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The following are my thoughts on the NFL head coach candidates for the 2025 season. I'll preface that there won't be many defensive coaches, for reasons I reference in a study I previously completed (<https://github.com/PJakeCar120/Projects/blob/main/The Case for Offensive NFL Head Coaches>).

The A Tier

Ben Johnson

The Detroit Lions' offense has been incredible under offensive coordinator Ben Johnson, ranking 3rd in the NFL in offensive EPA/play and thriving even without a superstar quarterback. After the Rams moved on from Jared Goff, the Lions took a chance on him and, under Johnson's leadership, built one of the most dynamic and high-scoring offenses in the league. Johnson's innovative schemes have revitalized Goff's career, helping the team achieve a league-leading point differential and establish themselves as an offensive powerhouse. A former Division 1 college quarterback, Johnson majored in computer science and math at a top-tier school, so we have even more info he's a smart guy. His track record at such a young age makes him one of the most promising coaching candidates in the league.

Liam Coen

Liam Coen has played a crucial role in revitalizing Baker Mayfield's career and reinventing the Tampa Bay Buccaneers' offense, which currently ranks 5th in the NFL in offensive EPA/play. Under his leadership, running back Bucky Irving has emerged as a rising star, Chris Godwin delivered an outstanding season, and rookie wide receiver Jalen McMillan looked impressive when given the opportunity. Coen's impact isn't limited to the NFL—he previously engineered a complete turnaround of Kentucky's offense, helping Will Levis gain significant draft attention

and ultimately getting him overdrafted. He is a member of the McVay coaching tree, as well. He's another Division 1 college QB who has a strong track record at a young age.

The B Tier

Joe Brady

Joe Brady has significantly improved the Buffalo Bills' offense, elevating them to second in the NFL in EPA/play (0.16) during the 2024 season. Under his guidance, Josh Allen has fixed his turnover problem. Brady's coaching prowess was previously recognized during his tenure at LSU, where he won the Broyles Award as the nation's top assistant coach in 2019. However, his stint as offensive coordinator with the Carolina Panthers was less successful, which tempers his otherwise impressive resume. Furthermore, with Allen's ability to play out of rhythm, it's hard not to discredit some of Brady's influence on the Bills' success. At 35 years old, Brady remains one of the NFL's promising young coaching talents.

Kliff Kingsbury

Kingsbury is one of the most difficult candidates to rate. He has developed Jayden Daniels into one of the top QBs in the NFL as a rookie. Daniels was a very flawed prospect, having significant issues against pressure and throwing over the middle in college. Now, those problems have disappeared, and it's hard not to credit Kingsbury. Kingsbury has now had a role in the development of Daniels, Kyler Murray, and Caleb Williams. Clearly, his offensive mind is incredible. The issue will be explaining how he will improve as a head coach, not just an offensive coach. His end in Arizona was disastrous, and he'll need to prove to teams he's learned how to lead. He's also another D1 college QB and was drafted into the NFL.

Mike Vrabel

My first defensive coach. Vrabel was fairly successful with Tennessee, despite consistently mediocre rosters. He'll need to prove he can help a QB develop his 2nd time around. I do believe NE is a perfect fit, as Maye seems to be on track to become a superstar. Vrabel manages the clock very well and gets the best out of his defense, but the offense is going to need consistently good OCs to sustain itself.

Brian Flores

Brian Flores gets a tough rap for how his tenure went in Miami. The truth is, 2019 was a rebuilding year. In his other two years, Flores went 13-8 in games Tua started. He has a great defensive mind and has completely fixed Minnesota this year, ranking 3rd in defensive EPA/play with an almost entirely new roster. He'll need help with running an offense, and he'll need to prove he can communicate better with his players.

The C Tier

Josh McCown

Certainly, the riskiest candidate on my list. A long-time NFL QB, McCown started his coaching career working with Bryce Young in Carolina. The year went horrifically, but I find it unlikely he had no impact on Young figuring it out this year. Kevin O'Connell brought him in this year as the QB coach, and he helped turn around Sam Darnold's career. McCown could be a disaster, but hiring him this year gives teams a chance to snipe him before he possibly becomes the #1 candidate in the next couple of years.

Bobby Slowik

A Kyle Shanahan disciple, Slowik looked like one of the hottest candidates last season. However, the Texans offense took a massive step back this season. I will say, though, that I believed the Texans acquisitions of both Diggs and Mixon were bad decisions and completely changed the

way the offense was run (despite having so much success the previous year). At just 37 years old, Slowik will be a guy to keep your eye on.

Kellen Moore

A former NFL QB, Moore doesn't have a super long coaching history. He had success with Dallas and has done very well with the Eagles. He probably has the best offensive roster on paper in the NFL, so it's harder to evaluate him. It's probably a little early to hire him, but at 36 years old I would understand a team taking a chance on him instead of a possible bidding war in the future.

Notable Exclusions

Todd Monken

Hey, a top offensive coordinator I don't like! In all seriousness, Monken went 25-39 as an OC his first two times around. He comes to Baltimore, where Lamar Jackson has already won an MVP. Jackson plays out of rhythm constantly, so I have a lot of trouble crediting Monken for the offense's success. Add in two first round WRs in Flowers and Bateman, Mark Andrews, Derrick Henry, and two more first round offensive lineman, and I struggle to see how the offense wouldn't be incredible. I think a team would be making a mistake hiring him.

Aaron Glenn

Glenn is going to get a HC job, and I get it. He's completely turned around the Lions defense this season, all while playing in a tough division. He had a ton of success as the Saints secondary coach, too. But how good has the Lions defense really been under him? In 2021, they went 3-13. In 2022, they ranked 31st in EPA/play. In 2023, 19th in EPA/play. Finally, they ranked 7th this year. A multitude of assets has been invested in this defense, and I think they are probably performing roughly how they should. I won't blame him for the Commanders blowout, as their

defense was so banged up. Even still, I see him as an above average defensive coordinator, and that isn't enough for me to make him a head coaching candidate.

Pete Carroll

I just can't get behind hiring a 73-year-old head coach to take over a rebuild. It's nothing against Carroll as a coach.

Mike McCarthy

1 playoff win in 5 years with the Cowboys. Mediocre success with one of the best QBs in NFL history in Green Bay. I think McCarthy's time has passed.

Robert Saleh

20-36 as a head coach. I happen to like him as a DC, but there's just no way you can hire him as a head coach. No ability to run an offense.