

FINS FOCUS

linebackers

Status Report:

The linebackers corps just might be the most important unit in a 3-4 defense because it's where most of the big plays are expected to come from.

To that end, maybe it's no coincidence that Joey Porter has been the biggest playmaker on defense. Playing the weak side in a 3-4 clearly is the best fit for Porter's skills and he was more than happy to slide over to that side after Jason Taylor was traded.

The Dolphins didn't seem to have an answer on the strong side, which involves more run-stopping responsibilities, until they moved 2007 starting defensive end Matt Roth to that spot.

One of the backups at outside linebacker is Quentin Moses, another converted defensive end. The other is Charlie Anderson, signed as a free agent from Houston this offseason. The Dolphins also promoted Rob Ninkovich from the practice squad in mid-November.

Inside, the Dolphins replaced the departed Zach Thomas with veteran Akin Ayodele after acquiring him in a trade with Dallas and inserted him in the starting lineup next to Channing Crowder.

The one backup at inside linebacker is Reggie Torbor, who's versatile enough to line up on the outside as well if needed. He joined the team as an unrestricted free agent after helping the New York Giants win the Super Bowl last season.

joey PORTER

Porter is on his way to breaking the team's single-season record for sacks and likely will be in the running for NFL Defensive Player of the Year honors.

