

49ers Mid-Day Clips – February 16, 2017

Local Media

San Francisco 49ers Free Agents in 2017

By Staff, 49ers.com

<http://www.49ers.com/news/article-2/San-Francisco-49ers-Free-Agents-in-2017/50f498fd-e77d-4e39-84ae-b36ec19ba57f>

49ers' five biggest needs and the players that could fill them

By Matt Barrows, Sacramento Bee

<http://www.sacbee.com/sports/nfl/san-francisco-49ers/article133158249.html>

Torrey Smith could benefit from Shanahan's big-play philosophy

By Matt Maiocco, CSNBayArea.com

<http://www.csnbayarea.com/49ers/torrey-smith-could-benefit-shanahans-big-play-philosophy>

Much for 49ers to evaluate when it comes to Mitch Trubisky, other QB options

By Nick Wagoner, ESPN.com

http://www.espn.com/blog/san-francisco-49ers/post/_/id/23480/much-to-evaluate-for-49ers-when-it-comes-to-quarterbacks-and-mitch-trubisky

Rams-Niners rivalry gets new twist with Sean McVay, Kyle Shanahan

By Alden Gonzalez, ESPN.com

http://www.espn.com.au/blog/los-angeles-rams/post/_/id/33025/rams-niners-rivalry-gets-new-twist-with-sean-mcvay-kyle-shanahan

National Media

Washington has no comment on Chris Cooley's remarks

By Mike Florio, ProFootballTalk.com

<http://profootballtalk.nbcsports.com/2017/02/16/washington-has-no-comment-on-chris-cooleys-remarks/>

Tony Romo reportedly expects release from Cowboys, believes he can start for 2-3 more years

By Staff, Dallas Morning News

<http://sportsday.dallasnews.com/dallas-cowboys/cowboys/2017/02/16/tony-romo-reportedly-expects-release-cowboys-believes-can-start-2-3-years?f=r>

Steelers not saying if they'll franchise Le'Veon Bell

By Michael David Smith, ProFootballTalk.com

<http://profootballtalk.nbcsports.com/2017/02/16/steelers-not-saying-if-theyll-franchise-leveon-bell/>

Miami Dolphins to release Branden Albert, Mario Williams, two others in salary cap moves (\$1.7M update)

By Armando Salguero, Miami Herald

<http://www.miamiherald.com/sports/spt-columns-blogs/armando-salguero/article133096369.html>

Jets' Austin Seferian-Jenkins takes plea deal in DUI case

By Darryl Slater, Newark Star-Ledger

http://www.nj.com/jets/index.ssf/2017/02/austin_seferian_jenkins_jets_dui.html#incart_river_index

Tom Brady, Patriots reportedly in early stages of contract extension talks

By Jared Dubin, CBSSports.com

<http://www.cbssports.com/nfl/news/tom-brady-patriots-reportedly-in-early-stages-of-contract-extension-talks/>

Local Clips – Full Version

San Francisco 49ers Free Agents in 2017

By Staff, 49ers.com

The San Francisco 49ers will have 20 free agents in a couple of months. Seventeen of those free agents are unrestricted, while three are classified as restricted free agents.

A couple of things to know before free agency takes place:

-- Unrestricted free agents can negotiate exclusively with the San Francisco until the new league year begins on March 9.

-- Restricted free agents could be tendered a contract. If so, the 49ers would have the right of first refusal to match any offers they may receive.

-- Teams have until 1 p.m. PT on March 1 to designate franchise or transition tags for their free agents.

-- The new league year also begins with the start of NFL free agency, which officially opens on March 9 at 1 p.m. PT. Unrestricted free agents will have a two-day negotiating period on March 7 at 12:59 p.m. PT to enter contract talks. New deals cannot be executed until the start of free agency.

Let's take a look at the 17 aforementioned unrestricted free agents on San Francisco's roster in alphabetical order:

LB Nick Bellore

Started 10 games at linebacker in place of NaVorro Bowman, recorded 82 tackles, one interception and one fumble recovery.

K Phil Dawson

Made 30-of-31 extra-point attempts and was 18-of-21 on field goals with a season-long of 53 yards.

NT Glenn Dorsey

Started six games after suffering a torn ACL late in the 2015 season, recorded 36 tackles and one sack.

RB Shaun Draughn

Appeared in 14 games. Rushed 74 times for 196 yards with four touchdowns on the ground. Caught 29 passes for 263 receiving yards with two touchdown receptions.

TE Jim Dray

Signed with the 49ers on Dec. 19, 2016. Appeared in two games.

QB Blaine Gabbert

Started five games in 2016. Completed 91-of-160 pass attempts for 925 yards with five touchdown passes and six interceptions. Rushes 40 times for 173 yards with two touchdowns.

G Andrew Gardner

Signed on Dec. 21, 2016. Started at left guard in the 2017 season finale.

LB Gerald Hodges

Made 11 starts at inside linebacker. Recorded 92 tackles, three sacks, two interceptions, one forced fumble and one fumble recovery.

DT Tony Jerod-Eddie

Appeared in nine games. Recorded seven tackles.

DT Chris Jones

Claimed off waivers on Nov. 8, 2016. Appeared in five games. Recorded 27 tackles in five starts.

WR Jeremy Kerley

Acquired via trade on Aug. 29, 2016. Started 13 games and led the 49ers with 64 receptions and 667 receiving yards. Added three touchdown catches. Averaged 7.6 yards on 21 punt returns with a long of 26 yards.

QB Thad Lewis

Placed on Injured Reserve on Aug. 16, 2016 after sustaining a knee injury in the preseason.

WR Quinton Patton

Placed on Injured Reserve on Dec. 20, 2016. Produced career highs with 37 catches and 308 receiving yards.

QB Christian Ponder

Signed on Aug. 16, 2016. Did not appear in a regular season contest.

WR Rod Streater

Acquired via trade on Sept. 3, 2016. Recorded 18 catches for 191 receiving yards with two touchdown grabs.

G Andrew Tiller

Appeared in 14 games. Made seven starts at guard.

LB Michael Wilhoite

Appeared in 16 games. Made five starts and recorded 59 tackles and one forced fumble.

San Francisco's restricted free agents:

CB Marcus Cromartie

Appeared in nine games. Recorded four tackles.

CB Chris Davis

Began the season as the team's starting slot cornerback, was placed on Injured Reserve on Oct. 10, 2016. Recorded two tackles and a half sack in four appearances.

RB DuJuan Harris

Appeared in nine games, making one start. Rushed 38 times for 138 yards. Caught eight passes for 115 yards and one touchdown.

49ers' five biggest needs and the players that could fill them

By Matt Barrows, Sacramento Bee

When Kyle Shanahan arrived in Atlanta in 2015 as the Falcons offensive coordinator, he had both an elite quarterback and perhaps the best wide receiver in the NFL. In San Francisco, he'll discover both positions awfully bare.

Shanahan and new 49ers general manager John Lynch are in the midst of evaluating their current talent and figuring out which outside players they might want to acquire. The scouting combine begins in less than two weeks and free agency two weeks after that. Here's a ranking of the 49ers' needs and some of the additions they could make in coming months.

Quarterback: The 49ers already have three passers heading for unrestricted free agency and many believe they'll eventually have a fourth in Colin Kaepernick. That would be the likely scenario if the 49ers signal to Kaepernick that they plan to release him instead of pay him his 2017 contract, which calls for a nearly \$15 million base salary. That would force Kaepernick to opt out of his deal beginning March 2 so that he can be part of free agency March 9. In any scenario, the team must bulk up at the position. Do they go all-in and fork over draft picks and a big, long-term contract for someone like Jimmy Garoppolo? Or do they take a cautious approach in 2017 and make a more dramatic move next year when the draft-eligible quarterbacks are better? Matt Schaub and Brian Hoyer both have played for Shanahan in the past.

Trade: Garoppolo, A.J. McCarron

Free agency: Kirk Cousins (if he isn't franchised), Kaepernick, Schaub, Hoyer, Mike Glennon.

Draft: Deshaun Watson (1st), Mitch Trubisky (1st), DeShone Kizer (1st-2nd).

Wide receiver: The 49ers can't expect big gains out of the quarterback position unless they do something at wide receiver. Their most prolific player last year was Jeremy Kerley. His 667 receiving yards ranked 64th among NFL receivers and, more than that, Kerley isn't even signed for 2017. Soon-to-be free agent Terrelle Pryor had 1,007 yards last year in a bad Browns offense and is still learning that position after his conversion from quarterback. He'd be the closest thing on the market to Shanahan's most recent top receiver, Julio Jones, but it seems as if the Browns will hold onto him either through a new deal or with the franchise tag. In an ideal world, the 49ers get a big-bodied, No. 1 receiver who meshes with Torrey Smith. Pierre Garcon, 30, is older than the ideal free agent, but he has been tough and productive and was signed by Washington in 2012 when Shanahan was the team's offensive coordinator.

Free agent: Pryor, Alshon Jeffery, Garcon, Kenny Britt

Draft: Mike Williams (1st), Corey Davis (1st), Juju Smith-Schuster (2nd), Zay Jones (2nd).

Edge rusher: No matter whether they stick to a 3-4 defense or go with a more Seattle-Seahawks-like system, the 49ers must improve their pass rush. Ahmad Brooks and DeForest Buckner tied for the team lead in sacks with six apiece. The good news is that both free agency and the draft are loaded with pass rushers. San Diego's Melvin Ingram might be the best of the bunch on the open market. He had 72 quarterback pressures last year, according to Pro Football Focus. By comparison, the 49ers' champ for

quarterback pressures was Buckner with 48, which reinforces the point: The 49ers need more heat from the edge.

Free agency: Ingram, Chandler Jones, Jason Pierre-Paul

Draft: Myles Garrett (1st), Derek Barnett (1st), Tim Williams (1st), Devonte Fields (2nd).

Linebacker: This is another position the 49ers must address regardless of their base scheme. They have just three inside linebackers signed for next season: NaVorro Bowman, Ray-Ray Armstrong and Shayne Skov. Bowman is coming off another major injury, Armstrong lasted only a couple of games last season before he was injured and Skov never has played extensive defensive snaps in the NFL. The 49ers could make a big splash with Patriots free agent Dont'a Hightower, but it's hard to say how that would sit with Bowman, who right now is the defensive king of San Francisco's locker room. Buffalo's Zach Brown might be a cheaper, speedier alternative. He ran his 40-yard dash in 4.5 seconds five years ago and last year finished second in the NFL with 149 tackles. In a Seahawks-like system, he projects as a Will linebacker. In a 3-4 system, he'd be an excellent fit next to Bowman.

Free agency: Hightower, Brown, Sean Spence, Kevin Minter

Draft: Reuben Foster (1st), Zach Cunningham (1st), Haason Reddick (1st, 2nd)

Nose tackle: The 49ers only began to plug their leaky run defense last year when Glenn Dorsey returned to the lineup. Dorsey, however, is a pending free agent and the 49ers have not seemed eager to re-sign the 32-year-old lineman. The position is a tricky one because it has come off the field when the 49ers have switched to their nickel defense in the past. If that remains the case, it would be hard to see the 49ers either paying a huge free-agent salary or using a high draft pick on the position. What about someone like Alabama's Jonathan Allen, whom many see as one of the two best players in the draft and the natural choice at pick No. 2? His selection seems unlikely at this point because A.) The 49ers have drafted a defensive linemen in the first round in each of the last two drafts and B.) Allen's (and Stanford's Solomon Thomas') best position is defensive tackle in a traditional 4-3 defense. The only thing known about the 49ers' 2017 defense is that it won't be a traditional 4-3. The 49ers need a run stuffer at this spot.

Free agency: Brandon Williams

Draft: Larry Ogunjobi (2nd, 3rd), Eddie Vanderdoes (mid-round)

Torrey Smith could benefit from Shanahan's big-play philosophy

By Matt Maiocco, CSNBayArea.com

Wide receiver Torrey Smith has not lived up to the five-year, \$40 million contract he signed with the 49ers in 2015.

Or have the 49ers been the problem for failing to properly take advantage of Smith's skills as the deep threat that was sorely lacking in previous seasons?

New 49ers coach Kyle Shanahan figures to bring a more aggressive mindset to the team's offense. Now, it's a matter of finding the right players to plug into the right spots.

Smith could find a situation similar to what he enjoyed during most of his four seasons with the Baltimore Ravens. In 2014, Smith caught 11 touchdown passes before leaving for the 49ers as a free agent.

"It's not rocket science. Football is football. Plays are plays," Smith said. "It's the way they scheme it up and put it together. The way I watch it from afar, he (Shanahan) tailors it to people's strengths, which is always a plus. So I'm excited to see what his plan is for us."

The plan, according to new 49ers running backs coach Bobby Turner, is to use the running game to set up big plays down the field.

"At times, you can't run it if they put eight or nine in the box," Turner told CSNBayArea.com during Super Bowl week in Houston. "It's tough to run the ball. We might only get a yard on that play. But by doing that, being consistent and continually trying to run the ball, you exploit them through the air with the play-action game."

Falcons quarterback Matt Ryan led the NFL with 17 passes of more than 40 yards in the regular season.

Smith caught a 53-yard touchdown pass against Buffalo for his only reception that covered 40 yards or more last season.

"The offense, I have experience with it," Smith said. "I'm interested to see how he teaches it. You just have to execute. But with his track record, it kind of speaks for itself. I'm excited for him to have that opportunity. He's a young guy. I feel like he could fit in in our locker room. He looks that young. He has a proven track record and he knows what he's doing. It's his time, so I'm excited for him."

Smith has a scheduled salary-cap figure of \$9.475 million for the 2017 season, but the 49ers are comfortably under the salary cap with an estimated \$80 million in cap room heading into the new league year.

Much for 49ers to evaluate when it comes to Mitch Trubisky, other QB options

By Nick Wagoner, ESPN.com

ESPN NFL draft analyst Mel Kiper Jr. has now released two mock drafts, and though he's made some changes in them, he's kept things status quo when it comes to the San Francisco 49ers.

After sending North Carolina quarterback Mitch Trubisky to the Niners with the second overall pick in his initial mock draft, Kiper mocked Trubisky to San Francisco again on Wednesday in version 2.0.

It bears repeating here that this is going to be a connection that we'll see plenty of between now and the draft. While fellow ESPN draft analyst Todd McShay has mixed things up a bit in his mock drafts and recently sent Clemson quarterback Deshaun Watson to San Francisco, Kiper has been steadfast in his belief that Trubisky is the top prospect at the position and in his fit in San Francisco.

One thing we know for sure now is that Kyle Shanahan, the Niners' new head coach, will have major sway in this decision. That sheds a little light on what the team might be looking for as it seeks out a franchise signal-caller.

Here's what Shanahan had to say when asked what he's looking for in a quarterback:

"If you aren't an extremely talented thrower, which means it's effortless, you don't have to think about it, you don't have to go to all these quarterback gurus and work on your motion and all that, you were born to throw -- and Tom Brady was born to throw and he goes to everybody and works on it all the time because he does his craft to the fullest," Shanahan said. "But there's a very natural ability to throwing. And if you don't have that, it's very hard to succeed in this league because you've got to make some throws into tight windows, on time, with ball placement. It's hard to get people wide open in this league."

Trubisky possesses great size (6-foot-3, 220 pounds), accuracy (68.2 percent completion rate in 2016) and arm strength, but it's probably too early to say he fits what Shanahan describes. Trubisky also comes with plenty of questions, not least of which is a one-season sample size that makes him hard to evaluate.

If he's not one of those "natural throwers" -- and Shanahan said he believes there are only about seven in the world -- it's up to the Niners to determine if he has the goods in other areas to make him a fit.

"And if you don't have that, you've got to have some skills that are extremely special," Shanahan said. "And that's why people who haven't been like that have still won -- people who can make plays with their legs, people who are extremely tough, people who are extremely intelligent and who can just react in the pocket and get rid of the ball, and maybe they aren't always as accurate but they make good decisions and they give you a chance to win.

"So you're always looking for one of those seven throwers on the planet, whatever that number is. But I'm guessing there's only around seven, so you'd better not be set on that and say hey, I need one of those seven guys. I hope we get one of those guys, but if you don't, you've got to find other ways to win."

Those are all things the 49ers are sure to spend the next couple of months evaluating when it comes to Trubisky and all potential quarterback additions.

Rams-Niners rivalry gets new twist with Sean McVay, Kyle Shanahan

By Alden Gonzalez, ESPN.com

Sean McVay's message to Kyle Shanahan when he accepted his first head-coaching job: "I can't tell you how happy I am for you, but I can't believe I've got to see you twice a year now."

The long-standing rivalry between the Los Angeles Rams and the San Francisco 49ers, often-times intense during the Rams' original stint in Southern California, now has a compelling new twist: McVay, whose grandfather was part of five Super Bowl titles as a 49ers executive, is the Rams' new head coach. Shanahan, initially deemed a favorite for the Rams' vacant post, is the 49ers' new head coach.

And, of course, they have history.

Shanahan was the Redskins' offensive coordinator from 2010-13, while his father, Mike Shanahan, served as head coach. McVay coached tight ends during that four-year stretch, then replaced Shanahan as offensive coordinator after he departed for the Browns.

"Kyle is a guy who's had a tremendous influence on some of the things I believe in offensively," McVay said. "He's a great coach, and I wish him nothing but the best for 14 games -- except for those two next year."

The 49ers won only two games under Chip Kelly in 2016, but both of those wins came against the 4-12 Rams that were led by Jeff Fisher. They embarrassed the Rams, 28-0, during the Monday Night Football opener from Levi's Stadium, then came from behind to hand them a 22-21 loss at Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum in the second-to-last game of the regular season.

By that point, McVay was calling plays for the Redskins and Shanahan was offensive coordinator for the Falcons, who had an MVP quarterback in Matt Ryan and put together one of the most impressive offensive seasons in NFL history. The Rams were scheduled to meet with Shanahan during the weekend of the Falcons' playoff bye week, but inclement weather derailed their plans. They rescheduled for the following weekend, but ultimately hired McVay days earlier, making one of the biggest decisions in franchise history without even sitting down with Shanahan.

The Rams felt they had their guy and didn't really care to wait, but only time will tell if they made the right decision.

The Rams and 49ers finished first or second 11 times from 1970-89. But that seems like a lifetime ago. They've been the two worst teams in the NFC West each of the past three years, and it'll be up to McVay and Shanahan, two of the game's sharpest offensive minds, to turn their respective fortunes around.

Shanahan, who accepted the job immediately after the Falcons' devastating loss to the Patriots in Super Bowl LI, is six years older than McVay, who, at 31, is the youngest coach in the NFL's modern era.

The Grudens, Jon and Jay, were major influences on McVay -- but so were the Shanahans.

"We're all a product of our experiences," McVay said. "Certainly Kyle and Coach Shanahan's offense has had a big influence on what I believe and how I think you want to attack a defense. But it's going to be something that's going to be an ongoing process, figuring out our players first and then how we fit that scheme to their skill sets."