

Should the Cowboys Pay Dak Prescott?

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Coming off a Divisional Round playoff exit for the second time in the last 3 years, America's Team faces quite the predicament this offseason: Whether or not to give a contract extension to their star quarterback.

Prescott is entering the 4th and final year of his 4-year \$2.7 million rookie contract he signed after being selected with the 135th selection of 2016 NFL Draft. Far exceeding expectations, the 4th rounder went on to win an impressive 32 games in his first 3 seasons as starter (excluding playoffs). This mark is 5th highest all time amongst QB's first 3 seasons only behind Russell Wilson at 36 wins, and Andrew Luck, Matt Ryan, and Dan Marino all at 33 wins. On top of this, Dak has led the Cowboys to 2 NFC East Division Titles and 2 Playoff Victories in his 3-year stint with the team.

Well aware of his successes, the quarterback didn't shy away from the media when asked about his potential upcoming payday last week. Last week, Prescott was asked in an interview with USA Today about taking a 'team-friendly deal in order to have more cap space to sign free agents similar to 6-time Super Bowl Champion Tom Brady has with the Patriots. He adamantly shut down the proposal, citing that, "Nobody's wife makes as much money as his wife does either". It is important to note that Brady's wife Gisele Bundchen has a net worth of almost \$400 million, more than double than that of her husband. Getting at Prescott's point, the Brady-Bundchen household is a little more well off compared the average NFL QB's family income. Gauging the scope of Dak's expectations, it appears he has his sights set among the hefty deals landed by Kirk Cousins or Jimmy Garoppolo last offseason.

With all of this being said, the power of the negotiations (or lack thereof) are held in the hands of Dallas Cowboy's owner Jerry Jones. Although the 25-year old Mississippi State product has had a remarkable first leg of his NFL Career, there are a handful of statistics that serve as red flags on Prescott's résumé that cannot be ignored. First and foremost, the glaring issue of throwing accuracy has always frequently been a criticism of his game.

Many uneducated on the topic will to object this premise, quickly citing that Dak has the highest completion percentage over the first 3 seasons of a career in NFL History at 66.1%. Upon first glance, this figure seems to diffuse and even oppose the reasoning for concern as stated earlier. To that, I note that this statistic must be taken as a grain of salt, because it does not encompass the real root of the issue.

Digging beyond the surface, Dak Prescott's accuracy numbers are skewed due to the high volume of screen passes that make up the majority of his passing attempts. In fact, in 2018, he ranked among the bottom 25% of starting QB's at an average of only 5.5 air yards per pass on completions. This is well below the level of his peers seeking contract extensions in the near future in Jared Goff and Deshaun Watson at 7 and 6.8 air yards per completion respectively.

Furthermore, Dak's Passing TD numbers have been seemingly pedestrian when stacked up against the rest of the league as the passing game continues to dominate the modern offense. In fact, he was neck and neck with none other than Jaguars QB Blake Bortles to have the same number of TD passes in the last 3 seasons until Bortles was ultimately benched for his lackluster performance in the middle of last season. Building upon this, in his 3 seasons in the league,

Prescott has never thrown for more than 23 TD passes in a single season, which shakes out to an average of shy of 1.5 per game. Lastly, it can not be ignored that Dak has never even thrown for 4,000 yards passing in a season, a feat that even the underwhelming Derek Carr and Eli Manning completed last season. Throughout the entirety of his career, Dak Prescott has averaged an unimpressive 226.6 yards passing per game. For frame of reference, this very closely aligns with the figure for Dolphins QB Ryan Tannehill at 232.2 yards per game.

After surveying the numbers on a deeper level, Dak's statistics definitely stir up the argument as to whether or not the QB is worthy of a massive contract extension, or possibly becoming the NFL's first \$200 million man. Having his name in the same category as below average players such as Bortles, Carr, Eli, and Tannehill definitely does not bode well for his case. Conversely, he seems to get the job done when it matters the most racking up an average of almost 11 wins per season thus far in his tenure.

At the end of the day, the front office of the Dallas Cowboys should block out the pressure from the media and general public to provide Prescott with an extension this offseason. Instead, they should ride out and enjoy the last year of the QB's rookie deal and try to build the best team around him as possible while benefitting from the best bargain at the position in the league. Waiting until next offseason to negotiate is a win-win for the Cowboys regardless of the outcome. On one end of the spectrum, Dak delivers a poor season and the Cowboys don't find the postseason success they have anxiously yearned for over the last quarter century. Despite the short-term disappointment, it will save the team millions of dollars as the QB will have to prove himself again.

Looking at the best-case scenario, this doubt lights a fire under Dak, which leads him to defy the odds on an inspired Super Bowl run to prove the organization of his worth. As a result, the team will likely have to find and shell out the infamous 'Brinks Truck' that never found its way to former Celtics guard Isaiah Thomas. At the end of the day, they will have a 6th Lombardi Trophy to join the collection, and I'm sure Mr. Jones wouldn't mind paying a little extra for that premium!

THE CASE FOR GIVING DAK AN EXTENSION:

- **32 Wins in First 3 Seasons (and 2 Playoff Wins)**
- **2016 Offensive Rookie of the Year Award**
- **2 NFC East Titles in last 3 Years**
- **Remained Healthy & started Every Game in career (Best ability in NFL is availability)**
- **Underpaid 1st 3 years in league so far, making 1/10th of QB's with similar accolades**
- **Ability to lock Dak up the next several years before market becomes extrapolated by Goff/Wentz/Watson/Mahomes deals**

BUYERS BEWARE

- **Lack of Consistency on Deep Ball and Intermediate Routes**
- **Mediocre Stat Lines Across the Board**
- **Struggles when Offensive Line Isn't Completely Healthy**
- **Ball Security: Has been Top 5 in League in Fumbles Twice**
- **Unorthodox Inconsistent Throwing Motion**
- **Takes Too Many Sacks: 58 last season (2nd most in NFL)**