



## AFC NEWS 'N' NOTES

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## AFC SPRING ROUND-UP

**BALTIMORE:** Making a splash for the Ravens last season was wide receiver **MARK CLAYTON**. The former Oklahoma Sooner posted a club rookie-record 44 receptions and relishes playing beside veteran receiver **DERRICK MASON**. "He's so intelligent and smart," says Clayton. "Being around him and watching him go through a season was a learning experience.".....Defensively, Baltimore will continue to employ varying looks. "We still want to play multiple fronts," says defensive coordinator **REX RYAN**. "Everyone wants to target you. 'Are you a 4-3 or 3-4?' We're just multiple."

**BUFFALO:** The Bills enter a new era under the leadership of general manager and Pro Football Hall of Famer **MARV LEVY** and head coach **DICK JAURON**. Levy rejoins the Bills after leading Buffalo to four consecutive AFC championships (1990-93) as the team's head coach.....Jauron, a former first-team running back at Yale in 1972, was recently named to the 2006 Division I-A ballot of induction into the College Football Hall of Fame. The new class is announced on May 16. Jauron, a three-time All-Ivy League selection, is Yale's all-time leading rusher with 2,947 yards.

**CINCINNATI:** The Bengals aim for consecutive division championships this season for the first time in franchise history.....Head coach **MARVIN LEWIS** recently became the coaches' subcommittee representative on the NFL's Competition Committee. The appointment makes him a non-voting member of the Competition Committee. Lewis' regular season record of 27-21 (.563) is the highest winning percentage posted by a Bengals coach. Pro Football Hall of Famer and former Bengals head coach **FORREST GREGG** (32-25) holds the next-best ledger at .561.

**CLEVELAND:** Following the famous adage from "The Wizard of Oz" that "There's no place like home," four key Cleveland free-agent acquisitions have returned to their hometown – center **LE CHARLES BENTLEY**, center-guard **BOB HALLEN**, receiver **JOE JUREVICIUS** and punter **DAVE ZASTUDIL** – to sign long-term contracts. "I can't explain how excited I am right now," said Bentley upon signing with the Browns. "It's a dream come true.".....Running back **REUBEN DROUGHNS** (1,232) can be the first Brown to post consecutive 1,200-yard rushing seasons since Hall of Famer **LEROY KELLY** (1967-68).

**DENVER:** **RICK SMITH** was promoted from director of pro personnel to assistant general manager earlier this month. Entering his 11th season with the Broncos, the 37-year-old Smith served as an assistant coach for four seasons before contributing to the team's player evaluation and acquisition processes.....Denver notched its ninth top-10 NFL offensive ranking since head coach **MIKE SHANAHAN** arrived 11 seasons ago (1995).

**HOUSTON:** Former Broncos offensive coordinator **GARY KUBIAK** enters his first season as the Texans' head coach. Under the direction of the Houston-born Kubiak, Denver had scored 465 touchdowns since 1995 – the most in the NFL in that span.....The Texans own the first overall selection in the 2006 NFL Draft.....The upcoming season marks the team's fifth and their first with a 4-3 primary defense, instituted by new defensive coordinator **RICHARD SMITH**. He joins Houston from Miami where the Dolphins ranked second in the NFL with 49 sacks last year.

**INDIANAPOLIS:** The Colts recently acquired through free agency arguably the most dependable pressure kicker in the NFL in **ADAM VINATIERI**. A 10-year veteran of the New England Patriots who honed his Pro Bowl skills in NFL Europe, Vinatieri brings his history of success under pressure – two Super Bowl-winning field goals, two divisional-playoff game-winners, and a record-tying five FGs in the 2003 AFC Championship – to a longtime Patriots rival. "There will always be a special place in my heart for the New England Patriots," says Vinatieri. "I'll miss that. But I want to make some history with the Indianapolis Colts".....Teammates **PEYTON MANNING** and **MARVIN HARRISON** (94) are six touchdowns shy of becoming the first tandem in NFL history to connect on 100 TD receptions.....For the first time in franchise history, the Colts have won 10 or more games in four consecutive seasons.

**JACKSONVILLE:** Defensive end **PAUL SPICER**, receiver **ERNEST WILFORD**, and conditioning coach **MARK ASANOVICH** visited Japan last month for a strength training seminar in Tokyo. "It's an exchange of information," says Asanovich. "They want to know how we train. The NFL is big over there.".....**TONY BOSELLI**, the Jaguars' first draft choice prior to their inaugural 1995 season, will become the first player inducted into the team's "Ring of Honor" at ALLTEL Stadium. Boselli, one of the top tackles in the NFL during his career, will be honored at a home game this fall.

**KANSAS CITY:** **HERM EDWARDS** became the Chiefs' 10th head coach in January. Edwards directed the New York Jets to three playoff berths in his five years as coach there (2001-05). A familiar face in Kansas City, he was a Chiefs NFL Minority Coaching Fellowship intern in 1989 and served the team as a scout/defensive backs coach from 1990-95.....Running back **LARRY JOHNSON** reached 100 rushing yards in each of the Chiefs' final nine games, good for the longest active streak in the league and the third-longest such streak in NFL history.

**MIAMI:** The Dolphins parted with their 2006 second-round draft choice (No. 51) to obtain quarterback **DAUNTE CULPEPPER** in a trade from Minnesota. The three-time NFL All-Star owns the fifth highest career passer rating (91.5) in NFL history. Culpepper is a native of Ocala, Florida, located 300 miles north of Miami.....Earning a 9-7 record last season – including wins in each of their last six games – the Dolphins own the longest current streak in professional sports of seasons without consecutive sub-.500 years. Miami last endured such consecutive seasons in 1968-69.

**NEW ENGLAND:** Injuries forced the Patriots to start 45 players in 2005, the most starters by a division champion since 1970. New England is the NFL's only team to win a playoff game in each of the past three seasons and is tied with the Colts for the longest current streak (three) of consecutive division titles.....The team hosts the third New England Patriots/National Football Foundation Coaching Academy on April 8 to continue elevating the quality of coaching at the youth and high school levels across the New England region. Defensive coordinator **DEAN PEES** will take part in the seminar.

**NEW YORK:** New pilots will fly the Jets in 2006 as head coach **ERIC MANGINI** and general manager **MIKE TANNENBAUM** begin their first seasons in their positions. Mangini arrives from New England where he was the Patriots' defensive coordinator. Tannenbaum was the Jets' assistant general manager for the past two years.....St. Petersburg, Florida honors native son, former Jets defensive standout, and current team radio color analyst **MARTY LYONS** with "Marty Lyons Day" on March 27. A member of the Jets' feared "New York Sack Exchange" in the 1980s, the Marty Lyons Foundation has granted more than 3,000 wishes to children suffering life-threatening or terminal illnesses since 1982.

**OAKLAND:** Pro Football Hall of Famer **ART SHELL** returns to Oakland as the Raiders' head coach. Shell led the team to a 56-41 (.577) mark from 1988-94. "It's coming home," says the 59-year-old Shell. "It's coming home to finish what I started." Adds Raiders owner **AL DAVIS**, "It's tradition, history, excellence, leadership. It's all wrapped up in one when you mention the name 'Art Shell.'" Shell returns to Oakland from the NFL league office where he served as senior vice president of football operations and development.

**PITTSBURGH:** **BEN ROETHLISBERGER** quarterbacks the Steelers with Swiss watch-like precision – appropriate for his Swiss descent. The Pittsburgh field general and his family are planning a trip to Switzerland this offseason to learn more about the family's ancestry. "From what I know, it's a beautiful country," says Roethlisberger, who also is German. "I am excited to go over there and see the country.".....In honor of the Steelers' Super Bowl XL triumph, the H.J. Heinz Company has created special ketchup bottles commemorating the team's title with home (black) and away (white) labels. They are available in the Pittsburgh area.

**SAN DIEGO:** Third-year pro **PHILIP RIVERS** is poised to lead the Chargers at quarterback this season. A standout at North Carolina State, Rivers played in five bowl games, winning all of them, and was named MVP of each game. "It's a situation similar to when I got to N.C. State," says Rivers. "I came in there and showed the coaches that I could play and I got the job. I'm confident that I can succeed at this level and I'm excited about the opportunity".....The Chargers have won 21 games in the past two seasons for their greatest win total in consecutive years since 1980-81 (21).

**TENNESSEE:** Standout linebacker **KEITH BULLUCK** is one of 120 NFL players taking part in the NFL Business Management and Entrepreneurial Program this offseason, part of an ongoing NFL-NFLPA initiative to assist players in preparing for their post-football careers. Bulluck took part in the Harvard Business School Workshop from February 27 to March 1. The Titans' leading tackler was immersed in a curriculum including financial analysis, marketing strategies, and contractual tax considerations. Program workshops are scheduled through April 5 at Harvard, Northwestern, Stanford, and Penn.

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