



TRENDS SWEEPING NFL NATION

They may not know the finer points about pinstripes versus polka-dots, but when it comes to trend-spotting around the NFL, coaches know exactly what changes are hot topics.

Coaches across the league identified many developments when asked about which fresh trends they think are spreading the fastest coast-to-coast.

A greater need for proactive defenses and a demand for more flexibility from players were some of the recent changes that made the list.

“It helps to find players who can line up at multiple positions and whose versatility becomes a weapon,” Baltimore Ravens linebackers coach **JEFF FITZGERALD** says. “I think everybody is looking for a guy who can rush the passer, stop the run *and* cover tight ends and wide receivers downfield.”

Here’s what five NFL coaches identified as recent trends in an ever-changing game:

COACHES	TREND SPOTTED
Defensive coordinator TED COTTRELL , San Diego	“The 3-4 defense. Pittsburgh has run it for years and WADE PHILLIPS has taken it to Dallas. A big reason I think teams are going that way is because of the colleges and the outside rushers. It’s been hard to find the traditional 4-3 defensive ends in college, guys that can get up the field and have leverage and contain with quickness. In college, those guys are 240 and 250-pound guys so when they get to the pros, the conversion to outside linebacker is a lot less for them in a 3-4 defense and it makes the transition a lot easier.”
Linebackers coach JEFF FITZGERALD , Baltimore	“I think there is a movement to have defenses scheme more from an offensive standpoint. Much like we do and have made our M.O. over the past several years, you’ve seen defenses take on our mentality of attacking and not reacting. You have to be proactive and not reactive in your scheme and defensive philosophy.”
Running backs coach TONY NATHAN , Baltimore	“Compared to when I played, teams sling the ball around a lot more. Lining up in a phone booth and telling the defense you’re going to pound the ball right at them doesn’t happen much anymore. The fullback is a dying breed and you see a lot of single-back, two-tight-end sets. Everybody has been influenced by the emergence of the West Coast Offense and has a scheme that uses more finesse than seen in years past.”
Head coach ANDY REID , Philadelphia	“The comeback of the 3-4 defenses.”
Head coach MIKE TOMLIN , Pittsburgh	“More of an open offensive scheme.”

BRONCOS LOOK FOR ANOTHER LUCKY “7”

It’s an NFL season ending with the number seven. Does that mean good fortune in the Mile High City for 2007?

If the past is any indication, the answer could be yes.

The number seven has treated Denver Broncos’ fans to three of their best seasons in team history (1977, 1987 and 1997) and was worn by their Pro Football Hall of Fame quarterback **JOHN ELWAY**. In all three of those seasons, the Broncos won the AFC Championship, and in 1997 the club won the first Super Bowl (XXXII) in franchise history.

Count former Broncos wide receiver and current play-by-play announcer **DAVE LOGAN** as one who thinks the stars could be aligned for another deep playoff run in 2007.

“I really believe that since **MIKE SHANAHAN** arrived in 1995, the club has and will always be in position for the playoffs,” Logan says. “With the additions this year of **TRAVIS HENRY**, **DRE’ BLY** and **DANIEL GRAHAM** and the development of **JAY CUTLER** at quarterback, the club could do big things in 2007.”