

# Jaguars' Mark Brunell signs \$30.5 million contract

■ **NFL:** The quarterback's signing came just three days after Green Bay's Brett Favre signed with the Packers for \$42 million over seven years

The Associated Press

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. — The numbers suggest Mark Brunell is a young quarterback with still plenty to prove — 26 years old, a 12-14 record as a starter and 6,630 career passing yards.

The new contract he signed with the Jacksonville Jaguars suggests otherwise.

Brunell, who took the Jaguars to the AFC championship game in his first full season as a starter, signed a five-year contract that makes him one of the highest-paid players in the game.

"There is some increased pressure with

a contract like this," Brunell said Monday. "I'm ready to face that."

The new contract is for \$30.5 million and includes a \$10 million signing bonus. Brunell signed Sunday night, just three days after Brett Favre signed a seven-year contract worth \$42 million with Green Bay.

Favre was named the league's Most Valuable Player last year after leading the Packers to victory in the Super Bowl.

"I don't think Brett signing had anything to do with it," Brunell said. "I don't compare myself to other quarterbacks. I don't say, 'Well, I'm making this and I should be making this.' If you play long enough, those things take care of themselves."

Brunell, whom Green Bay drafted in the fifth round out of Washington in 1993, hasn't played all that long.

After two years as a backup to Favre in Green Bay, he was traded to the Jaguars on the eve of their first draft and spent his first year battling Steve Beuerlein for the starting job during a 4-12 season.

But Brunell blossomed into one of the more dangerous quarterbacks in the league last year, becoming the first player since Johnny Unitas in 1963 to lead the NFL in passing yards and rushing yards among quarterbacks.

Along with his durability — he was the only quarterback to take every snap last year — Brunell led the Jaguars to four fourth-quarter comebacks.

They won their last five games to get into the playoffs, then beat Buffalo and Denver on the road before losing 20-6 at New England in the AFC title game.

Brunell had six 300-yard passing games and two 400-yard games, giving him a league-high 4,367 yards and 19 touchdown passes. He finished the season being honored as the most valuable player of the Pro Bowl.

"I came a long way," Brunell said. "I got a chance to play in some big games and win some big games, all the while knowing I still have improvement to go. I'll continue developing. I feel very strongly that I need to grow and I will grow."

Brunell had been in the final season of a three-year contract that would have paid him \$1.2 million this year.

"Mark Brunell is an integral part of our football team," coach Tom Coughlin said. "It is critical to acquire and keep the best players, and that's what we have done."

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MARK PARISI  
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