



FOOTBALL EXTRA POINTS

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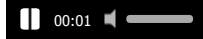
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FOOTBALL EXTRA POINTS - MONDAYS @ 9:00PM EASTERN

SUNDAY, MARCH 23, 2014

MARCH MADNESS IS DA BOMB: DA BEARS IN FREE AGENCY - PART I

Woohoo, March Madness!



OK, now that I have your attention, this has nothing to do with March Madness. It has nothing to do with all the exciting last minute plays leading to surprising upsets by Dayton over Ohio State and Syracuse or Kentucky over the then-undefeated Wichita State. Nor does it have anything to do with the awesome raccoon mascot in this Allstate commercial. But I digress.



I am an awesome mascot!

Since football is my favorite sport, and the Bears are my favorite team (and my March Madness brackets have already gone bust) what I'd really like to focus on, like I did last year at this time ([here](#) and [here](#)), is what the Bears have done in free agency so far. Generally speaking, the Bears have played it close to the vest during the first wave of free agency. They haven't been quick on the trigger, waiting for the draft and the later waves of free agency to fill the gaping holes in their defense. So let's take a closer look, over three parts, at significant players who the Bears have **Kept**, **Ditched** and **Picked Up** in free agency.

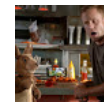
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B4



RTP Richard Thigpen Photography



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Name



Kept

Nate Collins - DT

The Bears defense wasn't much to talk about last year being among the bottom 3 defenses in the NFL in the regular season (29.9 points allowed per game on 6,313 yards allowed). Part of that might be due to the oft injured Nate Collins. He has yet to play a full 16 games in any of his three seasons, and he's still rehabbing an ACL injury, but keeping a healthy Collins on the roster is a good move, considering his significant upside, the fact he's only 26 years old, and the fact that the Bears are awfully thin at DT.

Tim Jennings and Charles Tillman - CB

Tim Jennings is slowing down as he hits 30, but he's still a solid coverage corner with 4 interceptions and 3 forced fumbles in 2013. Peanut Tillman wasn't as good in 2013 as he has been in the past, possibly due to injury, but he'll continue to be solid in Cover 2 schemes. Either way, the Bears can hardly afford to ditch even a mediocre secondary that was 15th among NFL defenses in pass yards allowed seeing as how it has a lot of work to do with the sieve-like rush defense that allowed the most rushing yards of any NFL team in 2013. Signing both Jennings and Tillman is a solid stop gap, at least for 2014.

Craig Steltz - S

As mentioned above, the secondary wasn't the primary problem with the Bears defense. So keeping the core secondary together makes sense as the Bears front office deals with other more pressing issues. Craig Steltz is by no means a standout, but he's a solid player that has a long time veteran presence having spent all six years of his career with the Bears. Adding his former LSU teammate Danny McCray from the Cowboys with a one year contract might also be useful in shoring up the base secondary.

Next time, we'll take a look at who the Bears **Ditched** during free agency. And maybe, just maybe, we can take another look at that awesome raccoon mascot. Whom T-Rac is now suing for copyright infringement.



I am a raccoon on a missile with wheels. This makes total sense.

By Ha Kung Wong (Twitter: @Rhihan)

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an Elite 2013 Fantasy Quarterback?

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