

NFL

Missing playoffs could equal personnel changes for Seahawks

By **TIM BOOTH**
Associated Press

RENTON, Wash. — Pete Carroll knows after eight seasons in charge of the Seattle Seahawks that his message always needs to evolve.

Much like Carroll's messaging, the Seahawks' roster could see some major changes going into next season after missing the playoffs for the first time since 2011.

"We all have to keep changing and growing together. That's why I always come back to compete, you know," Carroll said. "Keep competing to find a way to make sense and help a guy and pushing him to have success. Then we will do what we can do. Sometimes we do it better than others. Sometimes we shock the heck out of this, with all kinds of things that happen."

There's no denying Seattle's core group is getting older, which coupled with salary cap concerns could lead to major overhauls at some positions.

Here are some positions to watch in the offseason:

JIMMY EFFECT: Despite catching 10 touchdown passes and finally becoming the red-zone threat Seattle hoped for, don't expect Jimmy Graham to be back. It's likely Graham's last chance at a big contract and Seattle appears to



AP Photo/Elaine Thompson

Seattle Seahawks tight end Jimmy Graham (88) tries to fend off Arizona Cardinals safety Budda Baker (36) as Graham runs after a reception in a Dec. 31 game against Arizona in Seattle.

have more pressing needs. The tight end position remains an important piece of Seattle's offense, but both Graham and Luke Willson are free agents. Willson spoke hopefully of returning to the only team he's played for. Seattle would be smart to get a tight end who is a premier blocker with pass-catching skills, similar to Zach Miller. But that's easier said than found.

ON THE LINE: Michael Bennett was bluntly honest at the conclusion of the season that the NFL is a "young man's game," and at age 32 he may be cycled out.

Even if Bennett does return, Seattle's likely to see an overhaul along the defensive line. Cliff Avril appears to be leaning toward retirement. Sheldon Richardson played well in his one year with the

Seahawks but is now a free agent.

The Seahawks have a decent foundation to build around with Frank Clark, Quinton Jefferson, Nazair Jones and Jarran Reed. They should bring back Dion Jordan after the former first-round pick's performance once he became healthy. Bennett could return, but if so should take on less of a load. Despite playing with a foot injury the second half of the year, Bennett still played 84.7 percent of the snaps this season.

OFFENSIVE SKILL: Seattle has high hopes next season for the running back duo of Chris Carson and Mike Davis. Still, expect the Seahawks to add another ball carrier to the mix and move on from Eddie Lacy and Thomas Rawls. At wide receiver, there is a big decision to be made with Paul Richardson, who will be an unrestricted free agent. Richardson finished with 44 receptions and flourished early in the season, but faded late with just nine receptions in the final five games.

WITNESS PROTECTION: Seattle's offensive line woes have been an issue for three straight seasons. Youth, injuries, inconsistency have combined to make the Seahawks line a constant problem and brought plenty of criticism for offensive line coach Tom Cable.

But don't expect massive changes. Part of the beauty of the deal for Duane Brown was having him under contract through 2018. Seattle immediately started playing better once Brown arrived. Justin Britt has proven a capable center and Seattle has high hopes for Ethan Pocic. The big question will be what Seattle does with George Fant. He was the presumptive starting left tackle before suffering an ACL injury during the preseason. Seattle could opt to put Fant at right tackle and move Germain Ifedi to guard after he struggled at tackle.

UNSPECIAL TEAMS: No, Blair Walsh will not be back.

At least that's an obvious early indication with Seattle already signing former Jacksonville kicker Jason Myers to a futures contract. Walsh became a convenient person to blame after missing kicks in three games, leading to Seattle losses.

While Seattle is likely to make a change at kicker, it's likely to be a low-cost move. This is why punter Jon Ryan may be in trouble. The veteran had an up-and-down season, will turn 37 next season and the Seahawks can save \$2 million against the salary cap by releasing Ryan.

Ryan is the only player remaining on Seattle's roster from before Carroll's arrival.

MLS 2018 schedule includes 9-day break for World Cup

Timbers, Sounders will play three times in Cascadia Cup rivalry

By **ANNE M. PETERSON**
Associated Press

Major League Soccer's upcoming season includes a nine-day break in June for the World Cup in Russia.

The league's hiatus for the 2014 World Cup in Brazil was two weeks. But the U.S. national team, which played in 2014, did not qualify for soccer's premier tournament this year.

More than two dozen MLS players from other national teams are expected to play in the World Cup, although rosters have not been announced.

The World Cup break will run from June 14-22, during the group stage of the tournament.

The MLS season opens on March 3 with Toronto hosting the Columbus Crew in an afternoon match.

The league's newest team, Los Angeles FC, debuts on March 4 in Seattle against the Sounders.

LAFc will play its first rivalry match against the

LA Galaxy on March 31 at StubHub Center in Carson, California. LAFc was named as an expansion team in late 2014 shortly after Chivas USA folded.

The team's ownership group is led by venture capitalist Henry Nguyen, as well as Mandalay Entertainment CEO Peter Guber and former NBA executive Tom Penn.

The addition of LAFc puts the Western Conference at 12 teams and the Eastern Conference at 11.

The East teams will play two league opponents three times each, and the rest twice, while the West teams will play one league opponent three times and the rest twice.

The Sounders will play the Portland Timbers three times in the Cascadia Cup rivalry. But those two teams will each play the Vancouver Whitecaps just twice, impacting the point system for the rivalry's annual trophy.

The Timbers open the season with five matches on the road because of the expansion of Providence Park. Portland will play its home opener on April 14 against Minnesota United.

DC United will officially open its new soccer-specific stadium, Audi Field, on July 14 when they host the Whitecaps.

Hockey

US to play for bronze after loss to Sweden

By **JONAH BRONSTEIN**
Associated Press

BUFFALO, N.Y. — Sweden reminded the United States how difficult it is to earn a medal at the world junior hockey championship.

Filip Gustavsson made 29 saves and Sweden had a three-goal third period to beat the defending champion Americans 4-2 on Thursday in the semifinals.

Sweden will face the Canada-Czech Republic winner in the title game Friday night.

"You have a chance to win gold. You have nothing to lose," Swedish coach Tomas Moten said. "We have the silver medal already, so you go for the win. You go for the gold."

Elias Pettersson, Lias Andersson, Oskar Steen and Axel Jonsson Fjallby scored for Sweden, which has not trailed in any game during the tournament. Linus Lindstrom had two assists.

With the expected No. 1 pick in this year's NHL draft, defenseman Rasmus Dahlin, and several other top prospects on the roster, the Swedes believe they have the talent to claim their first gold medal since 2012. Sweden finished fourth each of the last three years after finishing second in 2013 and 2014.

"We have every chance to win gold," Dahlin said.



Nathan Denette/The Canadian Press via AP

United States' Brady Tkachuk (7) is held up by Sweden's Jesper Sellgren (23) during the third period of a semifinal game at the world junior hockey championship in Buffalo, N.Y., Thursday, Jan. 4, 2018.

"We're so excited about tomorrow."

The U.S. was trying to become the first country to win back-to-back gold medals since Canada claimed five straight from 2005-09. The Americans have never won a gold medal on home ice.

"This one blindsided us because we felt so strong with how we were going," U.S. coach Bob Motzko said. "We had a vampire suck it out of us today. It just tells you how tough it is."

Kieffer Bellows and Brady Tkachuk scored late goals for the U.S. after Sweden built a 4-0 lead midway through the third period.

"The goal at the beginning of the tournament when

everything starts is gold medal," Bellows said. "But I know we have to push this behind us and get ready for the bronze medal game. We're doing this for the team in the locker room and USA Hockey as a whole."

The U.S. controlled the action for much of the first two periods before Pettersson's power-play goal put Sweden ahead 1-0 with 6:30 left in the second.

With U.S. defenseman Dylan Samberg in the penalty box for high-sticking, Pettersson, the Vancouver Canucks' No. 5 overall pick last year, received a pass in the left faceoff circle from Buffalo Sabres 2016 first-round selection Alex Nylander and one-timed a slap shot over

Woll's shoulder into the far corner of the net.

Nylander's assist gave him 28 career points at the world juniors, equaling father Michael Nylander for fourth on Sweden's career list.

Gustavsson preserved the lead when stopped U.S. forward Casey Mittelstadt on a 3-on-0 breakaway in the final minute of the second period. Mittelstadt, the Sabres' most recent first-round pick, entered the game leading the tournament with 10 points.

Andersson made it 2-0 when he tapped in his sixth goal of the tournament on a 2-on-1 with Fredrik Karlstrom early in the third period. Steen and Jonsson Fjallby scored shorthanded goals 38 seconds apart before the U.S. pulled goaltender Joseph Woll with 11:25 remaining.

"We failed Joe tonight," Motzko said. "Joe didn't fail us."

Bellows scored his tournament-leading seventh goal on a power play to end Gustavsson's shutout bid with 7:36 remaining. The U.S. could not convert on its first four power plays while allowing the two shorthanded goals.

Tkachuk's goal came with 3:01 left to play and the U.S. was unable to score on a power play in the closing minutes.

SCOREBOARD

Local slate

PREP BOYS BASKETBALL

Friday
Riverside at Nyssa, 6:30 p.m.
Silverton at Hermiston, 7:00 p.m.
Joseph at Echo, 7:00 p.m.
Imbler at Pilot Rock, 7:30 p.m.
Heppner at Union, 7:30 p.m.
Condon/Wheeler at Mitchell/Spray, 7:30 p.m.
Ione at Dufur, 7:30 p.m.
Powder Valley at Nixyaawii, 7:30 p.m.
Griswold at Cove, 7:30 p.m.
Saturday
Baker at Mac-Hi, 4:30 p.m.
Irrigon at Vale, 4:30 p.m.
La Grande at Nyssa, 5:00 p.m.
Union at Pilot Rock, 5:30 p.m.
Elgin at Heppner, 5:30 p.m.
Imbler at Weston-McEwen, 5:30 p.m.
South Wasco County at Condon/Wheeler, 5:30 p.m.
Powder Valley at Helix, 5:30 p.m.

PREP GIRLS BASKETBALL

Friday
Riverside at Nyssa, 5:00 p.m.
Imbler at Pilot Rock, 6:00 p.m.
Ione at Dufur, 6:00 p.m.
Helix at Cove, 6:00 p.m.
Joseph at Echo, 6:00 p.m.
Powder Valley at Nixyaawii, 6:00 p.m.
Saturday
Baker at Mac-Hi, 3:00 p.m.
Irrigon at Vale, 3:00 p.m.
Elgin at Heppner, 4:00 p.m.
Union at Pilot Rock, 4:00 p.m.
Imbler at Weston-McEwen, 4:00 p.m.
South Wasco County at Condon/Wheeler, 4:00 p.m.
Powder Valley at Helix, 4:00 p.m.

PREP WRESTLING

Friday
Echo, Heppner at JO-HI
Riverside, Irrigon, Heppner duals
Mac-Hi/JV at Mountain View JV Invitational
Mac-Hi at Rollie Lane Invitational
Saturday
Pendleton at Brunner Invitational
Riverside, Irrigon, Heppner at Riverside Rumble

PREP SWIMMING

Pendleton at The Dallas

COLLEGE MEN'S BASKETBALL

Friday
EOU at Evergreen, 7:30 p.m.
Saturday
BMCC vs. Big Bend CC, 4 p.m.
EOU at Northwest, 7:30 p.m.

COLLEGE WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

Friday
EOU at Evergreen, 5:30 p.m.
Saturday
BMCC vs. Big Bend CC, 2 p.m.
EOU at Northwest, 5:30 p.m.

Basketball

NBA

EASTERN CONFERENCE

Atlantic Division

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Boston	31	10	.756	—
Toronto	26	10	.722	2½
Philadelphia	18	19	.486	11
New York	18	20	.474	11½
Brooklyn	15	23	.395	14½

Southeast Division

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Washington	22	16	.579	—
Miami	20	17	.541	1½
Charlotte	14	23	.378	7½
Orlando	12	27	.308	10½
Atlanta	10	27	.270	11½

Central Division

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Cleveland	25	13	.658	—
Detroit	20	16	.556	4
Milwaukee	20	16	.556	4
Indiana	19	19	.500	6
Chicago	13	25	.342	12

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Southwest Division

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Houston	27	10	.730	—
San Antonio	26	13	.667	2
New Orleans	19	18	.514	8
Dallas	13	26	.333	15
Memphis	12	26	.316	15½

Northwest Division

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Minnesota	24	15	.615	—
Oklahoma City	22	17	.564	2
Denver	20	17	.541	3
Portland	19	18	.514	4
Utah	16	22	.421	7½

Pacific Division

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Golden State	31	8	.795	—
L.A. Clippers	17	20	.459	13
Phoenix	15	25	.375	16½
Sacramento	12	25	.324	18
L.A. Lakers	11	26	.297	19

L.A. Lakers' Games

Golden State 124, Houston 114
Oklahoma City 127, L.A. Clippers 117

Friday's Games

Detroit at Philadelphia, 4 p.m.
Minnesota at Boston, 4 p.m.
New York at Miami, 5 p.m.

Toronto at Milwaukee, 5 p.m.
Chicago at Dallas, 5:30 p.m.
Phoenix at San Antonio, 5:30 p.m.
Utah at Denver, 6 p.m.
Washington at Memphis, 6:30 p.m.
Atlanta at Portland, 7 p.m.
Charlotte at L.A. Lakers, 7:30 p.m.

Michigan State 91, Maryland 61

Colorado, 90, No. 4 Arizona State 81
No. 29 Cincinnati 55, Temple 53
No. 14 Arizona 94, Utah 82
No. 19 Gonzaga 89, Pepperdine 59

Friday's Games

No games scheduled.

Pac-12 Schedule

Thursday's Games
Colorado, 90, No. 4 Arizona State 81
No. 14 Arizona 94, Utah 82
Stanford 107, UCLA 99
USC 80, Cal 62

Friday's Games

Oregon at Oregon State, 7 p.m. (FS1)

Women's Basketball

Top 25 Schedule

Thursday's Games
No. 13 Maryland 90, No. 18 Iowa 64
No. 7 Tennessee 70, Auburn 59
No. 19 Texas A&M 74, Kentucky 70
No. 4 South Carolina 88, Ole Miss 62
No. 22 Michigan 80, Wisconsin 57
No. 10 OSU 91, Minnesota 75
No. 11 FSU 69, Clemson 47
No. 3 Louisville 66, No. 17 Duke 60
No. 2 Notre Dame 83, Miami 76
LSU 69, No. 15 Missouri 65
No. 5 Miss St. 111, Arkansas 69

Friday's Games

Xavier at No. 21 Villanova, 4 p.m.
No. 24 Stanford at Arizona, 5 p.m.
No. 16 Oregon State at No. 14 UCLA, 6 p.m.
No. 23 Cal at No. 25 Arizona State, 7 p.m.
No. 9 Oregon at USC, 8 p.m. (PAC12)

Pac-12 Schedule

Thursday's Games
No games scheduled.

Friday's Games

No. 24 Stanford at Arizona, 5 p.m.
Utah at Washington, 6 p.m.
No. 16 Oregon State at No. 14 UCLA, 6 p.m.
No. 23 Cal at No. 25 Arizona State, 7 p.m.
Colorado at Washington State, 8 p.m.
No. 9 Oregon at USC, 8 p.m. (PAC12)

Hockey

NHL

EASTERN CONFERENCE

Atlantic Division

Team	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Tampa Bay	40	29	8	3	61	147	95
Boston	38	22	10	6	50	119	95
Toronto	42	24	16	2	50	138	122
Florida	39	17	17	5	39	109	126
Detroit	39	16	16	7	39	106	120
Montreal	41	17	20	4	38	103	127
Buffalo	38	12	17	9	33	99	130
Ottawa	40	10	21	9	29	88	135

Metropolitan Division

Team	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Washington	41	25	13	3	53	128	117
New Jersey	40	22	11	7	51	126	120
Columbus	42	23	16	3	49	115	117
N.Y. Rangers	40	21	14	5	47	125	114

Carolina 40, Pittsburgh 13

N.Y. Islanders 41, Toronto 17
Pittsburgh 42, Philadelphia 19
Philadelphia 40, Chicago 15

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Central Division

Team	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
St. Louis	43	26	15	2	54	124	105
Winnipeg	41	23	11	7	53	136	113
Nashville	40	23	11	6	52	125	110
Dallas	42	23	16	3	49	127	117
Minnesota	41	22	16	3	47	121	