

Cap Situation - If Dolphins trade for LT Branden Albert

Contributed by Rich Rodriguez
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The Kansas City Chiefs used the "non-exclusive" franchise tag on Branden Albert. That means he has the right to negotiate directly with other teams and sign an offer sheet. If the Chiefs do not match the offer sheet, Albert becomes a member of the other team and the Chiefs get two first round picks as compensation.

Obviously, no one is going to sign Albert to an offer sheet and give up two first round picks, which is why what is being reported is that the Chiefs are willing to trade Albert for at least a 2nd round pick, which is within their rights.

So, how does this possibly affect the Dolphins salary cap? Right now, Albert's cap number is \$9.8 million.

- The Dolphins have \$9.1 million remaining in cap space with 65 players under contract. Remember, only the top 51 cap numbers count against the cap, so we have 14 players under contract that do not impact the cap.

- Also remember that the Dolphins will need about \$6 million in cap space for rookie contracts. That leaves \$3.1 million in cap space to spend right now.

- After June 1st, the Dolphins will get an additional \$10+ million in cap space. But this cap space CANNOT be used prior to June 1st, so the Dolphins can't sign Albert and wait for June 1st to come. If they are over the cap at any point, the NFL will take action.

- The Dolphins could afford to trade for Albert and take the full \$9.8 million hit if they were to cut Dmitri Patterson and Richard Marshall. This would open up an additional \$8 million in cap space, putting the Dolphins at around \$11 million in cap space (excluding rookie cap) prior to June 1st, which is enough to then fit in Albert's cap numbers.

- There are two ways to handle the cap situation Albert would create.

Senario 1

The Dolphins could trade for Albert and sign him to a long-term deal. His cap number for 2013 would be low and would mostly likely escalate in 2014 or 2015. The risk here is that we have several contracts escalating in 2014 and another big contract would put further strain on that. But there is a way around that risk. Remember that the cap space that the Dolphins have at the end of the 2013 season will roll over. If the Dolphins were to make Albert their last significant signing and part ways with big cap numbers such as Patterson's and Marshall's, after June 1st they would still have a considerable amount of cap space and would presumably be done with big signings. Barring a significant amount of injuries forcing the Dolphins to sign more players, the Dolphins could conceivably roll over a large amount of cap space for 2014. Some quick napkin math.

Current cap space:

- \$9.1 million
- \$6 million for rookies
- \$3 million

Cut Patterson and Marshall

- \$11 million in cap space

Trade for Albert, sign to long-term deal

- \$4 million cap hit in 2013
- \$7 million in cap space

June 1st - Dansby and Burnett off the books

- \$15 million in cap space

Dolphins do not sign anymore free agents.

That \$15 million roll overs to 2014, where it is much needed.

Scenario 2

The Dolphins trade for Albert and decide to absorb the \$9.8 million hit this season. This could be worked under the cap and then Albert can resign for a long-term deal in 2014, with a smaller cap hit, it would fit nicely while other contracts escalate.

Current cap space:

- \$9.1 million
- \$6 million for rookies
- \$3 million

Cut Patterson and Marshall

- \$11 million in cap space

Trade for Albert, take \$9.8 million hit

- \$1 million in cap space

June 1st - Dansby and Burnett off the books

- \$9 million in cap space

Dolphins do not sign anymore free agents.

That \$9 million roll overs to 2014

The Dolphins were willing to resign Jake Long to a long-term deal, so there is no reason they can't figure something out with Branden Albert. They can then focus on cornerback, which makes big cap numbers such as Dmitri Patterson and Richard Marshall very expendable.

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