



## 2009 Preview: New York Jets

### Jets go in new direction under new coach

by [Steve Alderslev](#)

#### Outlook

The New York Jets started 8-3 last season, but fell away with four defeats in their last five games to miss the playoffs. Expectations were high due to the signing of QB Brett Favre. After a fast start in which he threw 20 TD passes in 11 games, Favre only managed two more in his final five starts.

Favre's presence did more than help the passing game. RB Thomas Jones enjoyed the best season of his career, posting 1,312 rushing yards and 15 total TDs.

However, the WRs were merely adequate as Laveranues Coles and Jerricho Cotchery both failed to break 1,000 yards. TE Dustin Keller looked promising, posting 535 yards and three TDs.

The Jets were average on defense and its secondary was the weakest area. Abram Elam and Eric Smith both saw time at SS. Darrelle Revis made the Pro Bowl but CB duties were split between Ty Law and Dwight Lowery on the opposite side. LB David Harris missed five games and was not fully healthy for some of the games in which he played.

The Jets are a team in transition in 2009 and will be hard-pressed to match last season's record. The first change comes in the coaching staff. Eric Mangini is gone and Rex Ryan is the new coach.

Ryan has also brought in defensive coordinator Mike Pettine, Dennis Thurman as secondary coach, and Matt Cavanaugh as quarterback coach. Brian Schottenheimer retains the offensive coordinator job.

Among the players, the biggest change comes at QB.

With Favre gone, first-round draft pick Matt Sanchez should start immediately. Although he is battling Kellen Clemens for the job, it's clear that Sanchez is the future and he will start unless Clemens clearly outplays him. Rookie QBs are typically slow to develop, so don't expect him to match last season's surprising performance of Atlanta Falcons QB Matt Ryan.

The running game sees Jones and Leon Washington return, but both are seeking a new contract. If the worst happens and either holds out of training camp, the Jets are still in good shape at the position after moving up to draft Shonn Greene with the 65th pick of the draft.

Greene, the only player in college last season to rush for 100 yards or more in every game, looks like a significant contributor in the future. He'll have a role even if Jones and Washington don't hold out.

Another significant loss is Coles, who is now with the Cincinnati Bengals. That leaves Cotchery as the clear No. 1, and a group of unproven young WRs who will need to step up. So even if Sanchez catches on quickly, he will have a questionable set of weapons at his disposal.

The Jets only had three draft picks and didn't draft anyone on the defensive side of the ball, but they added players through free agency. LB Bart Scott, CB Lito Sheppard, and SS Jim Leonhard are all likely to be regular starters. Leonhard is the only one that may face competition.

## **Key offseason moves**

### **a. Acquisitions**

#### **LB Bart Scott**

Starts next to David Harris on the inside and provides an additional pass rush threat.

#### **CB Lito Sheppard**

Favorite to start opposite Darrelle Revis and is an upgrade.

**SS Jim Leonhard**

Will start at SS if he can hold off Eric Smith, but this is a weak area for the Jets.

**DE Marques Douglas**

Set to start from Week 1.

**b. Losses****QB Brett Favre**

One year in New York was enough for Favre. With Mark Sanchez likely to go through the usual rookie struggles, this is a big loss.

**WR Laveranues Coles**

His departure leaves the WR corps looking very thin.

**LB Eric Barton**

Won't be missed with Bart Scott signed.

**K Mike Nugent**

Jay Feely took over in Week 1 last season so Nugent won't be missed.

**c. Impact Draft Picks****QB Mark Sanchez, Southern Cal**

The Jets will aim to play him immediately, and will hope that he is the long term answer.

**RB Shonn Greene, Iowa**

Won't see a huge role until Thomas Jones is gone, but he's the heir apparent.

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

Jerricho Cotchery is the only experienced WR. He has good speed and also has the ability to play the possession receiver role. It's likely that the Jets will lean on him heavily until someone steps up or is signed.

**Falling:**

Thomas Jones had the best season of his career in 2008 with 15 TDs. The Jets are likely to struggle on offense with the passing game in transition, so his numbers should take a significant hit. There's also the possibility that he will hold out as he is unhappy with his contract. With rookie Shonn Greene drafted, Jones can't count on getting as many carries as he did last season.

### **Could Surprise**

Shonn Greene was taken with the first pick in Round 3 of the draft. His immediate future is tied to Thomas Jones. If Jones agrees a contract, Greene will see limited touches. But Jones will be 31 by the start of the season and Greene is the future. If Jones struggles, the Jets might want to see what they have in Greene before the end of the season.

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