

BECOMING A NEW TEAM



When the Miami Dolphins take the field on September 12, 2010, Dolphins around the world will witness a completely different team from the one they saw play in 2009. I remember when the season ended, Jason Ferguson said in an interview what he believed would happen in the offseason. Ferguson did not hesitate to say that when the Trifecta did not get the results they wanted, they made changes. Ferguson could not have been more right and the Miami Dolphins have made several moves this offseason that has turned the 2010 Miami Dolphins into a completely new team.

The changes began as soon as the season ended. It all started when the Fins fired defensive coordinator Paul Pasqualoni. The achilles heel of the '09 Miami Dolphins was their defense, which finished the year ranked 22nd among 32 teams. So, firing the man responsible for directing the plays of the defense was understood and welcomed by fans.

Obviously, Pasqualoni was not the only one responsible for how bad the defense played, after all Paul only called the plays.

The blame also had to be put on the players who gave up the big plays and scores on Sundays.

During the '09 season one thing haunted the Fins: the inability of their safeties and linebackers

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to cover wide receivers and tight ends. Miami's defense gave up 234.6 yards per game and their defense ranked 24th against the pass. They also gave up 24.4 points per game ranking 25th

in the league. That is the reason why when free agency began it was no surprise to see Miami get rid of Gibril Wilson and Akin Ayodele.

Wilson was one of Miami's high-priced acquisitions in 2009 and the safety became a huge bust. Gibril could not cover anyone on the field and missed several costly tackles.

Ayodele would also be shown the door and it was due in part to him being slow and his lack of coverage skills.

Miami was not done, and that is why they also released their 2008 sack master, Joey Porter. Porter became angry in Miami after being suspended for a game for violating team rules. He also refused to come off the field to let younger players play. During Super Bowl week he trashed talked the Fins and bought his ticket out of Miami. That is why after a year in which his performance digressed, it was no surprise to see this disgruntled linebacker get released.

The Dolphins would go on to lose cornerback Nate Jones in free agency when the sides did not agree on a contract and Jones signed with Denver. They also waved good bye to long time Dolphins' legend, now enemy, Jason Taylor. Jason wanted a definite answer from Miami, but Miami stood their ground and informed him they would not discuss a contract until after the season. Jason decided to sign with rival New York Jets and the rest is history.

Before the 2010 NFL draft, the Fins would also trade Ted Ginn Jr., after trading for Brandon Marshall. Miami received a 5th round pick from the 49ers and shipped the once first round pick to the Niners. Ginn showed no testicular fortitude on the field, he dropped passes and would often look for the sidelines after catching the ball. After acquiring a receiver like Marshall, it was clear Ginn was no longer needed.

It was around this same time that we would find out that guard Justin Smiley was on the trade block as well, and Miami intended to get rid of the often injured, but serviceable, Smiley. The draft came and went and it seemed the Fins would release Justin. But just this week before the first mini-camps commenced, Dolphins found out Smiley would be traded to the Jaguars for a seventh round pick. Justin, while one of the best o-linemen when healthy, was very injury prone. While in Miami he suffered a broken leg and had shoulder problems, he also had a high price tag and that is why it made perfect sense to cut or trade Smiley.

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It does not stop there, just yesterday the Fins would also release backup linebacker Reggie Torbor. Torbor was signed in '08 along with Smiley and received a high priced contract. He would never prove to be anything more than a special teamer and many Dolphins predicted he would be released after seeing what the Dolphins did in the draft.

Most fans have asked themselves how the Dolphins overcame all these releases, trades and goodbyes. The answer is simple. The Fins acquired ex 49er head coach and defensive guru Mike Nolan after the firing of Pasqualoni. Nolan is said to be the most underrated acquisition the Dolphins have made this season. The Fins also signed premier linebacker Karlos Dansby to a huge deal when free agency began. Dansby is one of the best playmaking linebackers in the NFL and excels in coverage and blitzes. The Fins added depth to their offensive line, signing the proclaimed nastiest player in the NFL Richie Incognito and former Cowboys' guard Cory Procter. Miami traded for one of the best wide receivers in the league, Brandon Marshall, who is believed to be the biggest acquisition Miami has made this offseason. Marshall will open the field for the entire offense and give Chad Henne the much needed weapon he needs.

The Fins had an excellent draft, adding young players to help their defense. Defensive linemen Jared Odrick and linebackers Koa Misi and AJ Edds are expected to contribute immediately to a defensive unit that struggled tremendously last year. Safety Reshad Jones is locked in a battle for the open Free Safety position. Corner back Nolan Carroll will compete for the dime cornerback spot and is expected to contribute on special teams. The fins drafted offensive linemen John Jerry to compete for one of the Guard spots and late round picks Chris McCoy and Austin Spitzer are expected to compete at the linebacker position.

After all this, some might think Miami is done making moves, but that is very far from the truth. The fins will have to cut down players as we get closer to the season. On the bubble are rumored to be several players such as quarterback Pat White, wide receiver Patrick Turner and

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even nose tackle Paul Soliai. There also is the possibility that after June 1st, Miami could enter the OJ Atogwe sweepstake and sign the free safety to fill the position for their defensive unit. It is incredible to me how in just one offseason this organization has made so many moves to change their team to a better product. The 2010 Dolphins offseason might go down as one of the best in history, but it should be remembered as the complete overhaul. That is why the 2010 Miami Dolphins are on their way to becoming a new team.

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