Redskins in 2010, he served as the head strength and conditioning coach for the NFL's Florida Tuskers in 2009.

In 2008, Englehart served as director of strength and conditioning at Xcel Sports Performance in Louisiana. Before that, he was head strength and conditioning coach in 2007 at HS2 Athletic Performance in Mandeville, La., and at the University of New Orleans in 2006.



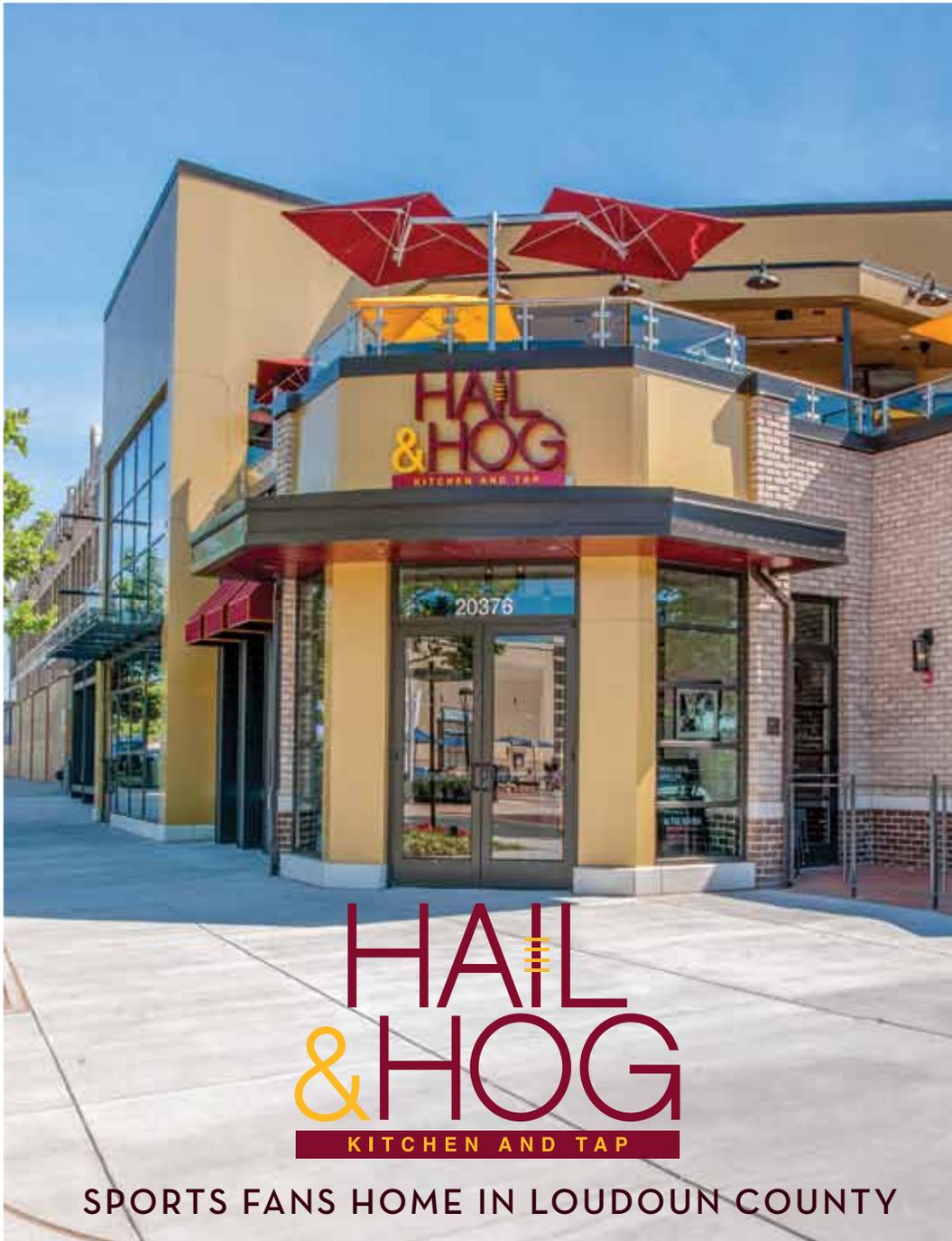


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Matt Cavanaugh Brings Even Keel And Continuity To Offensive Coordinator Position

It didn't take long for head coach Jay Gruden to find his offensive coordinator in Matt Cavanaugh, whose promotion will bring continuity to an already electric offense.

BY: JAKE KRING-SCHREIFELS

In mid-January, Redskins head coach Jay Gruden reached out to quarterbacks coach Matt Cavanaugh and asked if he'd be interested in taking the open offensive coordinator position, which had been left vacant by Sean McVay, who had, himself, just become the Los Angeles Rams' new head coach.

Cavanaugh, without hesitation, said "absolutely" and Gruden mulled over his response for just a couple of days before offering Cavanaugh the job. The short process was predicated on a desire to keep continuity after a record-breaking offensive season.

"Promoting Matt Cavanaugh was easy. We're not going to make wholesale changes offensively," Gruden said on "Redskins Nation." "It's a system we brought from Cincinnati; we added some things, Sean [McVay] added some things, but we feel good where we are offensively and there's no reason to make a whole lot of changes. Now we're going to critique what we did last year, get a lot better especially in the red zone, but I feel good where Matt is."

Cavanaugh believes Gruden valued his input last season with McVay, and that his promotion should be a seamless transition.

"There will be some tweaks like with any team in the offseason, but for the most part we want to keep the same system in place," Cavanaugh said. "Ideally we keep a lot of the same players, we'll deal with that when free agency hits, but we want to keep continuity."

Cavanaugh, 60, has served as the team's quarterbacks coach for the last two seasons, guiding Kirk Cousins, who became an extension of the coaching staff, to back-to-back record-breaking seasons.

His previous stints as offensive coordinator came with Chicago (1997-98) and later with Baltimore (1999-04), where he won a Super Bowl in 2000. Before joining Washington, he served as quarterbacks coach for the Jets (2009-12) and then with Chicago (2013-14).

While there is still uncertainty regarding the future of Cousins, Cavanaugh has expressed his confidence in the Redskins' starter for the last two seasons after working closely to develop him into a franchise record-breaking passer.

"Kirk's made great strides in the last

two years," Cavanaugh said. "There's still work to do and he'll be the first to admit it. There's things he wants to be better at, there's situational football that he wants to improve on. For the most part his decision-making has been pretty good, he wants to be more active in the pocket, he wants to extend plays, things that he sees other quarterbacks do that, it's the next step for him."

"When you first start in this league you're just concerned about throwing completions, and he's done that, he's

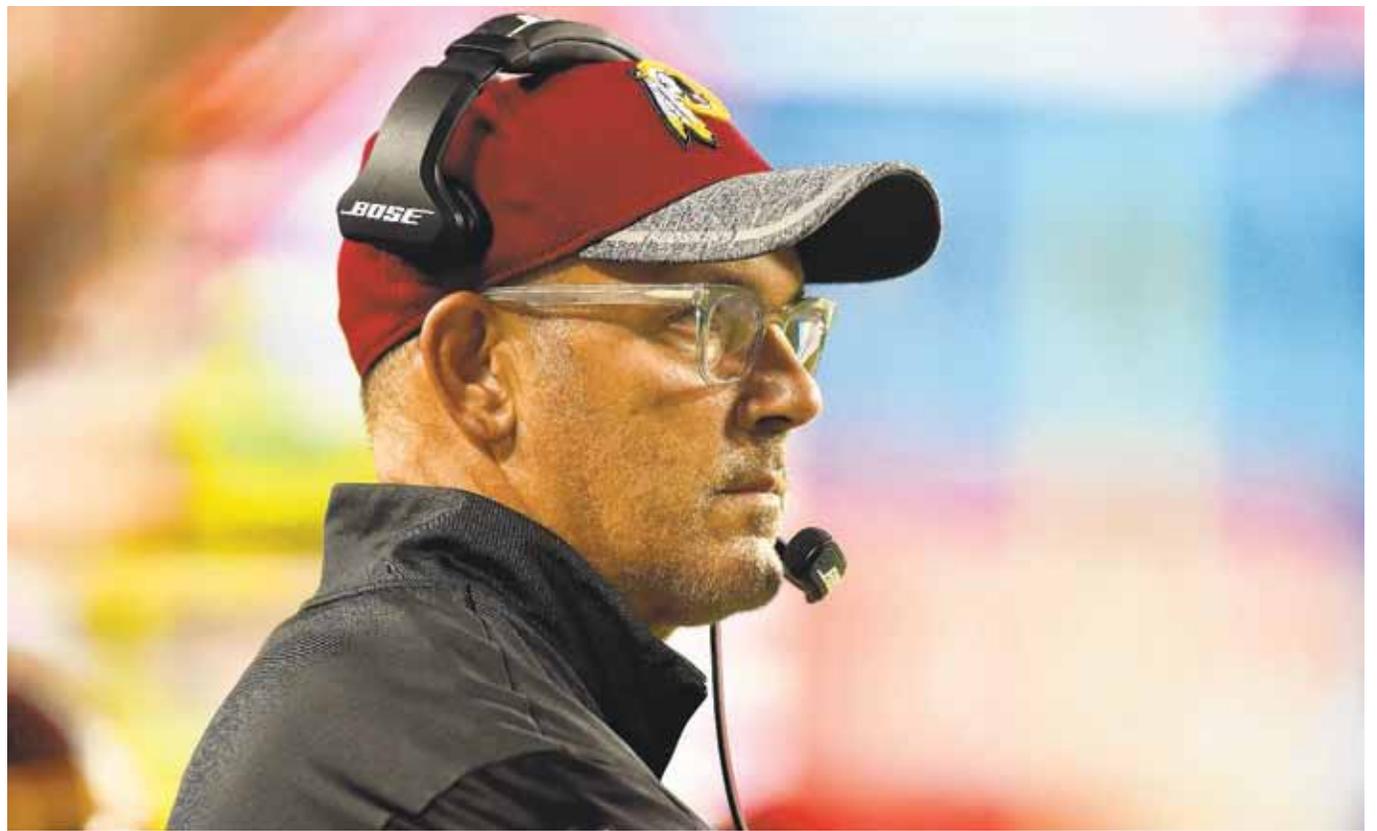
on maintaining an even-keel, knowing when to express pleasure or dismay with certain players' decisions and effectively conveying that in measured ways.

"[Experience] does help, and I'm certainly not saying that someone who hasn't played the position can't coach it, because that's been proven wrong, too," Cavanaugh said. "I think more than anything you have to think like the quarterback."

"My motto's always been, when you come off the sideline, I'll be sitting at

scream. If I've got to correct something, I'll get it corrected without being too demonstrative. But I want to be level headed, I want them to know that no matter what happens, we're going to be on a steady course and get things fixed and we won't get too excited when things are going great. We've got another series to go."

For his offseason work, Cavanaugh plans to analyze the deficiencies in the red zone that paralyzed an otherwise prolific offense. Washington ranked



On August 19, 2016, The Washington Redskins defeated the New York Jets 22-18 at FedExField in Landover, MD.

done that very well, but there's more to the game than that and I know he wants to expand on some of those situational things." Coordinator

Cavanaugh was a quarterback himself, starting 19 games over the course of 13 seasons in the NFL. As he's brought his experience into his coaching role the last two years with the Redskins, he believes that having a player's perspective of the position will assist him better as he takes over the entirety of the offensive game plan.

But Cavanaugh also believes that being an effective leader will also rely

the end of the bench waiting for you, and you won't know if we just scored a touchdown or you threw an interception. We're going to talk through that series and we're going to get ready for the next one."

Which is to say, Cavanaugh is not "naturally real loud" and his style will not be one of intimidation. Gruden will set the agenda for the offense and Cavanaugh will help put together the game plans and assist with play-calling.

"I think that I can talk things through without getting too animated," Cavanaugh said. "I don't need to yell and

30th in the league in that category, scoring just 45 percent of the time, a step back from last year when they ranked 11th and scored 58 percent of the time.

"It's certainly an emphasis for us to evaluate this offseason," Cavanaugh said. "We'll study other teams, see if there's some scheme we're missing, whether it's run or pass, evaluate the play calls we've made down there with the quarterback's decisions, the route-running, the blocking, it all goes hand in hand, it's not just one guy. It's not just the call, there's a lot that goes into it, and we need to evaluate that hard."



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Greg Manusky Plans To Implement An Attacking, Communicative Defense

The team's new defensive coordinator wants to make sure he stops the run, the foundation of which will be built on communication and aggression.

BY: JAKE KRING-SCHREIFELS

The Redskins' struggles on defense in 2016 could be attributed to a number of factors, but were likely symptomatic of poor communication. That's a broader issue that new defensive coordinator Greg Manusky hopes will be the foundation through which the defense will improve in 2017.

"I think it doesn't matter the call that is actually given to them," Manusky said on ESPN 980 this week. "I think they all have to be on the same page and that is big for me because I think as a former player, when you're in those situations everybody has to be on the same page and that is when you have to make plays."

Manusky, who was officially hired by the Redskins on Monday, will bring an "attacking defense" to the Redskins while still using the base 3-4 defensive scheme that the team has implemented for the past several years.

As NFL offenses have evolved and the passing game has thrown more defenses into nickel and dime coverages, the 3-4 model is rarely the predominant formation teams use. For example, in passing downs, instead of three defensive linemen, only two will stay on the line, flanked by two outside linebackers, essentially mimicking a 4-3 style defense.

"It's still going to be a 3-4 look with Preston and Ryan off the edge along with Trent," Manusky said. "You're looking for these guys to set an edge on each side and make sure the inside linebackers know that the edge is going to be set then the inside guys can go strike iron downhill."

Manusky has run both kinds of defensive schemes in his past, but, without knowing the kind of personnel he'll have at his disposal just yet - free agency and the NFL Draft are still in the future - he's spoken mostly about the style of play he expects from his group.

That means a hard-nosed, aggressive kind of football predicated on stopping the run. Washington ranked 24th against the run last year, allowing an average 119.8 yards per game, and in the last two years combined, the team ranks last in yards per carry allowed (4.86).

"I want them to compete at a high



On October 9, 2016, The Washington Redskins defeated the Baltimore Ravens 16-10 at M&T Bank Stadium in Baltimore, MD.

level," Manusky said. "We have to pressure quarterbacks number one in this league. In our division you better stop the run plain and simple, it has been like that since I was playing same as you Doc when you were playing. We have to stop the run and we have to run the ball."

"As an inside linebacker, I'm not going to have anybody run the ball on us that's the most important thing," Manusky added. "Because the one thing that it does is that it actually breaks you down. It's like what else can we do? Up front we have to dominate the front, the linebackers take head because you're going to come down hill and start striking iron. That is what we have to do."

One thing head coach Jay Gruden won't have to worry about with Manusky is his passion and energy. During his interview, Gruden learned more about Manusky's attention to detail and organization simply because he never had to wonder or ask about how he might captivate the room.

"He is going to have these guys ready to play hard," Gruden said Tuesday at the Senior Bowl. "That's the whole thing I want these guys to be sound defensively and play hard with a lot of passion. I think the way he was as a player and the way he has always been as a coach, his defenses have always played hard and that's what we are looking for."

Manusky, whose voice wasn't hard

to find on the practice field last year, seems to already have a method down for grabbing and maintaining attention in the meeting rooms.

"There is a lot of Spark and a lot of Red Bull prior to going into those meetings. You have to have energy when you go in there," Manusky said. "You have to get these guys to play with some fire and some passion. This is a great part of their lives, and don't let it waste by an 8-7-1 season. Personnel wise I don't care who is in the room I'm going to get them fired up and I'm going to get them to play at their best ability they can on each and every snap."

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Redskins Place Exclusive Franchise Tag On Kirk Cousins

The Washington Redskins announced on Feb. 28 that they have placed quarterback Kirk Cousins on the exclusive franchise tag, keeping him for now for the 2017 season.

By: JAKE KRING-SCHREIFELS

After weeks of speculation and buildup, the Redskins and Kirk Cousins finally agreed to a deal that will keep the quarterback in Washington, at least for the time being.

The Redskins on Feb. 28 placed the exclusive franchise tag on Cousins, which is essentially a one-year, fully-guaranteed deal.

This is the second straight season that Cousins has been tagged, and the first time in NFL history that a quarterback has been given the franchise tag in consecutive years.

Applying the franchise tag on Cousins also allows the Redskins to continue to work on a long-term deal with the quarterback until a July 15 deadline. Last year, the two parties were unable to negotiate a deal, but there may be more incentive this year considering next year's franchise tag will be extremely pricy.

For now, the decision ends the discussion of whether or not the Redskins would be able to hash out a long-term agreement prior to the March 1 tag deadline.

Another lucrative one-year deal for the Redskins starting quarterback does not make Cousins feel unwanted, however. As he explained throughout his press tour during Super Bowl week, receiving the franchise tag means the team wants to keep him, regardless of how long.

"I want to be where I'm wanted and if they tag mean that tells you that you're wanted," Cousins told ESPN 980. "They are not going to tag you or commit to you if they don't want you. So if they tag me then that's great and it means they want me back. Whether I sign a five year deal or a one year franchise tag, I'm going to feel like I'm on a one year deal every year and have to prove myself week in and week out. If they tag me great it looks like I'm wanted. If they don't then that sends a strong message too and lets go look at our options."

The merits for earning the tag are apparent. Cousins once again set records for the Redskins in his second season as the team's full-time starting quarterback. The Michigan State product finished the year with 4,917 yards – 15th most in NFL history -- and 25 touchdowns along with 12 interceptions. He also compiled a season passer rating of 97.2.



On October 2, 2016, The Washington Redskins defeated the Cleveland Browns 31-20 at FedExField in Landover, MD.



On October 23, 2016, The Washington Redskins were defeated the Detroit Lions 20-17 at Ford Field in Detroit, MI.

He finished the season with team single-season records in attempts (606), completions (404) and passing yards along with matching his own team record for 300-yard passing games with seven.

Cousins also became the first Redskins quarterback to rank in the top three in the NFL in passing yardage in a season since Jay Schroeder in 1986 (second).

In two different games this season, Cousins also threw for more than 400

yards, eclipsing the mark against the Cincinnati Bengals (458) in a Week 8 and then again against the Dallas Cowboys (449) in Week 12.

Cousins was also named NFC Offensive Player of the Month in November following his performances against the Minnesota Vikings, Green Bay Packers and Cowboys, as he combined to throw for 1,086 yards and eight touchdowns and no interceptions.

It was the second time in his career that he earned NFC Offensive Player of the Month honors. He joined linebacker Wilber Marshall – who earned NFC Defensive Player of the Month honors in October 1991 and October 1992 – as the only players in team history to win multiple Player of the Month awards.

"He's done a lot of great things, there's no question about it," head coach Jay Gruden said at the end of the season. "Any time that you throw for almost 5,000 yards in an NFL season, there's a lot of positives there... This is his second full year playing and he's learned a lot, but he's got a lot more to learn, both from a mental side and then from a physical side, maybe the ability to create some plays once in a while would be good – like he did against Chicago. A couple scramble first downs, some off-schedule plays that you see some of these guys make. Athletically, he's not like Russell Wilson, or some of those guys, but still, maybe if he can buy time in the pocket a little bit, something he can continue to work on, get a feel for [and] take his game to the next level. He's already at a very high level."

Now, the Redskins and Cousins must determine how much more they want to invest in each other.

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Redskins Sign Jay Gruden To Multi-Year Contract Extension

The Redskins signed head coach Jay Gruden to a multi-year contract extension on March 6. Gruden recently completed his third season in Washington and has led the Redskins to back-to-back winning seasons.

By **STEPHEN CZARDA**

When Jay Gruden was hired to be the 29th head coach in the history of the Washington Redskins, he preached an organization-wide effort to be a consistent winner.

“This is about a commitment to being a consistently great franchise and we want to provide everybody with the proud sense that we’re going to come to work every day and do the best we can to put a competitive football team on the field every day,” Gruden said during his introductory press conference on Jan. 9, 2014.

After three seasons of helping get the organization moving forward, the Redskins announced on March 6 that they signed Gruden to a multi-year extension, allowing him the path to continue to help build Washington into an annual contender. Full terms of the deal were not disclosed.

Over the last two seasons, the Redskins have collected a 17-14-1 regular season record along with another NFC East title in 2015.

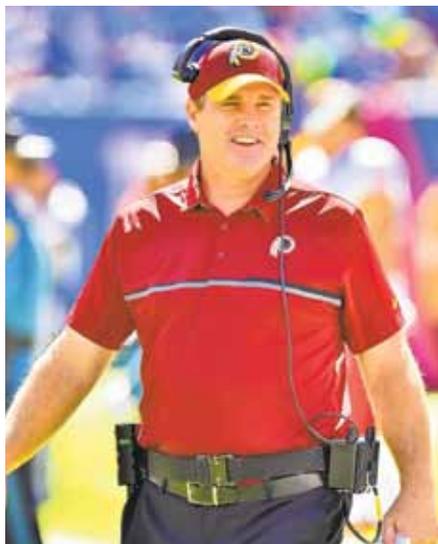
The back-to-back winning seasons are also the first since the 1996-97 seasons when the Redskins also went 17-14-1 during that span.

Despite coming off a 4-12 season in 2014, the Redskins experienced a breakthrough season in 2015, as Gruden led the team to a 9-7 record. Washington had a 5-7 record entering the final quarter of the season, but registered four consecutive victories including a 38-24 victory over the Philadelphia Eagles on Dec. 26, to win the division.

Gruden became the sixth coach in team history to lead the Redskins to a playoff berth within the first two years at the helm, joining Ray Flaherty, Dutch Bergman, Dudley DeGroot, George Allen and Joe Gibbs.

Quarterback Kirk Cousins and tight end Jordan Reed both experienced breakout seasons on the offensive side of the football, while linebacker Preston Smith tallied a league-high 8.5 sacks among rookies.

In 2016, Washington had five players named to the Pro Bowl under Gruden’s



On September 25, 2016, The Washington Redskins defeated the New York Giants 29-27 at MetLife Stadium in East Rutherford, NJ.

guidance, as Cousins, Reed and guard Brandon Scherff all earned selections for the first time in their careers while linebacker Ryan Kerrigan got his second career nod and tackle Trent Williams was named to his fifth Pro Bowl in a row.

During the season, the Redskins gained a team-record 6,454 yards and averaged more than 400 offensive yards per game for the first time in franchise history. The third-place finish in total offense also represented Washington’s highest ranking in the category since 1999. Eight different players also finished the season with at least 500 yards from scrimmage, tying the 2011 New Orleans Saints for the most in a single season in NFL history.

Cousins earned his second career NFC Offensive Player of the Month honor – most in franchise history – while kicker Dustin Hopkins earned his first NFC Special Teams Player of the

Month honor in September.

Returner Jamison Crowder also was selected as NFC Special Teams Player of the Week for Week 5 and rookies Su’a Cravens and Robert Kelley earned weekly awards voted on by the fans.

Kerrigan, meanwhile, has recorded 34 of his 58.5 career sacks while Gruden has been head coach. His is currently third in franchise history in career sacks, trailing only Dexter Manley and Charles Mann.

Gruden told Redskins.com in December that his goal while remaining in Washington is to help the players grow, both on the field and away from it.

“Well, you want to try to do the best you can and try to develop good people in here so that when these guys leave football, maybe they’re just a little bit better of a person,” Gruden said. “That’s easier said than done, but you try to do that. Ultimately it’s about winning.”



On October 16, 2016, The Washington Redskins defeated the Philadelphia Eagles 27-20 at FedExField in Landover, MD.



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Free Agent Roundup

The free agency window has opened and teams are allowed to negotiate with players whose contracts have expired with their current clubs. Over the next few weeks, the Redskins will

look to retain some of their own free agents while also shopping for other options to upgrade at specific positions of need. That includes the several position groups listed below. Depending on what they decide to do with their own free agents – Chris Baker, DeSean Jackson, Pierre Garçon – here’s a list of options that Washington will likely be keeping tabs on throughout the month.

Inside Linebackers

Dont’a Hightower

Dont’a Hightower, 26, has the size and speed to become a very good middle linebacker in the NFL.

In 2016 Hightower established

himself as one of the leaders for the New England Patriots’ eighth overall defense. Hightower is dominant when healthy but has only played a full season once in his career.

Gerald Hodges

Gerald Hodges is another option. The fourth-round pick from Minnesota spent the last two years in San Francisco and plays well against the run (an area the Redskins need help with) and in pass coverage.

He had a breakout year in 2016, collecting career highs in tackles (83), sacks (three) and interceptions (two) and forced fumbles (one).

Zach Brown

Zach Brown was mostly unnoticed prior to last season, but after signing a one-year deal with the Bills (much like former Redskin Lorenzo Alexander), Brown had a career year.

Brown played in all 16 games and collected 143 tackles, four sacks and

an interception along with two forced fumbles. It’s uncertain how much the Bills would like to bring him back with a new head coach in Sean McDermott, but he would likely be a more reliable option long term than Alexander.

Wide Receivers

Terrelle Pryor

If there was one bright spot for the 1-15 Cleveland Browns in 2016 it was Terrelle Pryor Sr. The former Ohio State quarterback transition to receiver has gone quite well.

In his first full year at his new position, Pryor Sr. became a playmaker for the Browns and averaged 8.8 targets per game. The most impressive part of Pryor Sr.’s 2016 campaign was his ability to produce while playing with an injured finger and having five different quarterbacks throwing him the ball.

In total, Pryor Sr. finished the year with 77 receptions for 1,007 yards and four touchdowns.

Kenny Britt

Kenny Britt answered the call in his contract year with the Rams, eclipsing 1,000 yards for the first time in his career.

In 15 games, he caught 68 passes for five touchdowns and, as the team’s leading receiver, tallied two games with more than 100 yards receiving.

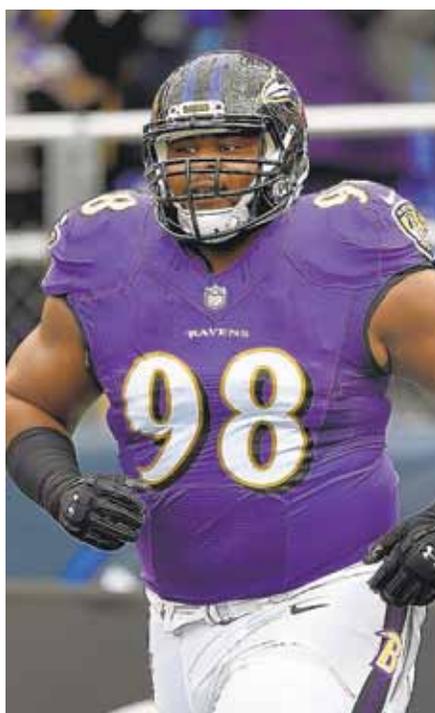
Alshon Jeffery

Alshon Jeffery would be one of the most coveted free agents if he were to hit the market. His size and speed makes one of the most dangerous deep threats in the NFL.

After serving a four-game suspension in 2016 for violating the NFL’s policy against performance-enhancing drugs, Jeffery quickly became the No. 1 offensive threat for the Chicago Bears.

Each of the last four years he has ended with at least 800 receiving yards for Jeffery.

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FREE AGENTS

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Defensive Linemen

Calais Campbell

Since Calais Campbell came to Arizona he was often overlooked as one of the best defensive linemen in the league. He missed only six games due to injury in nine seasons and is a two-time Pro Bowler.

Campbell was ranked number 24 on Pro Football Focus' Top 101 players of 2016 and, even at 30, isn't slowing down. His strength and athleticism

helps him disrupt the passing game by not only rushing the passer but being able to knock balls down at the line of scrimmage.

Brandon Williams

One of the best nose tackles in the NFL is the Ravens' Brandon Williams, who is also a main reason that Baltimore had the league's fifth best run defense.

Williams is a pure run-stuffing nose tackle that consistently took on double teams to allow linebackers C.J. Mosely and Zachary Orr to run free and take on running backs.

Dontari Poe

The Chiefs nose tackle Dontari Poe has established himself as one of the best defensive linemen in the NFL. The two-time Pro Bowler is able to occupy blockers to stop the run and can disrupt the opponent's passing game. Poe's 60 starts in 62 games show off his consistency week in and week out.

Safeties

Tony Jefferson

Tony Jefferson is an overlooked player in the Arizona Cardinals secondary with names like Patrick Peterson and Tyrann Mathieu around. However, Jefferson was the only Cardinals defensive back to end up on Pro Football Focus' top player list.

Jefferson is a solid tackler who likes to move up in the box to help the run game and he missed only five tackles all year.

T.J. McDonald

Safety T.J. McDonald had two interceptions last season along with 49 tackles.

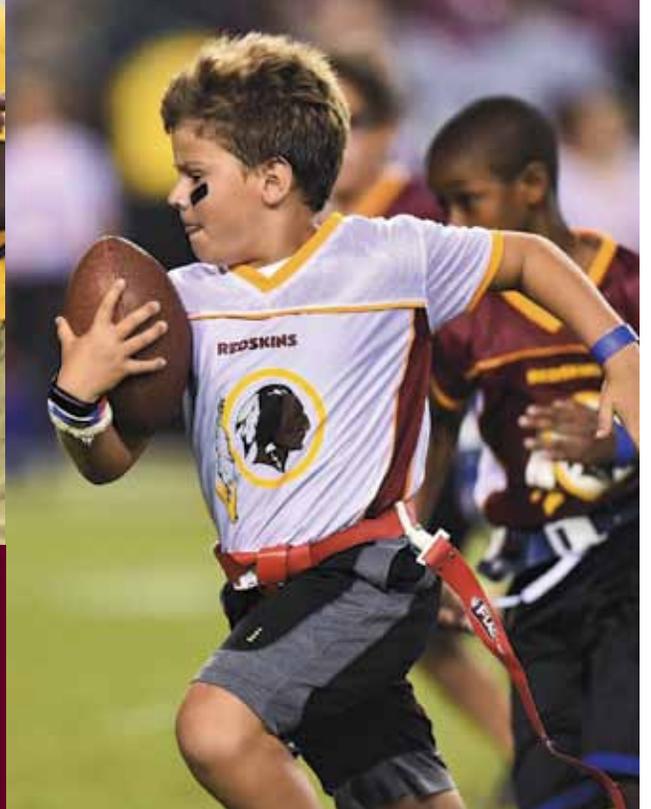
McDonald's best play came when he lined up as a nickel linebacker. He is able to cover tight ends and running backs coming out of the backfield. McDonald helped the Rams finish with the tenth best passing defense in the NFL in 2016 and the ninth overall defense. The 26-year-old safety out of USC is not a game changer but can be a serviceable starter in a secondary.

Micah Hyde

The Packers' defensive back is a versatile player, able to line up as safety or cornerback. He tied his career high with three interceptions and helped hold together a decimated Packers secondary the last part of the season.

The 26-year-old started 11 games and played in all 16 of Green Bay's regular season games. Hyde is a reliable player that defensive coordinator Dom Capers liked to use in all kinds of scenarios.





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