Plaxico Burress will be released from the Oneida Correctional Facility in Rome, N.Y., on Monday. Television trucks and cameras, which began gathering at the facility last week, will be on hand to record the moment, which comes three years and four months after Burress made a game-winning touchdown catch for the Giants in Super Bowl XLII.

If Burress follows the script designed for him by his various representatives, he will leave without comment, be driven to a nearby airport, then head to Fort Lauderdale, Fla., where he will begin his new life as a free man.

Burress and his wife have two children, including a daughter who was born while Burress was incarcerated.

“All of Plaxico’s family and friends are excited about him coming out tomorrow, and Plax is extremely excited about coming out and getting back with his family and getting back into game-playing shape,” said Tony Johnson, the co-founder of Playmakers Sports Management. Johnson and his partner, Clarence Wright, handle Burress’s nonfootball business interests.

In 2009, Burress was sentenced to two years in prison after pleading guilty to attempted criminal possession of a weapon.

The immediate questions around Burress focus on where, and how successfully, he will resume his N.F.L. career. Can he come close to achieving the elite status he enjoyed until that fateful night in November 2008 when he wounded himself — his career, his team and his family — with a loaded gun?

When Michael Vick was released from federal prison in 2009 after serving 18 months for his role in a dogfighting case, there was a line around the block for his quarterbacking services, even though he was 29 and some teams shied away, fearful of a public-relations fallout. Vick’s subsequent success with the Philadelphia Eagles could help clear the way for a team to sign Burress, who turns 34 in August.

Burress has had a fine-filled but charmed N.F.L. career, and in many ways, his good fortune continues. The uncertainty of the N.F.L. labor situation helps Burress immensely. With teams unable to sign free agents, there will be a mad scramble for players whenever a new labor agreement is signed.
Burress worked out as much as he could in prison, but as Vick discovered, no amount of training away from football is preparation for an N.F.L. season.

Unlike Vick, Burress is competing on a much more level playing field. While some players are diligently working out, many — based on the stories I am reading — are enjoying their time off.

For Burress, football will take care of itself. The more compelling aspect of his life is how this has affected him long term. How has his worldview expanded? What will be his message, especially to young players who like Burress can be lulled by celebrity into thinking they are above the law?

Johnson said Burress had done much soul searching; had read close to 80 books during his incarceration; and had tutored other inmates.

While Burress can talk about his personal growth and how he has changed and matured, the reality is that he is fortunate. Unlike thousands of young convicted felons who emerge from prison with limited or zero work skills and a scarlet letter, Burress will find lucrative employment.

“He knows that he has been blessed to be able to come out and go into a lucrative career,” Johnson said.

“But he wants to make sure that he can help as many people avoid what he’s been through himself.”

David Yellen, the dean of Loyola University Chicago School of Law, pointed out that the redemptive narratives for athletes like Vick and Burress could be misleading.

Yellen wrote a letter to The New York Times opposing mandatory sentencing guidelines when Burress was convicted.

“For every guy for whom going to prison turns out to be a positive thing, for whom that helps turn their life around, there’s 10 or 15 or 20 who never recover from the experience of being in prison,” he said in a telephone interview.

“Your typical guy getting sent away for a mandatory period of time doesn’t have pro sports clamoring to pay them millions of dollars when they get out. Your typical guy who gets sent away gets out, has no job skills and winds up falling back into or continuing in a life of crime.”

I am betting on and pulling for Burress to make a comeback in the N.F.L. In fact, Jerry Richardson, the Carolina Panthers owner, should make signing Burress a priority. Burress could mentor quarterback Cam Newton and be his lifeline, as he was to Eli Manning.
Wherever he winds up, Burress hopefully will eschew the prima donna role he once embraced and speak honestly with young, so-called star athletes about the pitfalls of stardom and entitlement.

For Burress, the long road back begins Monday.