

NEW NUMBERS!

Switch that number!

A lot of NFL players have changed jersey numbers for the 2005 season. Wide receivers **JERRY RICE** of Denver traded in No. 80 for No. 19, **RANDY MOSS** of Oakland switched from No. 84 to No. 18 and **PLAXICO BURRESS** of the New York Giants will be sporting No. 17 instead of the No. 80 he wore in Pittsburgh.

Ten key jersey number changes for 2005 and reasons why:

PLAYER	NEW NUMBER	EXPLANATION
Mike Barrow, Washington	No. 58	Barrow opted to switch from No. 55 back to his old college number, No. 58.
Plaxico Burress, NY Giants	No. 17	Burress wanted No. 17 after signing with the Giants on March 17. Fortunately for punter Jeff Feagles, who also relinquished No. 10 to Eli Manning in 2004 in exchange for a family trip to Florida, Burress had a price. He will help pay for Feagles' outdoor kitchen at his home in Arizona. "This is good business," Feagles joked. "I think I'll post a sign at my locker saying 'Numbers For Sale!'"
Rock Cartwright, Washington	No. 31	Cartwright decided to change to No. 31 in memory of his mother, who passed away on May 31, 2004.
Todd Johnson, Chicago	No. 35	Johnson switched to No. 35 so rookie RB Cedric Benson could have his long-time No. 32. "I'm going to have to carry his pads for awhile," says Benson.
Randy Moss, Oakland	No. 18	"It's a new start, so I am going back to the number that brought me into this league," says Moss, who wore No. 18 as a rookie with Minnesota before switching to No. 84.
Mike Nugent, NY Jets	No. 1	Nugent wore No. 85 at Ohio State, but chose No. 1 when the Jets drafted him. "I've always wanted to be No. 1," says Nugent. "It's a cool number," he explained.
Chris Perry, Cincinnati	No. 23	The Bengals' first-round pick in 2004 selected No. 26 for his rookie season, but decided to switch back to his college digits this year.
Jerry Rice, Denver	No. 19	"There was no way I was going to come in here and try to take Rod Smith's jersey off his back," says Rice. I have too much respect for him. I had a conversation with my youngest daughter and we came up with No. 19 instead." Coincidentally, No. 19 was also the number that former teammate Joe Montana wore in 1993-94 in Kansas City, his final NFL team.
Jeff Smoker, St. Louis	No. 15	Rams head coach Mike Martz has a superstition about quarterbacks who wear No. 9, so he asked Smoker to switch to No. 15 this offseason. "I like single-digit numbers because it makes me look thin," says Smoker. "But I'm okay with it."
Ben Troupe, Tennessee	No. 84	After wearing No. 86 during his rookie season, Troupe decided to switch back to No. 84, which he wore during high school and college.

ALEX SMITH CONTINUES NO. 1's UNIFORM STREAK

The past five No. 1 overall selections in the NFL draft have chosen jersey numbers in ascending order – Atlanta Falcons QB **MICHAEL VICK** (No. 7), Houston Texans QB **DAVID CARR** (No. 8), Cincinnati Bengals QB **CARSON PALMER** (No. 9), New York Giants QB **ELI MANNING** (No. 10) and San Francisco rookie quarterback **ALEX SMITH** (No. 11).

Each man has a reason for choosing his respective number. Smith will keep the recent tradition alive in 2005.

"I used to wear No. 7 in high school to honor my favorite player, John Elway," he says. "But No. 7 wasn't available when I was a freshman at Utah, so I chose No. 11. By the time No. 7 was free, people identified me with No. 11, so I decided to stick with it. I want to create my own way in the NFL, not take a number that was associated with another player. I want the No. 11 to remind people of Alex Smith."

Manning understands Smith's reasoning. Both his father Archie and brother Peyton have worn No. 18, but when Ole Miss offered to let him wear it also, he declined. Why?

"I didn't want to do that," says Eli. "It didn't feel right and I didn't want to deal with more pressure. So I asked what other numbers were available. They offered 14, 12 and 10. I had worn 14 and 12, so I decided to go with something different. No guy I could think of was No. 10 before."

During his tenure at Ole Miss, Manning became so attached to No. 10 that when he was drafted by the Giants in 2004, he offered to pay for punter Jeff Feagles and his family to take a family vacation to the Gulf of Mexico in exchange for the digits.

Palmer wore No. 3 while leading the USC Trojans, but switched to No. 9 when he was drafted by the Bengals in 2003, where his number of choice was being used by QB Jon Kitna.

In 2002, Carr chose No. 8 in honor of his favorite quarterback, Dallas Cowboys legend Troy Aikman.

Meanwhile, in 2001 Vick, who began the tradition, opted to keep No. 7 from his days at Virginia Tech. When he was drafted, before he had even been assigned a number, Falcons fans wore their old Jeff George (No. 1) jerseys and put white tape across the 1 to make it a 7.

The ascending uniform numbers of the past five No. 1 overall NFL draft choices:

PLAYER	YEAR	UNIFORM NO.
Michael Vick	2001	No. 7
David Carr	2002	No. 8
Carson Palmer	2003	No. 9
Eli Manning	2004	No. 10
Alex Smith	2005	No. 11