

Mike Evans calls decision to join 49ers a 'no-brainer'

BY JOSH DUBOW
AP PRO FOOTBALL WRITER



JACOB KUPFERMAN/Associated Press

Mike Evans will be giving up his Tampa Bay uniform as he joins the 49ers next season.

SANTA CLARA, Calif. — The decision to leave Tampa Bay wasn't easy for Mike Evans after he and his family built strong relationships with the Buccaneers and the community over 12 seasons.

Picking a new spot once he decided to leave was far easier for the star receiver. Evans dove into possible destinations before the start of free agency and made his final decision quickly on Monday after a video call with San Francisco 49ers coach Kyle Shanahan and general manager John Lynch.

"I did my research on a lot of teams that I was looking at. I was looking at contenders, guys with good quarterbacks obviously," Evans said. "So I was looking at here, Buffalo Bills, teams that needed a number one wide receiver. This was my number one spot on my own. And then I talked to

John and Kyle and it solidified it for me. I've always been a fan of Kyle. He just talked about how he sees me in this offense and it just made me even happier. It was a no-brainer really after I got on the phone with him."

After making more than \$150 million in his career, Evans turned down a more lucrative offer from the Bucs, according

to his agent, to sign with San Francisco on a relatively reasonable three-year contract worth up to \$60.4 million with \$16.3 million guaranteed.

Evans said a recruiting call from tight end George Kittle was the final piece that led to his ultimate decision.

"I love money, obviously, like everybody else. But the money was not the biggest

factor for me," he said. "It was just football and something that I can be excited about. I'm super excited. Every time I come to Levi's Stadium and I'll see the energy that they bring and the rich history of the San Francisco 49ers, it just excites me. So I feel like it's given me a second wind in my career. That's why I chose to come here."

Evans is coming off an injury-filled 2025 season when he only played eight games and failed to reach the 1,000-yard mark for the first time in his 12-year career.

The Niners needed a proven receiver with the team planning to cut ties with Brandon Aiyuk after placing him on the reserve/left squad list last season after he stopped showing up to rehabilitate a knee injury that had sidelined him since October 2024. A

Evans joins a receiving group that features 2024 first-

round pick Ricky Pearsall, veteran Demarcus Robinson and unproven young players Jacob Cowing and Jordan

Watkins. Jauan Jennings, who was the team's top wideout last season, is set to be a free agent.

Tua will compete for starting job, Atlanta GM says

BY MAURA CAREY
ASSOCIATED PRESS

Newly signed Falcons quarterback Tua Tagovailoa will have an opportunity to compete for the starting job in Atlanta, where Michael Penix Jr. is recovering from a torn ACL he suffered in November, general manager Ian Cunningham said Friday.

"For Tua coming in here, he knows he's coming in to compete, just like Michael knows he's coming in to compete. Quite frankly, not just those two at the quarterback position, but everybody's coming in to compete," Cunningham told reporters.

"We're excited to have Tua, but we're excited to have all the players that we were able to get in this free agent class."

Cunningham said he spoke with the agent for Penix before signing Tagovailoa, who was released this week by the

Miami Dolphins, and new coach Kevin Stefanski talked to the young quarterback personally.

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