



## 2009 Preview: Seattle Seahawks

### Post-Holmgren era begins with a veteran team

by [Andy Burns](#)

#### Outlook

For the first time since 2003, the Seattle Seahawks failed to win the NFC West last season. Their disappointing 4-12 record saw the end of coach Mike Holmgren's tenure in Seattle after his retirement. Inconsistency and injuries plagued the Seahawks, who saw a six-game losing streak in the middle of the season ruin any chances of a return trip to the playoffs.

QB Matt Hasselbeck missed nine games with a bulging disc in his back, and he was just the first name in a long list of injured Seahawks. The only offensive player to play in all 16 games was then-rookie TE John Carlson.

Replacing Holmgren is Jim Mora, who coached the Atlanta Falcons before moving to Seattle to coach the secondary. Former Tampa Bay Buccaneers linebackers coach Casey Bradley was hired to replace John Marshall as defensive coordinator while Greg Knapp, who worked with Mora in Atlanta, replaces Gil Haskell as the team's offensive coordinator.

The Seahawks made perhaps the biggest free agent signing when T.J. Houshmandzadeh inked a five-year deal. The team also made a major change to the defense when they traded LB Julian Peterson to the Detroit Lions for versatile DT Cory Redding.

Peterson's production will be hard to replace, but if there's a player who can offset the loss, it's Aaron Curry, the team's top draft pick. Curry joins Lofa Tatupu and Leroy Hill to form one of the league's top young linebacker groups.

Hasselbeck, who also had a leg injury to overcome, says he feels fine and is just trying to get familiar with the offense; but the main concern for Seattle is protecting their QB.

OT Walter Jones missed four games last year with a knee injury that required microfracture surgery, but he expects to be ready by training camp. OG Mike Wahle recently had surgery on his shoulder but the Seahawks hope that he will be healthy by training camp.

Should Hasselbeck have the time, he has a group of solid, veteran receivers to throw to. Led by Houshmandzadeh, Nate Burleson is now running after his reconstructive knee surgery and should be ready for training camp. Deion Branch, who has not played in 16 games since 2005 when he was with the New England Patriots, hopes to be ready for training camp as well after an injury plagued 2008. Carlson, who was the only consistent player on the offense last year, should get many looks from Hasselbeck in the West Coast offense.

RB Julius Jones returns to the backfield, but last year's backup Maurice Morris signed with the Detroit Lions. T.J. Duckett, who played under Mora in Atlanta, will be Jones' primary backup, but will probably be Seattle's goal line back.

Like so much of Seattle's offense, the production of Jones and Duckett will be tied to Hasselbeck's health, as the short passing game will take pressure off of the rushing game.

If Seattle can keep Hasselbeck upright and healthy, they may again contend in the NFC West.

## **Key offseason moves**

### **a. Acquisitions**

#### **WR T.J. Houshmandzadeh**

The premier WR signing gives Matt Hasselbeck a consistent threat.

#### **TE John Owens**

Owens will act as a sixth offensive lineman, don't look for receiving production here.

**CB Ken Lucas**

Expected to help bolster an inconsistent Seattle secondary.

**DT Cory Redding**

Versatile lineman hopes to help Seahawks get more pressure on opposing QBs.

**DT Colin Cole**

Will help the middle of the Seattle defensive line.

**b. Losses**

**WR Bobby Engram**

Team cuts ties with the 36-year-old who hopes to grab a starting spot with the Kansas City Chiefs.

**RB Maurice Morris**

The backup to starter Julius Jones, Morris will look for more carries with the Detroit Lions.

**LB Julian Peterson**

Team hopes top draft pick Curry can replace Peterson's production.

**DT Rocky Bernard**

Replaced by Cole and Redding, Bernard will head to the New York Giants.

**c. Impact Draft Picks**

**LB Aaron Curry, Wake Forest**

Seahawks grab the top talent of the draft, but he must fill the sizable void left by Julian Peterson.

**OT Max Unger, Oregon**

Can play any position on the line, but will have to battle a veteran unit for playing time.

**WR Deon Butler, Penn State**

Speedy receiver gives Seattle a young downfield target in a veteran group.

**Star Tracker**

**Rising:**

TE John Carlson was the only consistent player on the Seahawks last year, and if

Hasselbeck can stay healthy, Carlson should again be a big part of the offense. TEs are a big part of a West Coast offense and with opposing coaches focusing on Houshmandzadeh, Carlson should be able to easily find holes in coverage.

**Falling:**

When the Seahawks traded a first round pick for WR Deion Branch, they expected him to be a key part in their offense. To this point, Branch has not played a full season since arriving in Seattle and he shouldn't be expected to start now. Hasselbeck has plenty of targets, so Branch will more than likely be overlooked. Feel free to overlook Branch in your upcoming drafts as well.

**Could Surprise:**

As is the case when discussing any aspect of Seattle's offense, Hasselbeck's health is the key for Seattle's running game, led by Julius Jones. A strong passing game will open up the rushing attack, and although a few of his goal line carries may be taken by T.J. Duckett, but Jones could have a breakout year in 2009.

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