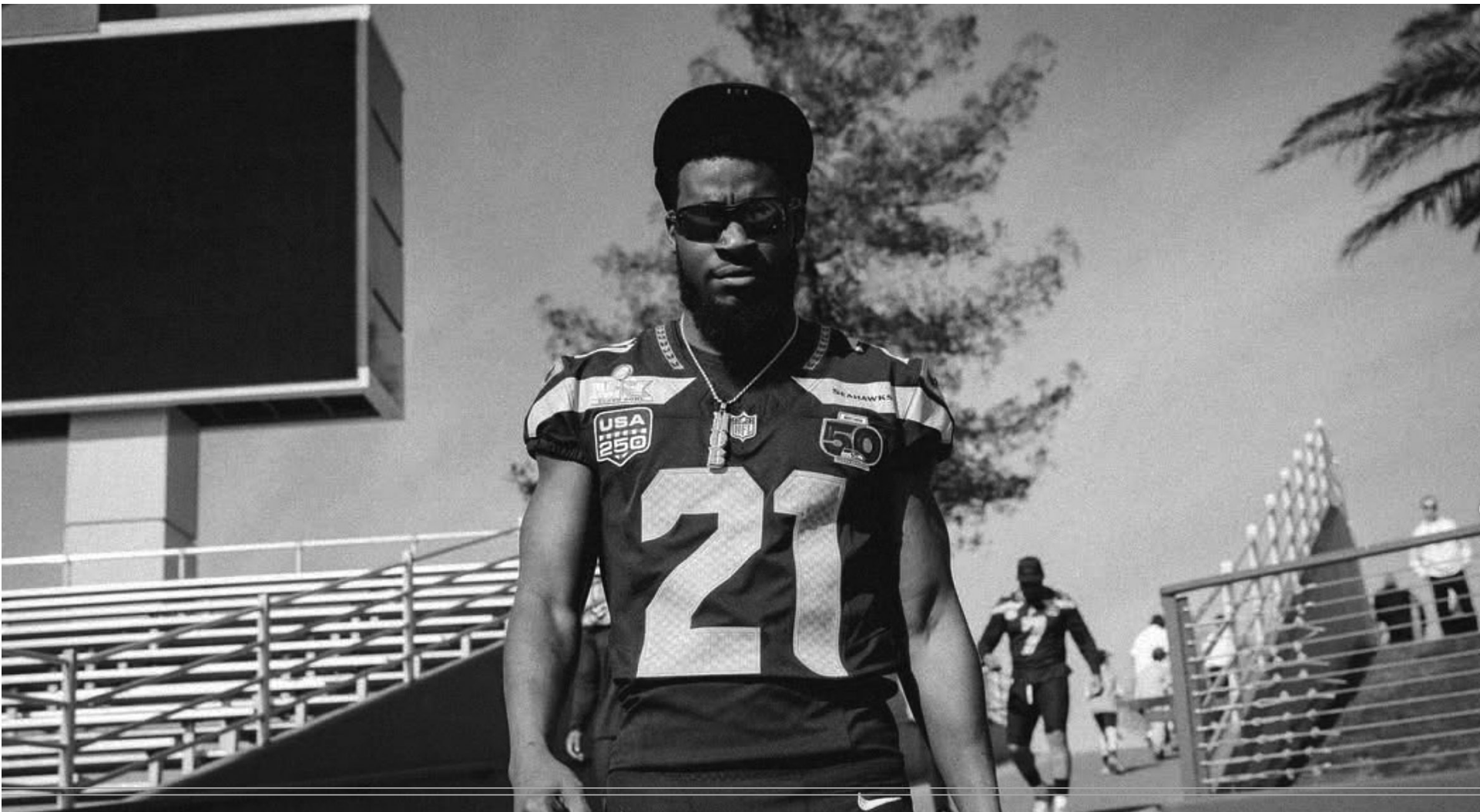


THE WEEKLY CHOWDAH: THE UNNECESSARY SAGA OF CHRISTIAN GONZALEZ’S CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS



Devon Witherspoon of the Seattle Seahawks posing for a photo on the field. Witherspoon and the team were able to celebrate in style with their win against The Patriots. PHOTO COURTESY OF @LILSPOON__ ON INSTAGRAM

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A day before taking the field against the Seattle Seahawks last Wednesday, the Patriots star cornerback Christian Gonzalez signed a four-year, \$135 million contract that included \$102 million guaranteed. It made him the highest paid cornerback in NFL history, just surpassing the four-year, \$132 million contract value of Seattle’s Devon Witherspoon.

For fans of either the Patriots or the NFL in general, this signing might have come as a major surprise. This is because Adam Schefter, ESPN’s premier NFL insider, claimed during an interview on the Pat McAfee Show just one day prior to the signing that “as of right now, talks were nowhere close,” and that he “doesn’t know specifically” why Gonzalez and the Patriots would be in that situation. Schefter faced backlash for these statements the following day, as fans wondered how the biggest source of NFL-related news could be so wrong.

To give credit to Schefter, he did repeatedly mention in that interview that “things could always change.” Though he is correct, modern sports media doesn’t often give the full context in headlines or social media posts. McAfee’s own tweet with his interview didn’t mention this caveat.

The vagueness of such statements can arguably feel a little puzzling since after the deal was signed,

he suddenly understood the specifics of how both sides came to an agreement, such as knowing the Patriots “raised the average price per year to \$33.75 million” after the team’s flight left for Seattle, according to Boston.com.

Schefter’s recent statements weren’t just a one-off event in the reporting of Gonzalez’s contract negotiations. Primarily during the summer

months when there were no major American sports being played outside of baseball, many reports on the negotiations seemed to mirror it in content and basis.

In late August, Schefter reported that the Patriots weren’t willing to give Gonzalez “Witherspoon type money” on the Pat McAfee Show. The statement left a lot open to interpretation. It also didn’t help that it contradicted

earlier statements made by Patriots owner Robert Kraft and de facto general manager Eliot Wolf.

Based on all of these comments, fans could reasonably come to a myriad of conclusions depending on who they believed was telling the truth. A simple clarification by Schefter, such as saying the contract fell short regarding guarantees or that the average annual value of the contract was less than

Witherspoon’s, would’ve helped to dispel any possible confusion.

Schefter wasn’t the only figure making such statements. Tom Curran stated on NBC Sports Boston in early August that “in my estimation, Gonzalez would like... not to be treated as if he’s at the table in 2026, but be treated as if he’s at the table in 2027.” A day later Greg Bedard mentioned to CLNS Media that his

team wanted “a percentage of the [salary] cap,” and the number Bedard “heard was 18 [percent].”

No player in the NFL has a contract that is indexed to the NFL salary cap in this manner, mainly because it limits the amount of flexibility front offices have for future contract manipulation. Indicating that a cornerback of all positions asked for such a contract makes Gonzalez look selfish and unreasonable, which could unfairly give him a poor view among fans.

The basis for these statements come from the reporters’ “estimation” or just what they have “heard.” There is no indication of any of this information coming from either Gonzalez’s team or the Patriots. The average fan may read these reports and come away with the idea that they represent the reality of the situation rather than a possibility, with the full truth remaining uncertain.

Other people, besides media members, also made the fans’ view of the negotiations muddier than needed. Robert Kraft should not have openly said they offered to make Gonzalez the highest paid corner when Gonzalez repeatedly said he wanted to keep negotiations private. Gonzalez’s trainer, also decided to chime in, commenting about a supposed contract offered over the summer.

The ultimate result of all of this is that fans, who just want certainty regarding their favorite teams or the future of their ascending star player, can easily get left in the dark.



Christian Gonzalez of the New England Patriots on the field during a game with the Seattle Seahawks. The Patriots lost 10-13 against the Seattle Seahawks on Wednesday, September 9, 2026. PHOTO COURTESY OF @LILSPOON__ ON INSTAGRAM