

49ers Clips – January 6, 2017

Local Media

49ers Interview Brian Gutekunst for General Manager

By Taylor Price, 49ers.com

<http://www.49ers.com/news/article-2/49ers-Interview-Brian-Gutekunst-for-General-Manager/7a89ea20-18f9-427f-9b99-7b109f704758>

49ers Interview George Paton for General Manager

By Joe Fann, 49ers.com

<http://www.49ers.com/news/article-2/49ers-Interview-George-Paton-for-General-Manager/e6992a1f-c10a-4206-ace5-b369bc7c1b31>

New coach, general manager will help shape Colin Kaepernick's future

By Nick Wagoner, ESPN.com

http://www.espn.com/blog/san-francisco-49ers/post/_/id/22656/new-coach-general-manager-will-help-shape-colin-kaepernicks-future

49ers turn coaching search to Atlanta offensive coordinator Kyle Shanahan

By Nick Wagoner, ESPN.com

http://www.espn.com/blog/san-francisco-49ers/post/_/id/22648/49ers-turn-coaching-search-to-atlanta-offensive-coordinator-kyle-shanahan

49ers brass interview two Packers executives for GM opening

By Chris Biderman, TheNinersWire.com

<http://ninerswire.usatoday.com/2017/01/05/49ers-brass-to-interview-two-packers-executives-for-gm-opening/>

San Francisco 49ers owner Jed York looking in right places for a 'winning team'

By Tom Pelissero, USA Today

<http://www.usatoday.com/story/sports/nfl/49ers/2017/01/05/san-francisco-49ers-coach-general-manager-search/96221012/>

49ers interview Packers' Wolf, Gutekunst for GM opening

By Josh Dubow, Associated Press

<http://pro32.ap.org/node/702485>

National Media

How the absence of Earl Thomas has been felt by Seahawks

By Jayson Jenks, The Seattle Times

<http://www.seattletimes.com/sports/seahawks/how-the-absence-of-earl-thomas-has-been-felt-by-seahawks/>

Los Angeles Rams' coaching search turns next to coordinators McDaniels, Patricia and Shanahan

By Gary Klein, Los Angeles Times

<http://www.latimes.com/sports/rams/la-sp-rams-coach-search-20170105-story.html>

Arizona Cardinals in good shape to bounce back in 2017?

By Jeremy Cluff, The Arizona Republic

<http://www.azcentral.com/story/sports/heat-index/2017/01/05/arizona-cardinals-good-shape-bounce-back-2017/96196608/>

Saints fire five assistant coaches, including Joe Vitt and Greg McMahon: reports

By Josh Katzenstein, New Orleans Times-Picayune

http://www.nola.com/saints/index.ssf/2017/01/saints_fire_five_assistant_coa.html#incart_river_index

Bills QB Tyrod Taylor has hernia surgery

By Nick Veronica, Buffalo News

<http://buffalonews.com/2017/01/05/bills-qb-tyrod-taylor-hernia-surgery/>

Report: Chuck Pagano is told he'll be back for 2017

By Mike Florio, ProFootballTalk.com

<http://profootballtalk.nbcsports.com/2017/01/06/report-chuck-pagano-is-told-hell-be-back-for-2017/>

Local Clips – Full Version

49ers Interview Brian Gutekunst for General Manager

By Taylor Price, 49ers.com

The San Francisco 49ers continued their general manager search on Thursday, interviewing Green Bay Packers director of player personnel Brian Gutekunst.

Gutekunst joined his colleague Eliot Wolf, Green Bay's director-football operations, as the first candidates to speak with CEO Jed York for San Francisco's GM vacancy.

The 43-year-old talent evaluator has spent the past 18 seasons in the Packers front office. Gutekunst spent 13 years as a college scout, before being promoted to director of college scouting for four seasons (2012-15), which was followed by a promotion to his current post on March 21, 2016.

Gutekunst has been a part of Green Bay's tremendous success over the past two decades. The Packers have made 14 playoff appearances during his 18-year tenure. Green Bay has made seven consecutive appearances in the postseason, including a victory in Super Bowl XLV over the Pittsburgh Steelers following the 2010 regular season.

Notable Green Bay draft selections during Gutekunst's tenure include, two-time league MVP quarterback Aaron Rodgers, six-time Pro Bowl outside linebacker Clay Matthews, and star wide receiver Jordy Nelson among numerous starters on a 10-6, NFC North champion squad in 2016.

Gutekunst joined the Packers in 1997 as a scouting intern before he was hired full-time in December of the following season. He began his full-time scouting career as an East Coast scout and was hired by Pro Football Hall of Fame executive vice president/general manager, Ron Wolf.

Gutekunst played two seasons of college football for the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. He later served as an assistant coach for the program for his final two years at the school (1995-96).

He and his wife, Jen, reside in Green Bay and have four children, including three daughters and one son.

49ers Interview George Paton for General Manager

By Joe Fann, 49ers.com

The list of eligible candidates to be the San Francisco 49ers next general manager continues to grow. Minnesota Vikings assistant general manager George Paton, a man with 20 years of NFL personnel experience, is the latest to interview with 49ers brass. Paton has been highly sought after for GM openings in recent years but has declined a number of interviews, electing to stay with the Vikings.

Paton has been the right-hand man of Vikings GM Rick Spielman for the past 10 seasons in Minnesota. He's held his current position for five seasons after being the team's director of pro personnel for his first five years. Prior to joining forces with the Vikings, the pair of heralded evaluators worked together with the Chicago Bears and Miami Dolphins.

During Paton's tenure, Minnesota has made four postseason appearances with three NFC North championships. Running back Adrian Peterson, quarterback Teddy Bridgewater, cornerback Xavier Rhodes, free safety Harrison Smith, linebacker Anthony Barr and linebacker Brian Urlacher (with Chicago) are a few of the notable selections that Paton has had a hand in drafting.

New coach, general manager will help shape Colin Kaepernick's future

By Nick Wagoner, ESPN.com

SANTA CLARA, Calif. -- As the San Francisco 49ers go through the process of finding a new coach and general manager, there's still another looming search that will have to take place soon: the hunt for a franchise quarterback.

Yes, the 49ers enter the offseason needing to fill all three spots in the NFL equivalent of a holy trinity: coach, general manager and quarterback. They don't have any of the above onboard for 2017, save for quarterback Colin Kaepernick. And Kaepernick's spot on the roster is tenuous at best.

That's because he has the ability to opt out of his contract before the start of the new league year in March. With none of the other three quarterbacks on the roster under team control for 2017, Kaepernick's decision could leave them doing a complete makeover of the QB depth chart.

So, what will go into Kaepernick's decision? A lot, apparently.

"That's something that, now that we're at the end of the season, I'll have time to reflect on and see how things play out," Kaepernick said. "Once again, I have a great appreciation for this organization, [CEO] Jed [York] and [chief strategy officer & executive vice president of football operations] Paraag [Marathe], have a good relationship with them. So, a lot of things to think about moving forward, and we'll see where this goes."

Even if, as expected, Kaepernick does opt out, the 49ers could work to bring him back on a more team-friendly contract that provides a little more long-term security. Or, if Kaepernick surprises and doesn't opt out, the 49ers would still have the ability to release him and take an affordable cap hit of a little more than \$2 million.

Among the many things Kaepernick will have to consider will be who the 49ers bring in as general manager and head coach. The departure of Trent Baalke could undoubtedly be seen as a good thing from Kaepernick's perspective, considering the frosty relationship he has with the team's now-former general manager.

The opposite is true of coach Chip Kelly's exit. Kaepernick and Kelly had a strong bond, with the coach earning praise from the QB for a variety of things, including an offense Kaepernick felt was suited to his skills and Kelly's support of his protest of racial inequality.

Although the 49ers were just 1-10 in Kaepernick's starts, his 90.7 passer rating was the best he has posted since 2013 and was 17th-best in the NFL. His 4-to-1 touchdown-to-interception ratio was tied for sixth-best, his 468 rushing yards were second-most among quarterbacks and his 6.78 yards per carry were first. On the flip side, Kaepernick's 59.2 percent completion rate was 26th.

But beyond the football things, Kaepernick said the biggest lesson he took from Kelly went beyond the field.

"I think the biggest thing is, can relate to football but more so relates to life, and that's not letting your circumstances dictate your attitude and how you approach a situation," Kaepernick said. "Once again, our circumstances weren't the best this year, but our team came out, we played hard every week. We played for each other each week, and that was something that I look at as something I can take moving forward and make sure I can continue to do that."

Despite Kelly's departure, Kaepernick didn't sound like a player with one foot out the door at his season-ending meeting with the media. He made multiple references to what the team must do to get better in the future and also repeatedly pointed out that his relationship with Kelly wasn't the only strong one he had in the organization.

Kaepernick called his relationship with York and Marathe, the team's top decision-makers, "much improved" and also pointed out that he had a lot of support in the locker room.

"I was excited about this organization as a whole, teammates playing hard regardless of the circumstances and coming to work every day and preparing to win regardless of what position we were put in," Kaepernick said.

Apparently, Kaepernick's feelings toward the organization were mutual, as teammates voted him the winner of the Len Eshmont award, given to the player who exemplifies inspiration and courage.

"I think the thing, to me, that stood out, was it was my teammates that voted on it," Kaepernick said. "That really means a lot to me. I can't express how grateful I am to have teammates like I did this year. They stood behind me regardless of any situation that went on."

It's unlikely that any coach or general manager the 49ers hire will view Kaepernick as a franchise quarterback to build around, but they could see him as a potential bridge to a young quarterback they might bring in. With this year's draft class lacking in top-end quarterback prospects, at least the kind who could step in and help right away, the 49ers will likely need someone who can help that transition.

Of course, there's also an argument to be made that the 49ers should start all over at quarterback since they're doing the same with their two most important jobs.

Kaepernick's decision probably won't be revealed right away. He spent his first day of the offseason delivering shoes, books, clothing and other necessities to charities in the East Bay.

That's just one more thing for Kaepernick to consider as he ponders his next move. Though he got mixed responses in many NFL cities, the Bay Area offered plenty of support.

"This fan base has been amazing," Kaepernick said. "The support I've had, people backing me, standing behind me and saying how much they appreciate what I'm doing and what I'm trying to help others do. So, I can't express how much I appreciate them, because it's been six years now and had a lot of good times with these fans. Some rough times as well, but they've always been there, they've always stood behind me, behind this organization, and I appreciate that."

49ers turn coaching search to Atlanta offensive coordinator Kyle Shanahan

By Nick Wagoner, ESPN.com

SANTA CLARA, Calif. -- The San Francisco 49ers have no set timeline for when they'd like to hire a new coach and general manager. But the process of interviewing candidates continues Friday with the team to meet with Atlanta offensive coordinator Kyle Shanahan.

This is the second interview of at least seven the team has already set up for the coaching job, and another eight or so candidates have already emerged for the general manager vacancy. Those meetings are to take place over the next week-plus, and more candidates could emerge as well.

Here's a quick look at Shanahan's candidacy:

Experience: Shanahan played wide receiver at the University of Texas before beginning his coaching career at UCLA as a graduate assistant in 2003. He quickly climbed the ladder from there. He had stops in Tampa Bay and Houston as offensive quality control, wide receivers and quarterbacks coach before being promoted to offensive coordinator in Houston in 2008. From there, Shanahan held offensive coordinator posts in Washington, Cleveland and now Atlanta. That body of work allowed Shanahan to work with a variety of offensive skill players and quarterbacks and mold his offense to what was in place.

That's all come together this season in Atlanta, where Shanahan's Falcons are first in the league in points per game (33.8) and yards per play (6.7).

Philosophy: Shanahan's offense is largely built on many of the zone-blocking concepts his father Mike used to great success in Denver. Though Atlanta quarterback Matt Ryan rightfully gets a lot of credit for the big season he's had, Atlanta's run game has been strong with those concepts in place and talented running backs in Devonta Freeman and Tevin Coleman. But though Shanahan is widely regarded as a disciple of the West Coast offense, he's showed a lot more versatility in his play-calling and game plans, often tailoring what the offense does in a given week to matchups instead of sticking to an associated philosophy.

Ties to the 49ers: Mike Shanahan spent three seasons as the offensive coordinator in San Francisco and was a finalist for the team's head coaching job in 2015.

Competition: Shanahan might be the hottest commodity on coaching lists around the league. As the Falcons enjoy their bye week, Shanahan is expected to interview with the Rams, Jacksonville and Denver in addition to the 49ers. Many expect that Shanahan's longstanding ties to the Broncos, where his dad won two Super Bowls, could make that the job he wants the most. If that feeling is mutual, it might be difficult for another team to land Shanahan's services.

49ers brass interview two Packers executives for GM opening

By Chris Biderman, TheNinersWire.com

The 49ers Thursday interviewed two executives from the Packers for their general manager opening after they fired Trent Baalke over the weekend, the team announced.

CEO Jed York and his top lieutenant Paraag Marathe interviewed Green Bay's director of football operations Eliot Wolf and director of player personnel Brian Gutekunst.

Wolf, of course, is the son of Hall of Fame executive Ron Wolf – who has an extensive tree of executives throughout the NFL, including Raiders general manager Reggie McKenzie, Chiefs GM John Dorsey and Seahawks GM John Schneider.

Wolf is just 32 and the youngest of the known candidates for the open GM position.

Gutekunst, 43, is in his first season as the team's director of player personnel. He spent the first 13 of his 18 years with the team as a college scout and became the director of college scouting in 2012 through 2015.

The Packers have been known for building their rosters through the draft and have made the playoffs in nine of the last 10 seasons. They'll host the Giants in the wild card round of the playoffs Sunday.

Green Bay (10-6) won its final six games after starting 4-6 and won the NFC North with a victory over the Lions in Week 17.

The 49ers other known general manager candidates are Patriots director of player personnel Nick Caserio, Colts vice president of football operations Jimmy Raye III, Vikings assistant general manager George Paton, ESPN analyst Louis Riddick and Seahawks co-directors of player personnel Trent Kirchner and Scott Fitterer.

San Francisco 49ers owner Jed York looking in right places for a 'winning team'

By Tom Pelissero, USA Today

The pattern was obvious as soon as candidates began to emerge for the San Francisco 49ers' head coach and general manager vacancies.

Josh McDaniels and Nick Caserio ... from the New England Patriots. Eliot Wolf and Brian Gutekunst ... from the Green Bay Packers. Tom Cable, Trent Kirchner and Scott Fitterer ... from the Seattle Seahawks.

49ers CEO Jed York repeatedly mentioned his desire to "re-establish a championship culture" during a media conference following last weekend's dismissals of coach Chip Kelly and GM Trent Baalke. And looking at the team's targets, that message sure seems deliberate – even if it did nothing immediately to stem criticism of a proud franchise that's spent two years in upheaval.

Culture is a real thing in professional sports, and particularly the NFL. It starts with the coach and GM, who need to share a vision and accountability, and flows from there.

There were times the 49ers had it with Baalke and Jim Harbaugh, who took them to three straight NFC championship games and a Super Bowl in four seasons, before the sides parted ways two years ago. From there, the 49ers went one-and-done with Jim Tomsula and Kelly, whose marriage with Baalke "didn't work," York said, "and I should have probably seen it."

So if you're rooting for York to hire his new brain trust and then get out of the way, which you can bet is his preference, you should at least take it as a good sign the 49ers' search is focused on people who have been around cultures that work and know what it's all supposed to look like.

It's also apparent the 49ers' preference is to find a tandem with a pre-existing relationship (though not necessarily with one team) who respect one another and are confident they can work together.

You won't find three more consistent programs in the NFL than New England, Seattle and Green Bay, where the 49ers' interview tour continued Thursday with the Packers' executives Wolf and Gutekunst. They'll speak to McDaniels, the Patriots' offensive coordinator, and perhaps Caserio, the personnel director, on Saturday. They're expected to interview Cable, the Seahawks' assistant head coach/offensive line, and executives Kirchner and Fitterer next week.

Other respected coaches (Atlanta's Kyle Shanahan, Buffalo's Anthony Lynn, Carolina's Sean McDermott) and executives (Minnesota's George Paton, Indianapolis' Jimmy Raye III) are on the list as well. In all, the 49ers are known to have requested or planned interviews with roughly eight coaches and 10 execs – an extensive process that makes sense when you remember they're not really seeking two people, but a team.

There's a ton of work to be done with the roster, starting with the quarterback position, where Colin Kaepernick can opt out of his contract and may not be in the team's plans regardless. Though there's some intriguing young talent (see: rookie end DeForest Buckner), this isn't a team that's likely to be a Super Bowl contender again in the near term.

It's notable that people like Wolf, a rising star who'd never interviewed for a GM job before, and Paton, who has turned down at least six requests since he was a finalist for the then-St. Louis Rams' GM job in 2012, are intrigued enough to speak to the 49ers. But it's one thing to talk about a job and another thing to take it.

The point here isn't that the 49ers have it all figured out. For the first time in years, though, at least they seem to have an idea what they're looking for.

49ers interview Packers' Wolf, Gutekunst for GM opening

By Josh Dubow, Associated Press

SANTA CLARA, Calif. (AP) — The San Francisco 49ers interviewed a pair of Green Bay Packers executives Thursday for their general manager vacancy.

Niners CEO Jed York first met with Packers director of football operations Eliot Wolf and then with director of player personnel Brian Gutekunst as he seeks to fill the void created when Trent Baalke was fired Sunday following a 2-14 season.

San Francisco is also conducting a coaching search at the same time and interviewed Buffalo Bills interim coach Anthony Lynn for that job on Wednesday. York said he was open to hiring either the coach or general manager first.

The 34-year-old Wolf is the son of Hall of Fame executive Ron Wolf, who helped build a Super Bowl champion in Green Bay and developed numerous front office executives throughout the league.

Eliot Wolf started with the Packers in 2004 as a pro personnel assistant and worked his way up the organization. He was director of player personnel before getting promoted to his current job last March.

He coordinates the pro and college football departments, handles pro and college scouting and helps evaluate potential free-agent signings.

The 43-year-old Gutekunst has spent the past 18 seasons in the Packers' front office, beginning as a college scout. He was promoted to director of college scouting for four seasons before starting his current role last March.

York said the primary goal in the search is finding a coach and general manager who can work well together. The Niners got rid of coach Jim Harbaugh following the 2014 season in part because of conflicts with Baalke. Harbaugh led the team to its only successful stretch of the past 15 years with trips to the NFC title game in his first three seasons from 2011-13 and a Super Bowl appearance.

Jim Tomsula replaced him and was fired after a 5-11 season. York then fired both Baalke and coach Chip Kelly after this past season.

The Niners became the first team in nearly four decades to fire coaches in successive seasons after only one-year tenures. The only other time that happened since the 1970 merger came when San Francisco fired Monte Clark after the 1976 season and Ken Meyer the following year. The 49ers then fired Pete McCulley midway through the 1978 season and interim coach Fred O'Connor after the year before hiring Bill Walsh to start a dynasty.