

# Bills' Jackson, Lions' Broyles among cuts

THE SPORTS XCHANGE

Longtime Buffalo Bills running back Fred Jackson and Detroit Lions wide receiver Ryan Broyles were among the notable cuts Monday as NFL teams worked to reduce their rosters to 75 players by 4 p.m. Tuesday.

Jackson, 34, started nine games for the Bills last season, rushing for 525 yards on 141 carries. He entered the NFL as an undrafted free agent and logged carries in NFL Europe and the Arena Football League before he broke through with the Bills in 2007. In eight seasons, he gained 8,286 yards from scrimmage and scored 37 touchdowns.

Broyles, the Lions' 2012

second-round pick out of Oklahoma, had three injury-filled seasons. He suffered a torn left ACL during his final season with the Sooners, and then he sustained a torn right ACL during his rookie year with the Lions and a torn left Achilles in 2013. He returned before the 2014 season but played sparingly, recording just two receptions for 25 yards.

In other roster moves:

- The New York Giants signed safety Stevie Brown.

The Giants' safety corps has been depleted by season-ending injuries to Bennett Jackson, Mykkel Thompson and Justin Currie. Nat Berhe underwent surgery Saturday to repair a calf injury.

Brown, who played for the Giants from 2012 to 2014,

was released Saturday by the Houston Texans.

- Among the trades on Monday, the Denver Broncos sent tackle Chris Clark to the Houston Texans for a seventh-round pick in the 2016 draft.

Clark, who is entering his sixth NFL season, started seven games for the Broncos last season and 14 in 2013.

The Broncos also released veteran linebacker Reggie Walker and quarterback Zac Dysert.

- The Pittsburgh Steelers made a trade aimed at slowing a revolving door at kicker, acquiring Josh Scobee from the Jacksonville Jaguars. Garrett Hartley, signed to replace Shaun Suisham (ACL), was injured Saturday against the Buffalo Bills. Suisham suffered a

torn ACL in the preseason opener against the Minnesota Vikings.

- The Tampa Bay Buccaneers traded tight end Tim Wright to the Lions in exchange for kicker Kyle Brindza.

Wright, who entered the NFL in 2013 as a college free agent with Tampa Bay, re-joined the Bucs this offseason after being waived by the New England Patriots in June. He had 26 receptions for 259 yards and six touchdowns in his only season in New England.

Brindza is a rookie out of Notre Dame who entered the NFL with Detroit this offseason. During the preseason, Brindza has made all three of his field-goal attempts.

- The Carolina Panthers acquired wide receiver Kevin

Norwood from the Seattle Seahawks for an undisclosed conditional 2017 draft choice.

The Panthers have been struggling at the position. They lost No. 1 receiver Kelvin Benjamin to a torn ACL, and first-round pick Devin Funchess has been working through a hamstring injury.

- The Indianapolis Colts released veteran guard Donald Thomas. The Colts signed Thomas, 29, to a four-year, \$14 million contract in 2013 but he had a history of injury problems. He tore his right quad and left biceps in Week 2 in 2013, causing him to miss the rest of the season. Thomas' 2014 season ended when he tore the same quad in training camp.

- The Seahawks also cut center Lemuel Jeanpierre, who had been fighting for a

starting job, and placed cornerback Jeremy Lane and wide receiver Paul Richardson on the physically-unable-to-perform list.

- The Cincinnati Bengals cut wide receiver Denarius Moore, who had signed after four years with the Oakland Raiders. He played in Cincinnati's first three preseason games, catching a 30-yard pass.

- The Arizona Cardinals released punter Dave Zastudil and linebacker Lorenzo Alexander among 11 moves.

Zastudil, 36, had spent the past four years with the Cardinals, but he missed 14 games in 2014 after suffering a groin injury in Week 2. Alexander, 32, had played the past two years for Arizona. He was set to make \$1.4 million this season.

## 'Skins name Cousins starting QB

FROM WIRE SERVICE REPORTS

The Washington Redskins on Monday named Kirk Cousins as their starting quarterback for the 2015 National Football League season, the latest signal that former standout Robert Griffin III could be on his way out.

Griffin, a Heisman Trophy-winning quarterback, has struggled for the Redskins since injuring his knee in a January 2013 playoff loss to the Seattle Seahawks that required surgery and extensive rehabilitation.

There has been growing speculation that Griffin is no longer wanted by the Redskins front office but coach Jay Gruden said on Monday that the team still had belief in the quarterback.

"I like Robert as a quarterback," Gruden said during a news conference. "His future with the Washington Redskins is what it is. There have been no discussions of letting him go or any of that stuff."

"Kirk has done an outstanding job, Robert's done some great things, no question we have total faith in all three of them," Gruden added, referring to quarterbacks Cousins, Griffin III and Colt McCoy.

Griffin, who played for Baylor University where he won the 2011 Heisman Trophy as the most outstanding college football player, was named the team's starter at quarterback in February.

However, he was scratched on the eve of a preseason game against the Baltimore Ravens on Saturday after being evaluated by independent league neurologists following a concussion he suffered 11 days ago against the Detroit Lions.

Cousins, who got the start in place of Griffin, impressed against the Ravens and went on to complete 20-of-27 passes for 190 yards and a touchdown pass to Jamison Crowder.

"All three quarterbacks should be commended for their efforts, their willingness to get better," Gruden said



TOMMY GILLIGAN | USA TODAY FILE

Washington Redskins quarterback Kirk Cousins drops back to pass Saturday during a preseason game against the Baltimore Ravens at M&T Bank Stadium in Baltimore. Washington named Cousins the starting quarterback over Heisman Trophy-winning quarterback and former starter Robert Griffin III.

after team practice at Redskins Park.

"But when it's all said and done after all the film that we've gone through, all the offseason activity, all the training camp footage, we feel that at this time, Kirk Cousins gives us the best chance to win ... it's Kirk's team."

Cousins, 27, a fourth-round pick in the 2012 NFL Draft, has completed a combined 40-of-53 passes for 435 yards, two touchdowns and one interception in three preseason games.

He will start for the Redskins when their season begins against the Miami Dolphins on Sept. 13.

Griffin, 25, took part in non-contact drills on Monday but remains in the league's concussion protocol and will not play in Washington's final preseason game on Thursday against the Jacksonville Jaguars.

### Patriots cut WR Boyce, four others

The New England Patriots released wide receiver Josh Boyce, linebacker Dekoda Watson and three other players on Monday as

they worked to reach a roster of 75 players by the deadline Tuesday.

Also let go were wide receiver Jonathan Krause, tight end Jimmay Mundine and defensive lineman Joe Vellano.

Boyce, 24, was drafted in the fourth round in 2013. He played in nine games as a rookie and caught nine passes for 121 yards. He spent most all of last season on the practice squad — signed to the 53-man roster on Dec. 27.

Watson, 27, signed with the Patriots in May. In 70 NFL games with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers (2010-13), Jacksonville Jaguars (2014) and Dallas Cowboys (2014), he has tallied 120 tackles, three sacks, one interception, two forced fumbles and four fumble recoveries.

### Taylor to open season as Bills' starting QB

Buffalo Bills coach Rex Ryan announced Monday that Tyrod Taylor will be the Bills' starting quarterback to open the season.

Taylor, who was battling Matt Cassel and former first-round pick EJ Manuel for

the job, will get the start against the Indianapolis Colts on Sept. 13 in Week 1.

"It came down to the explosiveness Tyrod gives us," Ryan said.

Taylor, a sixth-round pick by the Baltimore Ravens in 2011, signed a three-year deal with the Bills in March. In his first four seasons, Taylor has played in 14 games, completing 19 of 35 passes for 199 yards, with no touchdowns and two interceptions.

The Bills acquired Cassel, who has started 71 career NFL games, in a trade with the Minnesota Vikings in March and drafted Manuel with the No. 16 pick in 2013.

Taylor, 26, has not started a game in his professional career, but he outplayed both Cassel and Manuel this preseason, completing 24 of 31 passes for 236 yards and rushing for a touchdown in three games.



Taylor

## Giants defense has a ways to go

THE SPORTS XCHANGE

It's only the preseason and the games don't count toward anything. Still, one of the objectives of all teams is to show marked improvement as the days on the calendar inch closer to the regular-season opener.

For the New York Giants, they have had more than their fair share of instances where they have taken a step forward followed by two steps back. In particular, their new defensive scheme, orchestrated by coordinator Steve Spagnuolo, has seen far more valleys than peaks.

The Giants, currently ranked 15th in the league after allowing opponents an average of 324.3 yards per game, have struggled to maintain any kind of consistency.

In their most recent game, against the Jets, the Giants starting defense not only spotted their stadium neighbors 21 first-half points, the Giants simply couldn't stop the Jets' first-team offense.

Gang Green exploited the Giants' soft run defense on the edges to the tune of 136 yards on 30 carries, including 35 yards on five carries by Chris Ivory on the Jets' first scoring drive of the game.

"I think we all have a ways to go," head coach Tom Coughlin said. "We didn't make as many stops as we wanted to make, and so from that standpoint, we have work to do," he added. "There weren't a lot of points scored, but there was some run yardage out there that you think you could stop."

"I felt like we kept beating ourselves with levers; when you have to stay inside, stay inside; when you have outside contain for the run, you stay outside, and we just hurt ourselves," cornerback Prince Amukamara added.

The defensive performance also included some communication breakdowns and missed assignments, some of which were back-breakers.

One such example came on a second-quarter 24-yard

touchdown catch by Jets running back Zac Stacy. On the play, a screen pass, three Giants defenders — linebackers Jameel McClain and Devon Kennard, and safety Jeromy Miles — all went to cover the tight end, which left Stacy wide open to run to daylight.

Run to daylight he did, as safety Brandon Meriweather made a feeble attempt to cut Stacy at the ankles, the running back simply stepping over the safety's lame tackle attempt.

"Yeah, it was a mistake," Coughlin said. "Whoever was supposed to be responsible was not there. There was no coverage on the screen."

All new systems take time to jell, but when a unit has had as many injuries necessitating the shuffling of different guys into the lineup, Coughlin admitted that any chance of building continuity to where a team can add to the foundation previously established the week before becomes a challenge.

"Well you don't have a lot of continuity when you have a lot of people missing and you have to change, and you have to create it and it takes a little bit of time to do that," Coughlin said. "Now there's no excuse; we've been practicing long enough but there's no question that when you're constantly changing parts, it's not quite as smooth as you'd like to be."

The hope for Coughlin and the defense, then, is for the players who do have to miss time to be able to reach back into their memory to where if something comes up that they saw before, they can reach back and recreate the scenario, even though they haven't physically practiced it.

"Our game is a game of continuously building on the previous week," Coughlin said. "Over the long haul, you have to build and build and build and allow that what someone experienced two weeks ago if it comes back in a game, and perhaps it's something new that you can reach back into your memory bank to understand why those things take place."

## UMaine

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win, why not?" Cosgrove said.

UMaine features significantly more experience at quarterback than a year ago. Collins played in six games in 2014, leading the Black Bears to a 2-4 record, before suffering a season-ending shoulder injury.

Belcher, as a true freshman out of Reading (Massachusetts) High School,

helped guide the team to a 3-2 mark in its last five contests.

As Belcher has settled in as a Division I quarterback and while Collins has worked his way back after surgery, both have improved. But neither has separated himself.

"We have two very good players. This is not the same as last year where we had inexperienced guys and we were trying to find out if they could handle the situations within the game," Cosgrove said. "Both of these guys have

played and won CAA football games."

Last season, Collins completed 77 of 143 passes for 908 yards with nine touchdowns and two interceptions. Belcher went 77-for-152 with 740 yards, three TDs and three INTs and rushed for 312 yards and two scores.

Cosgrove said both young men performed well late in training camp, which ended last week, and that the continued competition has benefited each.

"They both made tremen-

dous progress as quarterbacks throughout the offseason, and it's been a very competitive situation throughout camp," Cosgrove continued.

Thus, regardless of who is eventually named the starting quarterback later this year, he may not have a monopoly on playing time.

The duel continues when UMaine returns to the practice field on Tuesday.

"It's an open door and that [platooning the quarterbacks] possibly could happen," Cosgrove said.

## Smith

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Monday determined that his rehabilitation process will extend beyond the current high school football season, according to Smith's mother, Laurie.

"Unfortunately things aren't looking good for him to play this season at FA," she said. "However, Hunter wants to play football collegiately, so he needs to follow the doctor's orders and make sure this heals completely.

"Lucky for him, he still

has many football games to play," she said.

While dislocated shoulders are a fairly common football injury, hip dislocations while playing football are rare.

Laurie Smith said Morse, also the team physician for the University of Maine, consulted several colleagues who work with National Football League teams, and the resulting recommendation begins with Smith having six weeks with no weight-bearing on his left foot in an effort to minimize damage to the head of the femur, which locks into the hip socket.

A magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scan then will be conducted to evaluate the integrity of the femur, and if the results are positive, Smith could begin to bear weight on his left leg and undergo physical therapy to rehabilitate his hip joint.

Smith also faces the risk of necrosis in his hip because of the lack of blood flow during the dislocation, but because Smith's hip was reset quickly — within one to two hours after the injury was suffered — it is believed that risk was minimized.

Whether Smith's next football game will be at college or in the Blue-Grey

North-South All-American Bowl, a prestigious high school all-star showcase scheduled for Jan. 9, 2016, at Raymond James Stadium in Tampa, Florida, remains to be seen.

Smith was among 200 incoming seniors — many of whom already have made verbal commitments to play at major Division I college football programs — recently selected to play in one of two scheduled All-American Bowl games from a pool of 6,570 invited players who participated in a Blue-Grey regional or super combine earlier this year.

Smith was named to the

50-player North squad that will face off against the South in a nationally televised contest that begins at 8 p.m. Jan. 9. The East-West game will be played Dec. 20 at AT&T Stadium, home of the Dallas Cowboys.

Smith was chosen for the All-American Bowl based on his performance among 50 players invited to participate earlier this year at the All-American Bowl's Mid-Atlantic Super Combine in Richmond, Virginia. He posted the fastest time in the shuttle run, had the third-best performance in the broad jump and ran what at the time was a personal-best

time of 4.68 seconds in the 40-yard dash.

Smith, whose father Dean starred in basketball at Foxcroft Academy and the University of Maine, also is the reigning Big East Conference player of the year in that sport and this spring was the Class C outdoor track and field state champion in the 110 hurdles (15.62 seconds) and high jump (6 feet, 4 inches).

He is considered one of the top football prospects in the state's Class of 2016, and his early Division I connections have included Maine, New Hampshire, Dartmouth and Harvard.