

Montana

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see action for Kansas City this season - Okoye is injured and will miss the season while Word was recently traded to Minnesota. The only running back who played regularly last season is lightweight Harvey Williams, who has never played a whole season as the No. 1 back. While the addition of a proven leader like Allen will solidify the team's locker room, his best days on the field were in L.A. Allen has never played his best on astroturf and Kansas City will play only five games on grass this season.

But none of that matters, say the fans. The Chiefs have Joe Montana and he's all they need to get over the top.

True, Montana will take the opening snap of the season at quarterback, but how long will he stay on the field? The former 49er is 37-years-old. He's coming off of major elbow surgery and has played the sum total of one-half of a regular season game in the past two seasons. How much more Montana has to give is unknown, but it wouldn't come as a surprise to see him out for good by the halfway point of this season.

Montana spent his entire career playing in the NFC West, a division not known for its hard-hitting pass rushers. With coaches like Bill Walsh and George Seifert designing an offense to cater to a quarterback's strengths, Montana seldom had to worry about taking a tough hit. The 49ers' system allowed Montana to get the ball off before the defense could catch up to him. The system also made sure Montana was always surrounded by quick, agile offensive linemen whose primary job was to protect the passer. None of this will carry over to Kansas City.

The Chiefs' current roster was built primarily for a running team, simply because over the past few years they had very good runners and several inconsistent quarterbacks. Now that they have Montana, the Chiefs plan on installing the 49ers' pass-first offense and scrapping the running game. They've even hired Paul Hackett, Montana's quarterback coach in San Francisco from 1983 to '85, as their new offensive coordinator to try and turn the Chiefs into a sort of "49ers East." The Chiefs have made it clear they didn't trade for Montana to have him hand the ball off 25 times a game. For better or worse, they are now a passing team.

But no one can overhaul a team in one off-season. Even if Montana remains healthy, Kansas City can't expect its offensive linemen to be able to successfully switch from drive blocking for runners to the complex pass-protection required to keep Montana safe. These are two entirely different blocking schemes and they require different types of linemen. The Chiefs haven't acquired the type of players needed to utilize the 49ers' offense in time for this season. That spells trouble for Montana.

Montana's new home, the AFC West, has not produced its share of Super Bowl winners lately but it has produced the most bumps and bruises. In division play, Kansas City will face perennially sack happy Denver (Simon Fletcher, Mike Croel), San Diego (Leslie O'Neal, Junior Seau), Seattle (Cortez

Kennedy) and the Los Angeles Raiders (Howie Long, Anthony Smith); each twice a year. There is no relief in sight outside the division either. In non-division games, KC gets to play Minnesota (Chris Doleman, John Randle), Buffalo (Bruce Smith), and Green Bay (Reggie White, Tony Bennet). That's a lot of heat for linemen playing out of their familiar roles. Add in the fact that most of these hits will come on astroturf and the likelihood of Montana making it through the season is smaller.

The Chiefs will go only as far as No. 19 can take them. They've seen to that by putting all of their hopes on Montana's magical right arm. By dropping the running game, Schottenheimer has effectively said, "It's all up to you, Joe."

A legend coming back from nowhere and leading his new team to a Super Bowl title would make a nice story. But does anyone outside of Kansas City really think the oft-injured Montana can survive such a pounding week after week? The answer here is no.



CHRIS JONES IS SPORTS COLUMNIST FOR THE REBEL YELL.

THE REBEL YELL

Rider

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some struggling people out there."

When the scandal exploded onto the national scene, Rider said he felt deserted by some of those closest to him.

"I had a problem with Coach Mass for a very short period of time," he said. "When all the controversy happened, instead of staying down the middle, he kind of leaned towards their side to protect himself and the coaching staff. I didn't appreciate that so I told him exactly how I felt. I thought it was B.S. He explained his situation and that was that."

The school work problems that have continually dogged Rider are not so much a question of whether or not he can do it, but rather, how he does it, he said.

"I have no problem with anything I want to do. I'm just lazy so I don't do it. I could do whatever I want to do in school as far as English, math, whatever subject. I'm capable of doing it. I just wait until the last two weeks of the semester and start studying for a final so I can at least get a 'B' and bring my grades up. That's how I work. It's wrong but that's how

J.R. is. And if I'm a terrible person because of that then so be it. I'd rather be a terrible person doing that than out here murdering people."

Rider said he will never forget his roots. He has proof - he had

his given name and uniform number "Isaiah 34" tattooed to his chest. And by the way, the neighborhood kids climb all over him like a long-lost brother, it is obvious they won't let him forget either.



"I would help the basketball program. I wouldn't help any other part of the school. I don't want to get Coach Mass and the players in any further trouble so I don't want to get into too much of a relationship with them because people will assume things. But those are my friends and if they need help, I'll help them because it's hard being away from home. And everyone thinks that at UNLV we all get paid. There are some struggling people out there." - Isaiah J.R. Rider

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