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Saleh got only 5 full games with Rodgers

ROB MAADDI
Associated Press

EDITOR'S NOTE: *On Football analyzes the biggest topics in the NFL from week to week.*

Robert Saleh got to coach just five full games with Aaron Rodgers before New York Jets owner Woody Johnson decided to make a change.

Johnson fired Saleh on Tuesday in a desperate effort to reinvigorate a talented 2-3 team that has underachieved, especially on offense where Rodgers and coordinator Nathaniel Hackett have struggled to duplicate the success they had in Green Bay.

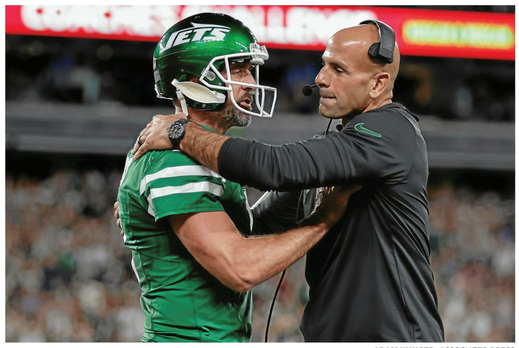
New York's offense is 25th in points (18.6) per game and 27th in yards (286.6). The defense is fifth in points (17.0) allowed and second in yards (255.8).

But Johnson couldn't fire Hackett — that probably wouldn't sit well with Rodgers — so Saleh is out and defensive coordinator Jeff Ulbrich takes over as interim coach for a team that's trying to end the NFL's longest active playoff drought at 13 seasons.

Only the 2021 Raiders with Rich Bisaccia and the 1961 Oilers with Wally Lemm made the playoffs after switching coaches during the season.

But the Jets aren't on the verge of rebuilding. They were two plays away from being 4-1.

If Greg Zuerlein made a 50-yard field goal in the final minute of a 10-9 loss to Denver in Week 4 and Rodgers hadn't thrown a terrible pick-6 in a 23-17 loss to Minnesota on Sunday, it would be a different vibe in New York.



ADAM HUNGER, ASSOCIATED PRESS

New York Jets quarterback Aaron Rodgers talks with New York Jets head coach Robert Saleh during the first quarter of a Sept. 19 game against the New England Patriots in East Rutherford, N.J.

The Jets have a stout defense that would be even better if they could get edge rusher Haason Reddick to end his holdout. They just need Rodgers and an offense that also features wide receivers Garrett Wilson and Mike Williams, and running backs Breece Hall and Braelon Allen to get going.

A victory on Monday night at home against Buffalo (3-2) gives the Jets a share of first place in the AFC East.

Saleh isn't getting a chance to finish what he started, however. He moves on after going 20-36, mostly with mediocre quarterbacks.

Saleh finished 3-3 with Rodgers, including a win in the season opener last year in which the four-time NFL MVP tore an Achilles tendon on the fourth snap.

He was 12-21 with Zach Wilson, 1-4 with Joe Flacco, 2-5 with Mike White, 2-1 with Trevor Siemian and 0-2 with Tim Boyle.

Oh, he was 1-0 in games that include awkward sideline hugs and 0-1 following a cadence controversy.

Hurricane prep

The NFL and FEMA entered into a strategic partnership last month, designating several NFL stadiums, including Raymond James Stadium in Tampa, as mission-capable venues that can be used during emergency response and recovery efforts.

With Hurricane Milton set to hit Tampa Bay, Raymond James Stadium has been bringing in first responders since Saturday and will have approximately 1,000 of them and other staff to support throughout the storm and ready to deploy after it passes. The stadium was also used for Hurricanes Helene and Ian.

Pittsburgh's Acrisure Stadium, Seattle's Lumen Field, MetLife Stadium in East Rutherford, New Jersey, and Los Angeles' SoFi Stadium along with the Buccaneers' home are the designated stadiums.

These venues can be used for staging areas (first responders, electrical trucks, etc.), commodity distribution (water, food, blankets, sandbags, etc.), disaster recovery centers where people can come and sign up for loans, etc. They are not designed to shelter citizens.

"Stadiums are valuable community assets that are often used in times of disasters," NFL chief security officer Cathy Lanier said. "This designation reflects the role that many stadiums play, not only on Sundays, but especially in times of need. We are proud to work with FEMA and first responders at the local and state level to ensure disaster response agencies have the information and tools they need to help a community recover when disaster strikes."

SEC, Big Ten leaders mulling future of fast-changing college sports

EDDIE PELLS
Associated Press

The Big Ten and SEC already have the upper hand in college football. At meetings this week, their leaders are setting the stage to exact even more control over the sport's future.

Among the talking points when an advisory group made of members from the conferences meets in Nashville, Tennessee, are the future of the expanded college football playoff and a possible scheduling agreement between the two conferences that would indirectly make it harder for the rest of college football to compete for the 12 or possibly 14 spots available in the postseason.

No final decisions are expected this week, though the discussions are expected to be a jumping-off point for more definitive moves to come. Here's a look at some of the topics:

DARRON CUMMINGS, AP FILE

Big Ten Commissioner Tony Petitti speaks during the Big Ten Conference media days on July 23 in Indianapolis.

Future of the CFP

The new 12-team playoff makes its debut this season. The top five conference winners, as ranked in the College Football Playoff committee's selection poll on Dec. 8, will earn spots in the postseason, followed by the next seven highest-rated teams.

It's likely that two teams will be added to the format beginning in 2026, which is also when ESPN's six-year, $7.8 billion contract to televise the playoffs begin. Big Ten and SEC leaders have made proposals to get three or four automatic spots in the new playoff. Neither idea has been popular among the rest of the conferences, but the SEC and Big Ten have negotiated to have more control over what comes next.

In possibly the most simple-to-digest sign of the power these two conference wield — they have 15 teams in this week's AP Top 25.

New scheduling format

Connected to the playoff format is a possible change in scheduling that would add an interconference Big Ten-SEC game to each team's schedule.

Part of what the conferences would like to achieve with the new postseason format and more automatic bids would be to eliminate the influence of the selection committee, whose poll doles out at-large berths.

To whatever extent the subjective poll remains part of the formula, a Big Ten-SEC matchup in the regular season would ostensibly help both conferences by improving their strength of schedule, which is a factor in the poll. It would also shrink the number of available opportunities schools from other conferences would have against these teams from the top two leagues.

Landmark lawsuit settlement

On Monday, a judge approved a plan that sets in motion the system for schools to eventually make direct payments to athletes. It will change the fundamental nature of college sports, and the two biggest conferences will feel as big an impact as anyone.

Specifically, the athletic departments will have to figure out how to replace up to $21.5 million they could be paying athletes as part of a first-of-its-kind revenue-sharing agreement. This is where payouts from the football playoff and even revenue from an extra marquee regular-season game could come into play, though that won't fully solve the problem.

"There's two ways to get there," Illinois athletic director Josh Whitman said at the Big Ten's recent basketball media days. "You can either make more money or you can spend your money differently, and we're working very aggressively on both of those fronts to put ourselves in a position to fully participate in the revenue share when it opens up next year."

The leaders also have to take educated guesses about how other legal and legislative action could impact them in the future. For instance, if players are deemed to be employees of the schools, it would add another layer of expense for the schools while potentially giving athletes access to school-funded health insurance and other benefits.

One news tidbit that could become a trend: Last month's announcement that Tennessee was slapping a 10% "talent fee" onto the price of next year's season tickets to help offset costs associated with the revenue-sharing plan.

Is Super League coming?

Though not on their agenda, the possibility of a super league hovers over everything in college sports these days.

Earlier this month, a group called "College Sports Tomorrow" unveiled its vision for a two-tiered, 136-team mega-league with divisions and a 24-team playoff.

"This is not trying to create minor league professional football," one of the group's leaders, former MLS deputy commissioner Mark Abbott, told the Wall Street Journal. "This is about the student athlete and actually trying to enhance the college experience for everybody."

Then, this week, Yahoo Sports reported on a potential super league involving the top four conferences that would pump $9 billion in private equity money into the sport.

There's not enough room to list all the roadblocks in the way of these sort of changes — tops on the list might be that SEC commissioner Greg Sankey has indicated he has no interest — but at the rate college sports are changing these days, it's hard to say never.

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"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me."
~ Psalm 51:10 KJV

"Be happy in your hope, stand your ground when you're in trouble, and devote yourselves to prayer."
Romans 12:12

"For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."
Jeremiah 29:11

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