Zach Miller ([00:06](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=g17BWfyxIogi3jr1z_TL7AXfrsltpGFm6zW1_5D996QW1B_g53vsewqBF-vCHWuK2mY2J5PnvnnLDUYf2zz-x4wTnV4&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=6.19)):

Welcome back to the NFL Players podcast. I'm Zach Miller. This week, we're going to talk about free agency. It's going to be starting at three weeks here. So you're already seeing teams get ahead of the situation. Releasing some veterans. Obviously a tough time for those guys. I've been in that situation my last year in Seattle. I had the ankle injury and you kind of expect it coming. I had a roster bonus due early in the league year. And so John Schneider, Pete Carroll, they give you the call a couple of days before it's due because they have to make a decision on whether to keep the player. Is it worth it? What's their injury history? How old are they getting? All the teams are making those decisions right as we speak.

Zach Miller ([00:56](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=YYENGqYsQO17d4Ct4FPBeCDaIzIBh3JDALZnwjlr9NyvaGtu3DIlrFTzmEtX314Zxs4PBQqlBErO6uUbK0swzlZrSpg&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=56.34)):

And so you've already seen some Marquee veterans be released. There'll be a lot more over the next couple of weeks here. And that's all triggered by either roster bonuses or just teams trying to shed players for cap space. And so we'll talk a little bit about free agency. The process. What the different terms are. What matters. How you can get to free agency effectively and actually earn the compensation you deserve. And that's such an important part of being able to make it to free agency, is staying healthy enough. Being able to perform at such a high level that you can become a free agent when you're at the top of your game.

Zach Miller ([01:38](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=KgFinFoUBiuqFgT1TwhhRcZTHI0X5w1f1ssRwTUvKg88OQnuCSyHM_z7FovYpKiDqvcR_QkPl5E1oSWXeGw6QBDKOuQ&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=98.25)):

And that matters for long-term contracts. That matters for how much you get per season. And really earning what your true potential is. And before we talk about that a little bit, just a pro tip here, if you're listening to this podcast, turn it at one and a half times speed. When you're listening you can really burn through a lot of podcasts and get a lot of information. And it's how I listen to podcasts. It's how I listen to audio books on audible or really anything that can be sped up. YouTube videos, you can speed those up too. So that's just my off-topic pro tip of the day. And so let's talk about the salary cap.

Zach Miller ([02:18](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=4mPWuaQAPTtFUCsCokqL3e5p5tSfPQFkDPz2WYwGE4Za2fJ2cOopJp2-w1oSgRSEi_-U1GHEfr8EakbZkoH0YT-jC0U&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=138.15)):

So obviously with Coronavirus, the cap has come down significantly for this upcoming league year. Last year, I think it was around 196 million, maybe 198 million. It's going to drop down to 183 million. And then they're expecting, or at least everything I've seen, is it going to really jump back up the 2022 league year, because they're expecting all those stadiums to be filled back up. I'm seeing projections like 90 to 95% capacity for the fall upcoming here. Really, really going to be good down the road for the NFL, but for this season, you're going to see a lot of general managers and team owners talking about the salary cap and having to release veterans that are good players.

Zach Miller ([03:09](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=ehvb-pkdpuKcmOUNNn_zoRVKwPaOB6tRMyOKe9g8j7-DkzUwMcB2LoQS0c8vrPEs4Se-3Z-T71Ej5jXuufuSXTpfMw4&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=189.33)):

They're just going to say, because of the cap, they had to let them go. And so there's always a tough part about that because you're constrained by that salary cap. And then you always know that the teams can extend, they can take bonus money to defer out that cap number into the future if they really want to keep that player. So hopefully none of the listeners are in that situation, but being in that situation myself and getting that call from the owner or the GM is a tough day. And so the sooner you can start getting other teams interested once you're out there in the free agency market, I truly believe that getting to free agency should be every NFL players goal.

Zach Miller ([04:02](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=D8aqzHJ3yd4H9k5NaoG52Vc5UnE2I5vcRd8BRBAZzKrnc6alIHe7YCPewxC7nHtAuLg9QCiSrj5w5DNHX78ACkttQjQ&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=242.51)):

Some teams will lock you up earlier, but I think that it's an awesome experience. I got to be a free agency in 2011 and it was a lockout shortened off season. But just the fact that teams get to compete for you, you get to see your true value. You get to pick where you're going to play. I think that's something that every player should get to experience. Every NFL guy should get that opportunity. And if you really look at all the free agency rules, they're really designed to restrict player movement and lower player compensation. Whether it's a franchise tag, the transition tag, exclusive rights restricted for agency, all those things are designed to restrict player movement.

Zach Miller ([04:43](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=4ogBO-72Zzu8Jzwu5vys5LKY6nPmZjZq_9WaALqMMUz2gt-J0klSGtsXD4vChryXxgxTTlFDfxqexkhZHRkEFw8Yf9g&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=283.75)):

So anytime a player can get to free agency, I think is awesome for the player. And it lets you kind of pick the situation you want to be in. Pick the team and culture you want to join, and I think that's definitely a goal every player should have. So just to talk about some of those terms, an accrued season in free agency means that you have played six games. So once you have four accrued seasons, you can become an unrestricted free agent. If you only have three, then you're a restricted free agent. And if you have less than three you're exclusive rights. So those are just important things. And accrued season is different than a credited season. A credited season is for your NFL benefits, and you only need three games for that one.

Zach Miller ([05:27](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=cXLu9OdSbZ4U-oTbFpOedIlZoiffKVIoVxs2_a-UCwxmyaXh62SesqNw7eQyDMSqbHSGAoc3q-IYYcR_ztUrAA3mM30&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=327.93)):

So the accrued season is six games and it's earning those and getting closer to free agency. Is huge for players. And so it's just something to really know as a player and then know what the franchise tag is. What the transition tag is. They obviously get a lot of headlines and you see teams use the franchise tag to really keep, those mark key players from leaving their team. And it's only a one-year deal. It's pretty good money for a one-year deal, but it lacks the security and the guarantees of a long-term deal that has skill cap and injury guarantees in it.

Zach Miller ([06:09](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=3rMd1XPEBzpmOkB134ovkIbnzWFPpVqLkEs9snIEJrb54NTlQ5CMVpYK6uoUZ-lVvZCyV_HevOQwjtjs3DFoAdxxhs4&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=369.54)):

And I was actually talking with an agent last week on you guarantees and how in the NFL, there's really very few guarantees out there for NFL players. And it's too bad because the teams that are giving out guarantees should know that that player would play out that contract with his best of ability and as hard as he could, because those are the type of players that you should be giving long-term contracts to. You shouldn't be worried that the guy won't put out the maximum amount of effort, because all the players I've seen that get long-term deals not guaranteed...

Zach Miller ([06:47](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=LPd0XPr4uFbbmSQXd-pVe57eA_O9VKbaNhMajOeivox5lgUGeex0mWeyemqW1WKYjJ92kYsVFmOFCvcez-MhowyrPcY&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=407.97)):

The right kind of guys you want on your team as leaders and as football players, they're the ones that they would play to the best of their ability because that's what they're intrinsically motivated to do. And they're not motivated by the money just to keep playing. So I still can't understand why more NFL teams don't give out guaranteed contracts, because the type of players that you give those to should be the ones that you want to build the foundation of your team on. For this cap year that's coming up, one thing I will say on that is that it's probably not a bad year for any free agent. That if you're not getting those deals that you want to really look at playing a one-year deal and waiting for the cap to go back up next year.

Zach Miller ([07:39](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=kxd4Bx32iolfxAAwOvz5vGsJpqPO39POf1mIZFRRy1JB7hcTUfGEWWEhHnnlsP7_4UjM2meCmesHN0H2KjSKcpd6hIU&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=459.01)):

And really bet on yourself in how you do that effectively, as you use all the type of protection you can give yourself. Whether it's a disability policy with a loss of value protecting in case there's some type of catastrophic injury. Those are things that if you do take a one-year deal are no brainers to protect the downside. So you can go play for that long-term free agency deal that you deserve in a normal cap year like 2022 will be. And then one more important thing to note I will say is, you hear around this time of year that a lot of guys they're unhappy with their agent. Or the agent gets them a deal, but there's only a few agents that really justify their 3% fee.

Zach Miller ([08:23](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=-qFPT699UhmcHasGoYoJtRZc1i1BIMgYEcCgdC4bv9IzsEz0r1FSL1-ygJq7kUKIGnD0_2dxJulwoVJGPLbboS-_MDU&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=503.09)):

It's actually your play on the field. How good of a football player you are. How much you take care of business off the field. How much of a leader you are. What kind of example you set for the younger players. Those are the guys that drive the free agency value. And you will see that in three weeks when free agency starts. You will see the teams with the best front offices end up finding those players with those intangibles, with that on the field performance and constant improvement and desire to win. Those are the guys that get the longterm deals, but then also play out those longterm deals and establish themselves as future either Hall of Famers or just long time NFL players.

Zach Miller ([09:09](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=xECbGTiJlaLjVpfJdff-2Dhrpzndpah34RKld6ybNp_oKMqLs-uTRJwdsjbeS4CLT7RAPUTd6vIINduSFjeZ8iB0HKA&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=549.33)):

And then one more thing I'll mention is just my story of becoming an unrestricted free agent. I played out my entire rookie contract in Oakland. I was a leading receiver for three years there before becoming a free agent. And then even made the Pro Bowl my last year before becoming a free agent. And another thing about that is they tell you yeah, play out your rookie deal, play out your contract because you signed it. The problem with that is the teams won't honor the other side. They'll release you before your contract's up. So I'll say on that, you will never make the money back for playing at less than market value.

Zach Miller ([09:51](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=F-NJmsfrCgEyUJ8heeuDrvvBC1RdUl6O-jFKMz_YpBhEdA5rlj-sGU8csJF03xKUIIVAXPtruvM3t29R8GjFFEnsG88&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=591.44)):

The teams will say, we'll reward you at the end. We'll reward you at the end. Well, I did that in Oakland and they did not reward me with any long-term deal. They weren't there in free agency like I was expecting. And so I got the luxury of becoming an unrestricted free agent in the 2011 off season. It happened to be extremely short free agency period, just because once the new collective bargaining agreement was signed, there was only, I think, a week before training camp started. And so there was just a really compressed free agency period with no off season.

Zach Miller ([10:29](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=n3eVgjX7Pu09egGLe1xdXQICcPwYw_PC7vSrw2ZMhbKGpOJXy-CJvfRr6WS5GT1oE8E_Q9UCHhvVEzNhCWjveWduEYg&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=629.61)):

So go into a new team in Seattle and there was no off season activities. So a really weird off season, but with my experience, getting a chance to fly to Seattle, meet with John Schneider, Pete Carroll... Pete Carroll actually recruited me coming out of high school and showed up to my practice before my senior season of high school. And then having talked to him and playing against him when he was at SC, when I was at Arizona State. And then having him have dinner with me the night I flew up into Seattle and then getting to meet so many of the players and do a free agent visit the right way and see the culture.

Zach Miller ([11:12](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=LLeDizHE03ANecqrOHHXZcoxqszCiGbidrGGLknQvJyn_m4snpHjGxE9_4QNojfHOxlWizXQXqORvQykpyKTrDxsh9U&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=672.22)):

At the time, there was no Russell Wilson in Seattle. So as much as you're trying to predict what team as up and coming for this next Super Bowl run. If you're a free agent and you want to try to join the team for a Super Bowl run, it would have been hard to predict how great that defense in Seattle would have been. And then the fact that the next year after my second year in Seattle, we would have drafted Russell Wilson and then gone on to win the Super Bowl in my third season in Seattle. So I will say as a free agent, as much as you're trying to jump on the team headed for the Super Bowl, it's tough to predict which teams are going to fall in favor and fall out of favor.

Zach Miller ([11:51](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=-gJuCVDb7sHqfI5f02_LIP8aCwxaQ4xd2S1aT5Hv4FzWiaibtz-2Dow62w0nalkquPiyskAyLhpUoU1QchZuc-L1PtE&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=711.77)):

So I think one of the biggest things is you'll really only have that luxury if you've set yourself up and played long enough to take care of your family. You're sacrificing your body for money in the NFL. That's just true. You're going to have the effects of football for the rest of your life. So you need to go ahead and make sure you take care of your financial life first and sign the deal you deserve. And then once you're lucky enough and you can give up compensation to play on a contender for the Super bowl, then you can start doing that. But until you've taken care of your business and financially, you really got to try to maximize your earnings, because your career is just so short in the NFL.

Zach Miller ([12:35](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=6Xx9pHP5GoLO3Z5YM0a9RG_Hg8GF5QXjxH82P3dmD221TmcMyetguz17HCxObCDR5nK6-b60sjhqEaugleZVYs6ET6M&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=755)):

You can't predict injury. You can't predict how long you'll play. You can't predict what system you're going to be in, where maybe they just don't throw the ball to you. You can't predict things like that. So you got to really do what you can to protect all the downside because of the such short careers. And then if you're lucky enough to be in a situation where you can sign multiple free agent deals, you can be more picky about which team you sign. And just another note with Tom Brady, he signed of less than market deal with the Patriots with the expectation they're going to bring an offensive weapons forum and they don't.

Zach Miller ([13:11](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=X4a5xIfa8aQ1ux0A9YqZZLSgkvSkDu77xDJ7AxglmCuHPwUJyLH-ujudWrSvBnOqFz10qEt4xIgw380e6n_ToLUNP3Y&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=791.31)):

They really didn't give him a lot of help with that sacrifice. He took it as contract. So just some of those things are, after watching the NFL, playing in the NFL for so long, you start to see. And that's pretty much it for free agency. Obviously they're going to see tons of news on it in the next few weeks. And that's it for free agency. Next week, we're going to talk a little bit about the draft process and the pro days that are coming up. I've had a chance to work with a couple tight ends that are coming up here on the draft.

Zach Miller ([13:40](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=iHczDWdtmZxWY0-hF_YfssUSmriLD8rFxnEx-TsEFjYyjh-kzEyTT8QKe7mWB2oMbT2t9ctAYCm6jis3cJO4OMsnBTU&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=820.92)):

And so there's just so much information out there. And the whole draft process is a little weird this year, but looking forward to it, and thanks for joining me. The information in this podcast is educational and general in nature and does not take into consideration the listeners personal circumstances. Therefore it is not intended to be a substitute for specific individualized, financial, legal or tax advice. To determine which strategies or investments may be suitable for you, consult the appropriate qualified professional prior to making a final decision.