

Dolphins replace Kevin Burnett with Raiders OLB Phillip Wheeler

Contributed by Dave Blake
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A lot of us knew that the Dolphins would have to address the aging linebacker position and their escalating salaries, but we thought with all the salary cap room that we had this year that this would be a next year thing. Guess what? Why put off next year what you can do this year. Keep in mind that with free agency making teams overpay, the players are going for the guaranteed monies and security. I think no one expects to work the last couple of years at the contract they sign and are hoping to be restructured.

Keep in mind that these moves put the Dolphins in good cap shape for 2014.

Anyways, in case you missed it, the Dolphins signed OLB Phillip Wheeler to a 5 year, \$26 million contract. According to Omar Kelly of the Sun Sentinel, OLB Kevin Burnett was released right after the signing. Wheeler came in last year from the Colts for a workout but ended up signing with the Raiders, as the Dolphins went with someone else for linebacker depth. After a year of starting for the Raiders, Wheeler showed that he could do it all.

What the Dolphins did was get younger, faster, and cheaper yesterday at the linebacker position. The pass rush should be much improved from the linebacker position, but pass coverage will be weaker. I guess Miami's stance on that is that our two new linebackers should excel in Kevin Coyle's blitzing zone defensive scheme, and if a quarterback is on his back then he isn't taking advantage of a lack of linebacker coverage. That's what the Ravens defense has thrived on for years, which created turnover opportunities for the secondary.

"... what's clear is that Ellerbe and Wheeler are superior blitzers to Dansby and Burnett. Wheeler was the second best pass rushing 4-3 outside linebacker, trailing only Denver's Von Miller last season." (Omar Kelly)

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