



## 2009 Preview: Indianapolis Colts

# Colts look to regain championship swagger with new coach

by [Geoffrey Stein](#)

### Outlook

Change is the theme for the 2009 Colts, who aren't the defending AFC South champions for the first time since 2003.

Gone are head coach Tony Dungy, a slew of assistant coaches and WR Marvin Harrison – all staples of one of the greatest runs in NFL history.

Returning, though, is QB Peyton Manning, who is single-handedly capable of filling many holes. The reigning NFL MVP has topped 3,700 yards passing and 25 TDs in each of his 11 NFL seasons.

While Manning will be without Harrison for the first time as a professional, he still has plenty to work with, most notably WRs Reggie Wayne and Anthony Gonzalez and TE Dallas Clark.

Manning and Co. will need improvement from a running game that finished 2008 ranked 31st in the league in rushing yardage.

RB Joseph Addai never looked healthy last season, but offseason knee surgery should have the one-time stud back close to his 2006 and 2007 levels in which he

rushed for 1,000 yards and caught 40 passes.

Should Addai struggle again, the Colts have insurance in RB Donald Brown, the 27th overall selection of the 2009 NFL Draft.

Brown, who led Division 1 college football with 2,083 rushing yards last season at the University of Connecticut, will get carries regardless of Addai's status which gives him a high floor to match his unlimited ceiling.

The defense returns most starters from a unit that finished 2008 ranked seventh overall in the NFL.

Indianapolis, however, will miss DT Darrell Reid who signed with the Denver Broncos this offseason. Second-round selection Fili Moala will be counted on immediately to help apply pressure from the middle of the defensive line.

The Colts' defensive MVPs, DE Dwight Freeney and SS Bob Sanders, are healthy entering 2009. History has shown, though, that can change at any second.

Keep an eye on the situation at K, after Adam Vinatieri had hip surgery that has his status for training camp in doubt. His days as the No. 1 option are behind him.

New coach Jim Caldwell certainly has his work cut out for him, but with veterans Manning, Freeney and Sanders leading the way, the transition shouldn't be a difficult one.

Expect more of the same we've become accustomed to in Indianapolis.

## **Key Offseason Moves**

### **a. Acquisitions**

None

### **b. Losses**

#### **WR Marvin Harrison**

Lost step and huge contract sent the future Hall of Famer packing.

#### **RB Dominic Rhodes**

Leaves Indy for the second time in his career.

### **c. Impact Draft Picks**

**RB Donald Brown, Connecticut**

Will be a part of the offense from Day 1.

**WR Austin Collie, BYU**

Collie is an ideal slot receiver who produced plenty in college.

**K Pat McAfee, West Virginia**

Has a very good chance of making the final roster.

**Star Tracker****Rising:**

Marvin Harrison's departure leaves the No. 2 WR job to Anthony Gonzalez, who's caught 94 passes for 1,240 yards and seven TDs in his first two seasons as a professional. Opposing defenses will continue to pay a lot of attention to No. 1 WR Reggie Wayne and TE Dallas Clark, leaving plenty of targets for the sure-handed Gonzalez. Look for big things from the 2007 first-round selection in the post-Harrison era.

**Falling:**

RB Joseph Addai sank the fortunes of many who selected him with their first-round selection last season. Mixed together, Addai's poor 2008 performance along with offseason knee surgery and the addition of Donald Brown have tanked the value of a RB who was once on the brink of stardom.

**Could Surprise:**

WR Austin Collie was a monster during his senior season at BYU, catching 106 passes for 1,538 yards and 15 TDs. Collie will compete with Pierre Garcon to be the Colts slot receiver in 2009, a battle he should ultimately win. Indianapolis has a long history of productive slot receivers with Peyton Manning under center – it wouldn't be a surprise to see Collie's name added to the list, which already includes Brandon Stokley and Anthony Gonzalez.

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