



2006 NFL FREE AGENCY QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Q – When can players start being signed in the 2006 free agency signing period?

A – Beginning tomorrow morning at 12:01 AM ET on Saturday, March 11.

Q -- What are the categories of free agency?

A -- Players are either "restricted" or "unrestricted" free agents. Within the categories are also "transition" and "franchise" players.

Q -- What is the time period for free agency signings this year?

A -- For restricted free agents, from March 11 to April 21; for unrestricted free agents and transition players, from March 11 to July 22 (or the first scheduled day of the first NFL training camp, whichever is later); and for franchise players, from March 11 through the 10th week of the season (November 14).

Q -- What is the difference between a restricted free agent and an unrestricted free agent?

A -- Players become restricted free agents when they complete three accrued seasons and their contract expires. Unrestricted free agents have completed four or more accrued seasons with an expired contract.

Q -- What constitutes an "accrued season?"

A -- Six or more regular-season games on a club's active/inactive, reserved-injured or "physically unable to perform" lists.

Q -- Other than accrued seasons, what determines a restricted free agent?

A -- He has received a "qualifying" offer (a salary level predetermined by the Collective Bargaining Agreement between the league and its players) from his old club. He can negotiate with any club through April 21. If the restricted free agent accepts an offer sheet from a new club, his old club can match the offer and retain him because it has the "right of first refusal." If the old club does not match the offer, it can possibly receive draft-choice compensation depending on the amount of its qualifying offer. If an offer sheet is not executed, the player's rights revert to his old club after April 21.

Q -- What determines an unrestricted free agent?

A -- A player with four or more accrued seasons whose contract has expired. He is free to sign with any club, with no compensation owed to his old club, through July 22 (or the first scheduled day of the first NFL training camp, whichever is later). On July 23, his rights revert to his old club if it made a "tender" offer (110 percent of last year's salary) to him by June 1. His old club then has until the Tuesday after the 10th week of the season (November 14) to sign him. If he does not sign by November 14, he must sit out the season. If no tender is offered by June 1, the player can be signed by any club at any time throughout the season.

Q -- What determines a transition player?

A -- A club can designate one transition player (or one franchise player) in any given year. His club must offer a minimum of the average of the top 10 salaries of last season at the player's position or 120 percent of the player's previous year's salary, whichever is greater. A transition player designation gives the club a first-refusal right to match within seven days an offer sheet given to the player by another club after his contract expires. If the club matches, it retains the player. If it does not match, it receives no compensation.

Q -- What determines a franchise player?

A -- A club can designate one franchise player (or one transition player) in any given year. The salary level offer by a player's club determines what type of franchise player he is. An "exclusive" franchise player -- not free to sign with another club -- is offered a minimum of the average of the top five salaries at the player's position as of April 21, or 120 percent of the player's previous year's salary, or the average of the top five salaries at his position as of the end of last season -- whichever of the three is greater. If the player is offered a minimum of the average of the top five salaries of last season at his position, or 120 percent of the player's previous year's salary, he becomes a "non-exclusive" franchise player and can negotiate with other clubs. His old club can match a new club's offer, or receive two first-round draft choices if it decides not to match.

Q -- Can a club decide to withdraw its franchise or transition designations on a player? If so, can it then use them on other players?

A -- A club can withdraw its franchise or transition designations and the player then automatically becomes an unrestricted free agent either immediately or when his contract expires. The club cannot name a new franchise or transition player that year. It can name a new franchise or transition player the next year.

Q -- What is the salary cap for 2006?

A -- The salary cap is \$102.0 million per club.

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