



SENIOR DEFENSIVE ASSISTANT

COACHING EXPERIENCE: 26TH SEASON
NFL EXPERIENCE: 19TH SEASON
VIKINGS EXPERIENCE: 1ST SEASON

PAUL GUENTHER

Paul Guenther will serve as the Senior Defensive Assistant in his 1st season with the Vikings and 19th in the NFL in 2021. Guenther spent the previous seven seasons as an NFL defensive coordinator in Cincinnati (2014-17) and Las Vegas (2018-20).

In 2020, the Las Vegas defensive unit finished 16th in red zone defense and 25th in total defense. DE Maxx Crosby posted seven sacks, leading the team for the second consecutive season and giving him 17 for his career. His 17 sacks through his first two seasons tied for the fifth-most by a player drafted in the fourth round or later since sacks became an official stat in 1982. In the secondary, S Jeff Heath led the club with a career-high three interceptions and took home AFC Defensive Player of the Week honors in a Week 10 win vs. Denver with a two-interception day. CB Trayvon Mullen was productive, starting in all 16 contests in just his second year, posting a career high in tackles (62), interceptions (two) and passes defended (14). His 14 passes defended ranked tied for eighth-most in the NFL. Additionally, LBs Nick Kwiatkoski, Cory Littleton and Nicholas Morrow each recorded at least 75 tackles Kwiatkoski (81) and Morrow (77) each recorded career highs in stops, while Morrow also notched a career-best three sacks.

In 2019, the Raiders defense showed continuous growth under Guenther's second year with the unit. The team completed the 2019 campaign allowing just 98.1 rushing yards per game, a mark that stands as the seventh-best finish in franchise history. That average also ranked eighth in the NFL last season, marking a 22-spot improvement from the team's finish in 2018 and the club's highest ranking since 2002. The unit also saw significant improvement in the sack department, racking up 19 more than they compiled in 2018 while leading the league in rookie sacks with a total of 14.5 on the year. The 14.5 sacks by Raiders rookies ranks as second-most in club history behind the 16.5 posted in 1983. Leading in the sack category was Crosby, whose 10 sacks on the year finished as the second-most by a rookie in team history behind only DE Greg Townsend's 10.5 in 1983. Crosby's 10 sacks also ranked second in the NFL among all rookies, as he became just the fourth rookie since at least 2000 to record 10 sacks and four forced fumbles.

Manning the middle of Guenther's defense once again was LB Tahir Whitehead, who compiled his fourth straight 100-tackle campaign and second straight with the Silver and Black, totaling a team-high 108 (79 solo) stops on the year. In the secondary, Guenther helped oversee the grooming of second-round rookie standout CB Trayvon Mullen, who led the club with 10 passes defended, the most tallied by a Raiders rookie since CB Charles Woodson's 22 in 1998.

In his first season with the Silver and Black in 2018, Guenther oversaw a young defense that gelled as the campaign went on. The Raiders defense improved eight spots from 2017 in total takeaways, finishing the year with 17. Highlighted among the club's takeaways were their number of interceptions. Guenther inherited a defense that finished last in the NFL in interceptions in 2017 and mentored his defensive group to an 18-spot improvement for a 14th-place finish with 14 total on the year, led by a career-high three from CB Gareon Conley. Guenther also sculpted the defense to be at its best inside the two-minute mark of the halves, as the club allowed just 15 points on the season inside of two minutes and was good

for 11th-fewest in the NFL in 2018. The No. 11 ranking marked a nine-spot improvement from the 2017 campaign.

Helping lead the defense in Guenther's first year with the Raiders in 2018 was Whitehead, who was brought in as a veteran leader for the defense via free agency. Whitehead led Guenther's unit with 126 tackles (89), the seventh-most by a defensive player in Raiders history and good for ninth-most among the NFL in 2018. Guenther also guided Hurst to four sacks in just 13 appearances. His four sacks tied for 10th in the NFL among rookie defenders while ranking second in club annals among rookie defensive tackles.

In his 13 seasons with Bengals, Guenther helped the team win four AFC North titles (2005, 2009, 2013 and 2015) and reach the postseason seven times, including a franchise-record five straight trips to the playoffs from 2011-15.

As the Bengals' defensive coordinator from 2014-17, Guenther guided a unit that ranked fifth in points allowed per game (20.1) over that time span and ranked in the top 10 in two separate seasons, finishing second and setting a Bengals franchise record in 2015 (17.4) and eighth in 2016 (19.7). Cincinnati also excelled in forcing turnovers, recording 69 interceptions over his last four years with the club, a number that ranked first in the NFL. Guenther also coached his defensive players to eight Pro Bowl selections as the team's defensive coordinator, including four straight selections for DT Geno Atkins. The Bengals also limited opposing passers to just an 80.1 quarterback rating in his four years at the helm of the defense, ranking first in the NFL over that span.

In his final season with the Bengals in 2017, Guenther led a defensive group that finished sixth in the NFL in yards per play, holding opponents to an average of only 4.97. With 21.8 points allowed per game, Guenther tallied his fourth consecutive season as coordinator where the defense averaged under 22 points per game. The unit was also one of just seven teams to have four players with at least five sacks each.

In 2016, the defense finished eighth in the league in fewest points allowed (19.7). Cincinnati held opponents under 20 points in six of the last seven games, and only 15.0 points per game over that stretch. Guenther's unit finished second in the NFL with 17 interceptions and ranked seventh in red zone defense. DT Geno Atkins and DE Carlos Dunlap led the charge, as both were selected as starters in the Pro Bowl. Atkins led all NFL interior linemen in sacks (nine) and was also named first-team All-Pro by The Sporting News. Dunlap was second on the team in sacks (eight) and tallied 15 passes defended.

The Bengals' defense finished 2015 as one of the strongest units in the league, ranking second in the NFL in points allowed at just 17.4 per game. The 17.4 points per game is a franchise record, and Cincinnati allowed just two more points (279) than the league-leading Arizona Cardinals (277). The Bengals also ranked seventh in the NFL in rushing defense, with a 92.3-yard average that was lowest in team history. Additionally, Cincinnati ranked third in the NFL with 21 interceptions and allowed only 18 touchdown passes. Four defenders were selected for the Pro Bowl, tying the franchise's best total. The quartet included Atkins (11 sacks), DE Carlos Dunlap (13.5 sacks, second in club history), CB Adam Jones (three interceptions and 12 passes defended) and S Reggie Nelson (tied for NFL lead with eight interceptions).

In his first season as Cincinnati's defensive coordinator in

2014, Guenther led a Bengals defense that ranked 12th in the league with 21.5 points allowed per game. The defense also ranked in the top 10 in nine of 15 major statistical categories, including tying for a third-place finish in interceptions (20) and third place in lowest opponent quarterback rating (75.8).

Prior to being appointed the team's defensive coordinator, Guenther served in various roles on the Bengals' coaching staff from 2005-13. He spent two seasons from 2012-13 as the team's linebackers coach, helping guide undrafted free agent LB Vontaze Burfict to a Pro Bowl selection in 2013. Under his direction in 2013, the linebacking corps helped the defense finish third in the NFL in total defense (305.5 yards per game) and tied for fifth in scoring defense (19.1 points per game).

In his first season as linebackers coach in 2012, Guenther directed a unit that helped the defense finish sixth in the league in total defense (319.7). The Bengals were also eighth in the NFL in scoring defense (20.0 points allowed per game). Guenther was charged with the development of the rookie Burfict, as he led the team in tackles (174).

From 2005-11, Guenther assisted on special teams each season, while also working with the linebackers from 2005-10 and the defensive backs in 2011. Guenther helped the Bengals win AFC North titles in 2005 and 2009. While assisting the Bengals' special teams units from 2005-11, Guenther helped the group develop into one the better coverage units in the league, ranking sixth in opponent punt return average (7.8 yards) and 12th in opponent return average against (22.0 yards) during that span.

In 2011, Guenther worked his last season in a dual role, coaching defensive backs and special teams. He also worked closely with defensive coordinator Mike Zimmer on blitz techniques, and the Bengals ranked fifth in the NFL in sacks (45), up from 27 the previous year. On special teams, Guenther helped Cincinnati finish seventh in the NFL in punt return average (11.5 yards per return), seventh in punt coverage (7.2) and third in kickoff coverage (20.8).

Guenther served as the assistant special teams/assistant linebackers coach from 2005-10. In 2010, he coached LB Dhani Jones, who led the team in tackles (160) for the third straight season. Working with special teams, Guenther helped Cincinnati lead the NFL in punt coverage in 2010, allowing only 4.8 yards per return, a mark that was third best in franchise history. In helping the Bengals win the AFC North in 2009, his linebackers supported a defensive unit that ranked fourth in the NFL in total defense (301.4 yards per game) and allowed only 18.2 points per game.

In 2008, Guenther's unit helped the defense finish 12th in the NFL in total defense, allowing 325.5 yards per game. Jones was once again the leader of the linebacking corps, posting a career-high 165 tackles. Additionally, the special teams units limited opponents to 22.5 yards per kickoff return (13th in NFL) and 9.1 yards per punt return (14th in NFL). In 2006, Guenther's efforts on special teams produced the top punt coverage unit in the league, as Cincinnati allowed just 5.6 yards per return. The Bengals' kickoff coverage was also among the NFL's best, allowing just 21.0 yards per return, a figure that ranked sixth. In his first season with the Bengals in 2005, Guenther helped KR Tab Perry set franchise records for kickoff returns (64) and kickoff return yards (1,562).

Guenther entered the NFL coaching ranks as an offensive assistant with the Washington Redskins from 2002-03, working as an associate to Marvin Lewis, who served as the team's assistant head coach/defensive coordinator in 2002. With the Redskins, Guenther also worked with the running backs corps.

From 1997-2000, Guenther was the head coach at his alma mater, Ursinus College, an NCAA Division III school in Collegeville, Pa. He was the youngest head coach in college football in 1997, at age 25, and he led the program to the playoffs in 1999 and 2000. His 1999 team finished 10-2, setting

a school record for wins, and advanced to the second round of the playoffs. The team also broke nearly every offensive and defensive record in school history.

Prior to joining Ursinus as an assistant coach in 1996, Guenther coached at Western Maryland for two seasons from 1994-95.

A native of Richboro, Pennsylvania, Guenther played LB at Ursinus College, setting a school record for career tackles (355), while earning all-conference honors three times. He received his bachelor's degree in communications from Ursinus in 1994 and a master's degree in sports administration from Western Maryland in 1997. He and his wife, Patrice, have two sons, Jake and Duke. His last name is pronounced GUN-thur.

GUENTHER'S BACKGROUND

Player

1990-93Ursinus College // LB

Coaching

1994-95Western Maryland // Assistant Coach

1996.....Ursinus // Assistant Coach

1997-2000Ursinus // Head Coach

2002-03Washington Football Team // Offensive Quality Control

2005-10Cincinnati Bengals // Assistant Special Teams/LB

2011Cincinnati Bengals // Assistant Special Teams/DB

2012-13Cincinnati Bengals // Linebackers

2014-17Cincinnati Bengals // Defensive Coordinator

2018-20Las Vegas Raiders // Defensive Coordinator

2021Minnesota Vikings // Senior Defensive Assistant