Holmes growing into leadership role
Steelers Training Camp / Day 5 Saint Vincent College, Latrobe

Friday, August 01, 2008
By Ed Bouchette, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Santonio Holmes seems to be growing faster than his yards per catch, which led the NFL last season. He talked about how he and his teammates cannot be selfish, about how his goals do not matter as much as those of his team. He acknowledged the many talents on offense but said it won't matter if players don't buckle down and produce.

In short, he sounded like a leader of the wideouts.

"It's hard for him to really become the leader," Hines Ward said. "I'm still here."

As Ward enters his 11th season, there is little reason to believe he no longer will serve as the standard-bearer for Steelers wide receivers, as he has done this entire century. Yet there is room for a second in command, and the rising Holmes wants to stake his claim in his third NFL season.

"It's going to be exciting this year," Holmes declared. "I'm looking for a lot of big things from myself. I'm expecting a lot out of our team this year ... I'm expecting to be more involved in the offense this year."

The next question for Holmes came with a lit fuse: Are you going to be Ben Roethlisberger's No. 1 option in 2008? As an aside, Holmes led the Steelers with 942 yards receiving and nine touchdowns last season, and his 18.1 yards per catch topped the NFL. His 52 receptions were second to Ward's 71 as Ward led the team in catches for the ninth consecutive season.

"I'm looking forward to it, but Hines is still our go-to guy," Holmes answered. "We need those first downs, we need those small catches across the middle, we need a big-game play from Hines. He's still going to be there for us.

"I'm used more so as a deep threat, everyone would say. But, at the same time, I think my opportunity will come to become the leader of the team."

There does not have to be an either or with Holmes and Ward. In the ego-driven world of NFL wide receivers, everyone wants to know who the "go-to-guy" is, who's the "man." It's not really like that with the Steelers, although a big ego at anytime could jump in and try to make it so, Holmes is not taking the Chad Johnson-Terrell Owens-Randy Moss approach, and, with the kind of second season he had, he could start doing it if he wanted.

Holmes sounds interested in being the man, while acknowledging that Ward still holds that title. Had Plaxico Burress stuck
around, the dynamic might have been different because Burress was more a contemporary of Ward's and ego might have
gotten the better of their relationship.

But Burress left, and Ward became the mentor for all other Steelers wide receivers, including Holmes. And Ward believes
Holmes is a worthy successor in the wideout leadership position.

"He's a great wideout," Ward said to open the topic. "One thing I like, he's a great student of the game. He's always asking.
When I tell him something, its not, 'Oh, I know!' He says, 'I see what you're talking about.'

"He definitely has leadership skills. You don't have to be a vocal guy, just lead by example because there's always somebody
watching you."

This Holmes-Ward partnership should thrive because Ward is the tough, possession receiver, the one to look for on third
down. Holmes has developed into the home-run threat.

The Steelers have done a good job of surrounding their franchise quarterback with the kind of skilled talent he needs.
Roethlisberger can call on those two, plus a maturing Nate Washington and 6-foot-4 second-round pick Limas Sweed, the
tall receiver the quarterback requested before the draft. There's also 6-5 tight end Heath Miller and 6-7 Matt Spaeth, a
second-year man. At running back, there's a healthy two-time Pro Bowler Willie Parker, who led the NFL in rushing right up
until the next-to-last game of the season when his fibula was broken -- plus first-round pick Rashard Mendenhall and new
third-down back Mewelde Moore.

What more can a quarterback ask for (a competent offensive line, but that's another matter)?

"We're just as talented as anyone in the league," Ward said of the offense. "We have Heath at tight end, Santonio, myself,
Nate, Sweed. We have a one-two running back punch.

"Ben has weapons around him, so the excuses shouldn't be made."

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Steelers Notebook: Drummond joins team, gets shot as return man

Friday, August 01, 2008
By Ed Bouchette, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

The Steelers acquired a return man late in the game for the second consecutive year, only this time they did not have to use a draft pick to get him.

East Liberty native Eddie Drummond signed with the Steelers yesterday and was returning punts in practice at Saint Vincent College by the afternoon.

Drummond, 28, believes he can again become what he once was, among the best kick- and punt-return men in the NFL.

"Definitely," he said. "I think I'm peaking right now. I feel like when I was in my Pro Bowl year, and being on a team like this will make a big difference."

Drummond, undrafted out of Penn State, made the Lions in 2002, but has not been the same since he made the Pro Bowl with Detroit in 2004. That season, he had four touchdown returns, two punts and two kickoffs. He averaged 13.2 yards a punt return and 26.6 on kickoffs.

He has not scored a touchdown since. He signed a one-year contract as a free agent with Kansas City last year and averaged just 6.9 yards on 32 punt returns and 21.2 on 37 kickoff returns.

He has been a free agent since March.

"It's understandable," Drummond said of his status until yesterday. "With the whole season we had with Kansas City, that's why they're making so many changes there."

He said injuries also have dogged him, and he believes he is in tip-top shape and ready to make a comeback in his hometown.

"I always grew up being a Steelers fan. Even when I was in Detroit, they were in the Super Bowl. I was at the game going crazy, like a No. 1 Steelers fan. ... Hopefully, I can end my career here."

In September, the Steelers sent Atlanta their seventh-round draft choice in 2008 for return man Allen Rossum, and they released him early this year after a poor season.

Pittsburgh native enters Hall

For the second consecutive year, a Pittsburgh native associated with the Steelers is headed for the Pro Football Hall of Fame as a writer.

ESPN's Len Pasquarelli, who grew up in Bloomfield, will be honored with the Dick McCann Award tonight at the Hall of Fame dinner in Canton, Ohio. The award is given annually by the Pro Football Writers Association in honor of distinguished service.

Pasquarelli, who lives in Atlanta, will receive his award at the Pro Football Hall of Fame dinner in Canton, Ohio, this summer.

Last year, ESPN's John Clayton, a Pittsburgh native and former Pittsburgh Press sports writer who covered the Steelers in the 1970s and '80s, earned the McCann Award.

Pasquarelli, a graduate of Central Catholic and Pitt, was a teacher and part-time newspaper writer before he became editor of the old Steelers Weekly in 1978. After working for numerous publications, he joined ESPN.com in 2001.

Pasquarelli's dedication to his profession showed dramatically in February when, physically ill, he participated in a morning-long Pro Football Hall of Fame voting session the day before the Super Bowl, then wrote his column, and only then checked into a Phoenix hospital emergency room, where he immediately had quintuple bypass heart surgery.
Cope gone, not forgotten

Longtime Steelers broadcaster Myron Cope would love this one -- they still have a parking spot reserved for him next to Saint Benedict Hall at Saint Vincent College for training camp.

Cope, who died Feb. 27 at age 79, had been retired from his job as color man since after the 2004 season and had not been to camp since then.

Cope's is among a handful of parking spaces reserved for Steelers executives such as Dan Rooney, Art Rooney and Kevin Colbert. The sign, in black and gold, reads simply "Reserved Parking For: Myron Cope." It likely is someone's way to erect a small memorial to the legendary, late broadcaster.

Next to Cope's reserved parking spot is one for another legend who still works for the Steelers. Joe Greene is a special assistant for colleges and pros on the Steelers' scouting staff. He was Chuck Noll's first draft pick, is in the Pro Football Hall of Fame and was voted the best player in Steelers history.

His sign reads "Reserved Parking For: Joe Green." Someone later wrote in the "e" with a black marker.

Capizzi needs surgery

Tall offensive tackle Jason Capizzi encountered another, familiar setback in his quest to make his hometown team.

Capizzi has a stress fracture on his left foot, the same injury he had earlier this year while training. Coach Mike Tomlin said he will have surgery, and that likely will end his season.

Capizzi (6-9, 330) signed with the Steelers last year as an undrafted free agent from IUP. The Gibsonia native, who started his college career at Pitt, was released on the Steelers' final cut and spent time last season on three practice squads.

Quick hits

Punter Scott Player, 38, worked out for the Steelers Wednesday in Latrobe. He has been with five teams since 1996. New England cut him in June. ... Veteran defensive end Travis Kirschke was given the day off. ... Safety Anthony Smith (groin) tried to practice and could not, so he might be out longer than expected.
Brett Favre's agent says the three-time MVP understands he would be walking into a media frenzy by showing up for the Green Bay Packers' training camp, but he's willing to deal with that rather than have retirement forced on him.

"He's prepared to deal with it," James "Bus" Cook said yesterday. "He's ready to go back, but he can't go back until the commissioner reinstates him."

That didn't happen. NFL commissioner Roger Goodell is giving the Packers and Favre at least one more day to resolve their standoff before granting the quarterback his reinstatement.

"The Packers and Brett Favre are continuing their discussions," league officials said in a statement. "The commissioner preferred to let those discussions continue rather than act on the reinstatement petition today."

Once Favre is reinstated, the Packers will have 24 hours to decide whether to cut him or restore him to their active roster. By not acting yesterday, Goodell decreased the chances Favre would be present at Packers training camp today.

Cook said Favre still wants to be released, something the Packers have ruled out.

"If he was given his release, there's no guarantee he'd go anywhere to play," Cook said. "However, he'd have the freedom to choose if he should decide to play."

Favre also could be traded -- apparently even to a division rival.

The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel reported that Packers officials have had internal discussions about trading Favre to the Minnesota Vikings or Chicago Bears as a "last resort" to resolve the smoldering controversy.

Rams

Holdout running back Steven Jackson missed his seventh day and 10th practice of St. Louis training camp, with no apparent movement in the impasse. Jackson, entering the final season of a four-year contract he signed after the Rams drafted him in the first round in 2004, is seeking a multiyear deal. The Rams are fining Jackson, who has three consecutive 1,000-yard seasons, $15,000 a day and have told his agent there will be no more negotiations until Jackson reports to camp.

Giants

New York coach Tom Coughlin was unaware of a report in a Virginia newspaper that running back Ahmad Bradshaw would have to serve another 30 days in jail after the NFL season because of an old probation violation. Bradshaw, a second-year running back, was released July 13 from the Abingdon Regional Jail in Virginia after serving most of a 30-day sentence.

Dolphins

Miami drew another name from the past of Bill Parcells, working out former Cowboys quarterback Quincy Carter. But Dolphins coach Tony Sparano said the workout is merely an evaluation of Carter, an Arena Football League quarterback who started for the Cowboys and Jets before poor play and drug-related arrests ended his NFL career.

Elsewhere

Wide receiver Chris Henry, who was released by the Cincinnati Bengals in April after his fifth arrest, was suspended by the NFL for four games but may play the final 12 games of the regular season for any team that signs him. ... NFL Hall of Famer Jim Brown has filed a lawsuit in New York claiming Sony and video game maker Electronic Arts are using his name and likeness without his permission.
After agreeing to a one-year contract with the Steelers Thursday, veteran return specialist Eddie Drummond made it clear that he didn't sign with his hometown team to give it an extra body for training camp.

Drummond, who grew up in East Liberty, said he feels as good physically as he did during the 2004 season, when he returned two kickoffs and two punts for touchdowns and made the Pro Bowl.

That translates into the Penn State product feeling good about his chances of making the Steelers.

"I honestly feel like I'm peaking right now," said Drummond, who played for the Chiefs last season and had been with the Lions from 2002-06. "As long as I stay competitive and stay progressive and don't get injured or anything like that, I'm pretty sure I'm going to be on the team just because they already know what I can do."

Drummond, who practiced with the Steelers yesterday afternoon, returns kickoffs and punts. The Steelers will also give the 5-foot-9, 190-pounder a look on their kick coverage teams as well as at slot receiver.

His best season came in 2004, when he averaged 26.6 yards per kickoff return and 13.2 yards per punt return.

The Steelers ranked 30th in punt returns last season (6.1 yards per return) and 21st in kickoff returns (24.6).

They released veteran return man Allen Rossum during the offseason and signed Mewelde Moore, a running back who has excelled as a punt returner and also returned kickoffs.

The Steelers didn't have a shortage of candidates to return punts and kickoffs before yesterday, but that didn't stop them from signing Drummond.

"Needed a guy in that capacity to add some competition," Steelers coach Mike Tomlin said.

The Steelers made room on the roster for Drummond by placing offensive tackle Jason Capizzi (broken foot) on the waived/injured list.
Drummond averaged a career-low 21.2 yards per kickoff return last season for the Chiefs and averaged 6.9 yards per punt return. Drummond said he played most of the 2007 season with a splint to protect a dislocated finger but added that he is 100 percent.

He had a chance to sign with the Steelers as a free agent last year but opted for the Chiefs, who released him following the 2007 season.

"It's good to come home," Drummond said, "so hopefully, I can end my career here."

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Steelers' Sweed fitted with contact lenses

By Scott Brown
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Football has become much clearer for Limas Sweed.

Literally.

Sweed started wearing contact lenses Thursday to compensate for a slight case of astigmatism, and his improved vision should only help the second-round draft pick as he pushes for a spot in the Steelers' wide receiver rotation.

After attending an appointment at the UPMC Eye Center in Pittsburgh yesterday morning, Sweed returned to St. Vincent with contact lenses and a prescription for glasses. He has an optical condition that is associated with blurred vision, and it is something Sweed didn't know he had until May.

Sweed wore his new contact lenses during the Steelers' Thursday afternoon practice.

"I'm shocked, I really am," he said of how improved his vision is. "If I can see better, I know I can catch better."

Steelers wide receiver coach Randy Fichtner made a good catch of his own regarding Sweed's vision.

At a wide receivers meeting during OTAs in May, Fichtner noticed Sweed squinting from his seat in the back of the room. Sweed chalked it up to fatigue, but Tomlin had him get his eyes checked.

When the Steelers still weren't satisfied with how Sweed was picking up the ball during practice, they sent him for another eye exam.

Sweed said the eye doctor had him look through a number of different lenses before finding the right prescription for what he has.

"The last thing he clicked, I could see perfect, clear," Sweed said. "No squinting, nothing."

"Hopefully, it's a winning edge for him," Tomlin said. "He's got to go out and catch footballs."

The 6-foot-4, 219-pounder did just that yesterday, and he practiced a day after
getting carted off the field with cramps.

The cramps he experienced late during the Steelers' Wednesday afternoon practice were so intense that Sweed had to be carried into the locker room.

Skipping the only practice the Steelers had yesterday wasn't a consideration, Sweed said, since he can't "afford to miss any days."

Sweed is battling Nate Washington for the No. 3 wide receiver spot, and he is expected to give the Steelers' passing game a dimension it has lacked since Plaxico Burress left after the 2004 season.

Sweed showed earlier this week the value of having a tall wide receiver. Sweed caught a touchdown pass in the corner of the end zone after running a fade route, drawing a rousing cheer from spectators.

However, he has dropped some passes during practice.

He apparently flubbed enough for the Steelers coaches to conclude that, as Tomlin put it, he was having trouble picking up the "blur of the ball."

"I wish we would have found out earlier because we need to get those drops down," veteran wide receiver Hines Ward said with smile. "He had two (Wednesday)."

The wide receivers have a contest to see who drops the most passes during training camp. Sweed made a modest guarantee after visiting the UPMC Eye Center.

"I won't be the guy with the most (drops)," he said, "I'll tell you that."

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Linebacker James Farrior and cornerback Bryant McFadden recovered from groin injuries and returned to Thursday's single practice after sitting out a day earlier. Safety Anthony Smith, also suffering from a groin injury, started yesterday's practice but wasn't able to finish.

"So it might be a little more than day-to-day at this point," coach Mike Tomlin said.

Defensive end Travis Kirschke (back) was given the day off.

• Other injuries include rookie linebacker Mike Humpal (hamstring), who is considered day-to-day.

Tackle Jason Capizzi (foot) of IUP will undergo surgery and is out for the season. Tomlin said Capizzi, who reached a financial settlement and is free to sign with any team, will need 6-8 weeks to recover.

• The Steelers will focus on red zone situations, the popular backs-on-backers blocking drill and blitz pickups during tonight's practice at Latrobe High School.

"We're going to go out and be physical," Tomlin said. "We're going to compete a little bit."

• Steelers quarterback Charlie Batch met with 25 students from his old school district, Steel Valley, following yesterday's practice. They are part of the I-TEAM (Ironmen Technology, Enrichment, Academics and Mentoring), a grass-roots, community organization whose goal is to enhance the educational experience for all students in the district.

"It just started a little less than a year ago," said Batch, who had several of his teammates join him in signing autographs. "We're trying to encourage them to stay positive in their grades and try to present different opportunities for them. We will continue to do stuff throughout the year."

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An inside look at Steelers training camp ...

If at first you don't succeed: Rookie quarterback Dennis Dixon has exhibited a knack for making a big play immediately following a bad play. During 7-on-7 drills Thursday, Dixon had a poorly thrown pass nearly intercepted by linebacker Larry Foote. On the next play, Dixon tossed a perfectly thrown ball to tight end Dezmond Sherrod for a big gain despite Sherrod being tightly covered.

Foote-work: Speaking of Foote, the veteran inside linebacker quickly dropped and executed push-ups as punishment for failing to intercept Dixon.

Back in the saddle: Nose tackle Casey Hampton returned to running and working out on an adjacent field yesterday after not being outside with his teammates for the previous three practices.

Playing catch-up: Rookie linebacker Bruce Davis, a third-round draft pick from UCLA, is trying to make up for missed practice time. Davis couldn't attend the Steelers' final 12 organized team activities (OTA's) because of an NFL rule that states a drafted player can't join his new team until after his college completes final exams.

"He's got to hurry up to catch up," Tomlin said of Davis, who will play on special teams right away. "He's in the process of doing that."

Mixing it up: Cornerback Deshea Townsend showed an unusual defensive look when he stationed himself at the line of scrimmage before dropping back in coverage. When the ball was snapped, Townsend took an inside route for a blitz, just missing rookie running back Rashard Mendenhall, who sped past him with the ball.

What penalty: During situational drills, quarterback Ben Roethlisberger and receiver Hines Ward told coach Tomlin the offense still had one more timeout due to a defensive penalty. Caught up in the moment, Tomlin replied, "There's no penalty. No timeouts" as play resumed.

Play of the day: Roethlisberger delivered a beautiful timing pass to Ward on third-and-nine for a big gain along the sideline.

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Drummond 'returns' to 'Burgh

Chris Harlan
Times Sports Staff

LATROBE — Eddie Drummond is happy to be home.

The free agent receiver was signed Thursday by the Steelers with intentions for Drummond to both return and cover kicks for the team he grew up watching as a boy in East Liberty. A former standout at Penn State, Drummond, 28, has played six seasons in the NFL, most with the Detroit Lions.

"It's good to be home," he said Thursday after joining the Steelers for the team's afternoon practice at St. Vincent College. "I'm going to play as long as possible and hopefully end my career here."

Drummond reached the Pro Bowl in 2004 with the Lions when he returned two punts and two kickoffs for touchdowns. He spent 2007 with Kansas City, having chosen there over Pittsburgh that off-season, but was one of several players cut loose this off-season after what was an all-around disappointing season for the Chiefs.

Drummond has returned 250 kicks for 5,811 yards (23.2 avg.) and 140 punts for 1,280 yards (9.1 avg.). During his Pro Bowl season, he returned 41 kicks for 1,092 yards (26.6 avg.).

The 5-foot-9, 190-pounder said he thinks he can return to that Pro Bowl form.

"I honestly think I'm peaking right now," Drummond said. "I feel like when I was in my Pro Bowl year. Being on a team like this is going to make a big difference."

He said several teams were interested in him, most recently the Buffalo Bills. Given a second chance, though, this time Drummond signed a one-year deal with Pittsburgh.

And he was quick to prove his roots.

"Even when I was in Detroit, when (the Steelers) were in the Super Bowl, I was at the game going crazy like I was the No. 1 Steelers fan," said Drummond, who attended high school at Linsley School, a private school in Wheeling, W.Va. "I'm always going to be a Steelers fan. It's good to come home."

His signing adds another helmet to an already crowded receiving corps, but Drummond said he'd been told he'd have a "big chance" to make the team as a return specialist. Former IUP tackle Jason Capizzi, sidelined with a stress fracture in his foot, was removed from the roster to make room for Drummond.

Barring injury, Drummond said, "I'm pretty sure I'm going to be on the team just because they know what I can already do."
Quick Hits: The eyes have it

By Chris Harlan
Times Sports Staff

LIMAS TEST

Limas Sweed learned something Thursday that should help him for the rest of his career: He needs glasses.

The Steelers second-round draft pick was sent to the eye doctor after coaches noticed Sweed having trouble finding passes from certain directions, and the rookie receiver was diagnosed with astigmatism.

"I didn’t think it was a big deal," Sweed said, "but I found out I had a little eye problem. I put the glasses on and then I could see clearly."

He arrived at St. Vincent with his new contacts and took part in the afternoon practice.

"When you see a guy struggling to pick up the blur of the ball, that's one of the first things you look at,” coach Mike Tomlin said. "We did and there was a minor issue there.”

Sweed left Wednesday’s practice with cramps but wasn’t limited Thursday.

INJURY UPDATE Free safety Anthony Smith, recovering from a groin injury, tried to return to practice Thursday but couldn’t complete the afternoon session. Tomlin had originally described Smith’s availability as day-to-day but said now it could be more serious.

Rookie linebacker Mike Humpal, a sixth-round draft pick this year, left practice with a hamstring injury. Defensive end Travis Kirschke was given the day off to rest his sore back.

Cornerback Bryant McFadden and linebacker James Farrior returned to practice Thursday.

NIGHT LIGHTS

The Steelers will have their first night practice of training camp at 7 p.m. today at Latrobe Area High School. "We're going to go out and be physical,” coach Mike Tomlin said, "give the fans something to look at.”
LATROBE — It’s 7:30 p.m. and the training camp dining hall is empty except for two NFL legends. Seated across from each other are Dick LeBeau, the Steelers’ highly respected defensive coordinator, and Kevin Greene, the former linebacker with the long blonde locks who ranks third in league history with 160 sacks.

This has been the scene each night the past week at St. Vincent College’s cafeteria: Greene, at camp this week to tutor the Steelers linebackers, talking football with LeBeau over dinner.

It’s easy to see how much respect they have for each other.

Greene, who retired after the 1999 season, recorded 35.5 sacks during his three seasons in Pittsburgh (1993-95).

In Greene’s last season with the Steelers, LeBeau had been promoted from secondary coach to defensive coordinator. Greene went on to have a Pro Bowl season as the Steelers advanced to Super Bowl XXX.

Now, 13 seasons later, the two have been reunited, if only for a week.

As they’ve talked this week, perhaps the topic of the Pro Football Hall of Fame came up.

After all, the Class of 2008 will be inducted Saturday, and LeBeau and Greene, both worthy candidates in the eyes of many, won’t be part of the festivities in Canton, Ohio.

For Greene, it’s only a matter of time.

He was one of 26 semifinalists this year. He has more sacks than any other linebacker in NFL history. In 10 of his 15 seasons, he recorded 10 or more sacks. Even in his last season, he dropped opposing QBs 12 times.

Meanwhile, LeBeau’s chances for Hall of Fame immortality aren’t that good.

A cornerback during his playing days with the Detroit Lions (1959-72), LeBeau is tied for seventh on the all-time interception list with 62. He holds the NFL record for most consecutive games played by a cornerback with 171.

The two cornerbacks in this year’s induction class — Darrell Green of the Washington Redskins and Emmett Thomas of the Kansas City Chiefs — have fewer interceptions than LeBeau.
Green had 54 over a 20-year span. Thomas had 58. No one doubts that Green and Thomas deserve their induction.

But as far as LeBeau, the Hall of Fame electors never made a push to get him in. For him to have any chance now, he must get in via selection from a special list of senior nominations.

"I've always been a Dick LeBeau advocate," said Peter King, the Sports Illustrated pro football writer who's on the 44-member Board of Selectors. "I've always supported him. But to tell you the truth, he's a long shot at best right now."

LeBeau, who celebrates his 71st birthday Sept. 9, doesn't lose any sleep about his Hall of Fame chances.

He's now in his 50th NFL camp as a player or coach.

All he's worried about right now is preparing his defense for what promises to be a challenging season based on the Steelers' demanding schedule.

"I was fortunate to play with some outstanding defenses when I played in Detroit, and every year I just tried to go out and do my job as best I could and not let my teammates down," he said.

"You know, (playing) 14 years in this league is a long time, and just being able to do that was reward enough for me."

**PICK-OFF ARTISTS**

The NFL's all-time interception leaders:

**Player Seasons INTs**

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<td>Dick LeBeau</td>
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Pat Fischer 1961-77 56
Aeneas Williams 1991-04 55
Darrell Green 1983-02 54
Willie Brown 1963-78 54
Eric Allen 1988-01 54
It's time to worry about line

The announcer on the stadium's public address system, a feature added just for Wednesday's practice, called the exercise a "passing under pressure drill."

The Steelers' quarterbacks better get used to.

In 17 games last season, including the playoff loss to Jacksonville, Pittsburgh quarterbacks were sacked 53 times.

Not all of those sacks can be blamed on the offensive line. Judging from the first week of training camp, it doesn't look like things are going to get better in 2008.

A casual observer would say either the Steelers defense is really good, or the offensive line just stinks.

Don't get me wrong, Pittsburgh's defense is good. It ranked first in the NFL in yards allowed in 2007.

But let's not confuse the facts. The offensive line is getting manhandled on most plays at Saint Vincent College.

When the first-team offense has gone up against the first-team defense on running plays, most of them end with a pile of bodies in the backfield or, at best, at the line of scrimmage. When the quarterbacks have dropped back to pass, they have been sitting ducks. Fortunately, hitting the quarterback is not allowed in practice.

It hasn't been a pretty sight.

To be fair, Chris Kemoeatu, who is expected to replace Alan Faneca at left guard, and Marvel Smith, the starting left tackle, have each missed time because of injuries. Kemoeatu has a triceps strain and has yet to practice, and Smith sat out Wednesday with a sore groin.

It's not just that the line is looking outclassed in those team blocking drills. The individual work has not been very good.

Second-year man LaMarr Woodley, who will start at left outside linebacker in place of Clark Haggans, has looked unblockable, regardless of who is lined up against him in one-on-one drills. James Harrison, the Pro Bowl right outside backer, has looked just as good.

The Steelers don't seemed concerned. Maybe it's because Kemoeatu hasn't practiced. But it's not realistic to believe he'll be as good as Faneca.

Even with Faneca, last year's line was a mess.

The battle at center between incumbent starter Sean Mahan and newcomer Justin Hartwig hasn't exactly been all that heated.

Mahan, who played below expectations last season, has taken the majority of the snaps with the first-team offense. Hartwig has seen less time than expected. Neither appears to be a long-term answer at the position.
Maybe it's too early in training camp to worry about such things. Maybe the Steelers have some grand scheme to improve Roethlisberger's protection.

Maybe that will include Roethlisberger calling his own plays and running the no-huddle to keep opposing defenses from zeroing in on him.

"In high school and college, when things are going faster and I'm calling stuff, it always seems to work out better for me," Roethlisberger said.

Also, if you don't allow the defense to huddle, those players will probably get tired of chasing him at some point.

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Steelers want many happy returns for Drummond

By F. Dale Lolley, Staff writer

dlolley@observer-reporter.com

LATROBE - The comings and goings continued for the Steelers Thursday as the team signed former Pro Bowl wide receiver-kick returner Eddie Drummond and waived offensive tackle Jason Capizzi.

It was the second roster move made by the Steelers in the past three days. Wide receiver Kevin Marion was released Tuesday to make room for punter Paul Ernster.

"We needed another guy in that capacity to add to the competition when we lost Kevin Marion a couple of days back," said head coach Mike Tomlin. "He's a return man who has some special teams background in other areas, be it a gunner or covering kicks. He's done that over his career and we'll give him a shot at doing that."

The 5-9, 190-pound Drummond is a former Penn State star, a native of Pittsburgh and graduate of Linsly High School in Wheeling, W.Va. He spent the first five seasons of his career with the Detroit Lions, making the Pro Bowl as a return man in 2004, before playing for Kansas City in 2007.

In his career, Drummond has returned 250 kickoffs for an average of 23.2 yards per attempt with two touchdowns. He's also returned 140 punts for a 9.1-yard average and four touchdowns. Drummond also covered kicks and punts.

"I've been doing that since I've been in the league. Detroit had me wedge-busting my last year there," Drummond said. "I get down there first and mess everything up, but I'm getting hammered."

Capizzi, who like Drummond is a Western Pennsylvania native, reinjured his left foot, which had troubled him in the spring. He'll have surgery to repair a stress fracture.

The team reached an injury settlement with him.

The former Indiana University of Pennsylvania star spent 2007 in the Steelers training camp and was on the practice squads of the Jets, Buccaneers and Chiefs.

Many returns

The Steelers did not practice Thursday morning and that gave many of the injured players time to recover.

Running back Mewelde Moore, left tackle Marvel Smith, linebacker James Farrior, cornerback Bryant McFadden, wide receiver Limas Sweed, tight end Cody Boyd and guard Jeremy Parquet returned for the afternoon practice.

"More so than giving them the morning off, we provided them with some therapeutic options," said Tomlin. "We provided a myriad of things for those guys (and) they took advantage of it. It was
productive for us. We got some day-to-day guys back out."

Safety Anthony Smith, who has been out since Monday with a groin injury, attempted to practice, but was unable to finish and linebacker Mike Humpal, a sixth-round draft pick, suffered a hamstring strain and also did not finish. Veteran defensive end Travis Kirschke was given the day off to rest his ailing back.

Friday night lights

The Steelers will practice twice Friday, with the second being held at Latrobe Memorial Stadium at 7 p.m. Players will be available for autographs 6:45-7 p.m.

"Hopefully, we're going to give fans something to look at," said Tomlin. "We're going to compete a little bit. ... We've got backs on linebackers blitz pickup. That will be the highlight."

Odds and end zones

Drummond will wear No. 18, and Ernster is wearing No. 5. ... Strong safety Troy Polamalu, who along with guard Chris Kemoeatu and nose tackle Casey Hampton are on the Physically Unable to Perform list, appears to be the closest of those three to returning. Polamalu has a hamstring injury, Kemoeatu has weakness in his triceps, and Hampton is working on his conditioning.

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A day after second-round draft pick Limas Sweed was carted off the practice field, the Pittsburgh Steelers found out their newest wide receiver does have a physical defect – but not an injury. An eye test resulted in Sweed returning to camp Thursday with contact lenses. As for being carted off the field a day earlier, Sweed had cramps.

“I just went in and had them checked out, and they told me, ‘You know, you have a little astigmatism,’ ” said Sweed, who said he has always been prone to cramps and dehydration and neglected to take his salt tablet Wednesday. “I’m happy because I never knew. Now I can be 20/20 and be back in action.”

Coaches saw Sweed squinting during video sessions and noticed he would catch the ball on only certain sides. “The wide receiver in me (notices) that when you see guys struggle to pick up the blur of the ball, that’s often one of the first things that you look at,” Steelers coach Mike Tomlin said. “It was a minor issue, it’s been corrected, and hopefully it’s a winning edge for him.”

Sweed was given new contacts and a pair of glasses, and he pledged to wear them on and off the field. He joked that he should be even better than he was at Texas, where he ranked second all-time in receiving touchdowns and fifth in yardage.

As he adjusts to the pro game, Sweed said that the NFL playbook is much thicker than in college, forcing him to learn more formations than at Texas. “I think I’m slowly finding my place as I learn more of the offense and am getting more comfortable,” Sweed said.

Pittsburgh has a crowded receiving corps. Starters Hines Ward and Santonio Holmes and reigning No. 3 wideout Nate Washington are ahead of Sweed on the depth chart and seven others after the Steelers signed Eddie Drummond on Thursday.

Also on the roster at the position are former third-round pick Willie Reid, last year’s seventh round selection Dallas Baker from Florida, Jeremy Bloom, Marvin Allen, Gerran Walker and Micah Rucker. “(Sweed) still has to put a lot of hard work into it,” Ward said. “But he’s a great student. He wants to learn, he wants to get better.”

The approval of Ward means a lot to Sweed, who has established an early rapport with Ward and the rest of the receiving corps, already joking that he has the least drops of the group through the first four days of camp. The rookie impressed Ward, who is entering his 11th season, by initiating contact while running over a safety after a catch in practice Wednesday. “I’m trying to pick up some of (Ward’s) trademarks,” Sweed said. “That nastiness, that toughness to go in there and knock those safeties back.”

Also returning to practice Thursday after missing workouts Wednesday were offensive linemen Marvel Smith (groin), Jeremy Parquet (cramps), running back Mewelde Moore (illness), cornerback Bryant McFadden (groin) and linebacker James Farrior (groin).

Veteran defensive lineman Travis Kirschke was given a precautionary day off due to a sore back, and safety Anthony Smith was forced to leave practice early due to his troublesome groin. Safety Troy Polamalu (hamstring), guard Chris Kemoeatu (triceps) and nose tackle Casey Hampton (overweight) have yet to practice. Injured punter Daniel Sepulveda (knee) also did not practice.
Photos

The Tribune-Democrat
Steelers ink return man, release ex-IUP star

Associated Press

LATROBE July 31, 2008 11:46 pm

— The Pittsburgh Steelers signed former Pro Bowl kick returner Eddie Drummond on Thursday to help bolster what has been a weak special teams unit.

Drummond, who grew up in Pittsburgh and attended Penn State, was a Pro Bowl selection as a member of the Detroit Lions after the 2004 season, when he returned two punts and two kickoffs for touchdowns.

“He’s a return man that has some track record and he has a background in other areas, be it as a gunner or covering kicks,” Steelers coach Mike Tomlin said. “He’s shown he’s capable of doing that and he’s had a nice career doing that.”

Offensive tackle Jason Capizzi, who had a foot injury that might require surgery, reached an injury settlement with the team and was released to make room on the roster. Capizzi grew up in suburban Pittsburgh and attended Pitt for a year before transferring to IUP.

Drummond played for the Kansas City Chiefs last season after spending the first five seasons of his career with Detroit. He returned a punt for a touchdown during each of his first two seasons in the NFL, but has not scored in the past three seasons.

Drummond, who has played on kick and punt coverage teams as well, said he also received interest from the Tampa Bay Buccaneers and Buffalo Bills.

“I honestly think I’m peaking right now as far as my career goes, and I feel better than I do when I had my Pro Bowl year,” Drummond said. “This is a good situation for me to be a part of.”

The Steelers released veteran return man Allen Rossum in the offseason and were projecting a multiplayer battle for the punt and kickoff return jobs.

Drummond has caught only four career passes for seven yards in 64 games and is one of 11 wide receivers on the Steelers’ camp roster.

Starter Santonio Holmes, third-year receiver Willie Reid, specialist Jeremy Bloom and rookie running back Rashard Mendenhall are among those expected to compete with Drummond for punt and kick returning duties.

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Capizzi waived after working out injury settlement

By Jim Wexell
LATROBE - Massive tackle Jason Capizzi, of Pine-Richland High and IUP, was waived after coming to terms on an injury settlement with the Steelers.

Taking his place on the roster is kick return specialist Eddie Drummond, a Pittsburgh native who played collegiately at Penn State. He was signed to a one-year deal.

Drummond (5-9, 190) has played six NFL seasons, five with the Detroit Lions and last season with the Kansas City Chiefs. In his career, he's returned 250 kickoffs for a 23.2 average with two touchdowns, and 140 punts for a 9.1 average with four touchdowns.

Drummond made the Pro Bowl following the 2004 season, but his numbers have since declined. Last year with the Chiefs, Drummond averaged 21.2 per kickoff return and 6.9 per punt return, despite playing with an injured hand the final three-fourths of the season.

"He's an East Liberty man," Steelers Coach Mike Tomlin said of Drummond's Pittsburgh roots. "He's a return man who has some special teams background in other areas - being a gunner, covering kickoffs. He's shown he's capable of doing that over the course of his career."

Capizzi, who showed the coaching staff some promise after recovering from a stress fracture in his foot last spring, re-injured the foot and will undergo surgery.

BUMPS AND BRUISES: Limas Sweed, Bryant McFadden and James Farrior returned to practice, but Anthony Smith remained on the sidelines with a groin injury. Tomlin said Smith "might be more than day-to-day at this point."

Impressive rookie linebacker Mike Humpal left practice with a slight hamstring pull but could return Friday. Defensive end Travis Kirschke was given the day off.

While Sweed returned, he was told by an eye doctor that he needs glasses.

"The old wide receiver in me," Tomlin said. "When you see guys struggling to pick up the blur of the ball, that's one of the first things you look at. We did. There was a minor issue there, and hopefully it's a winning edge for him. By no means are we going to lean on it. He's got to go out and catch footballs."

THIRD-ROUNDER BEHIND: Bruce Davis missed spring drills because of the NFL's rules about graduating classes, so Tomlin has been on him like a bear the last two days.

"He's got to hurry up to catch up," Tomlin said. "He's in the process of doing that, which might require an extra rep or two. He's in great shape, and he's going to need it because he has some ground to make up."

Davis has an array of pass-rushing moves and shows enough speed to be considered a solid outside linebacking prospect.

FRIDAY NIGHT LIGHTS: The Steelers will practice tonight at Latrobe Memorial Stadium at 6:30 p.m. Tomlin said the team won't run the drill that's become a favorite of fans: the goal-line drill.

"We're going to go out and be physical, and hopefully give fans something to look at. We're going to compete," Tomlin said. "We've got backs-on-backers and blitz-pickup. That'll be the highlight drill of tomorrow's practice. We're going to focus on red zone, make people stand up and defend that precious grass, and try to get points down there. We talk about situational football, and the point swing is going to make us great. Defensively, we can't let people put 7 on the board. Offensively, if we're going to be great we have to get 7."

©The Herald Standard 2008
The 20-page, full-color brochure resembles a stylish sales pitch for a vacation-land time share, which at least entitles purchasers to take off their shoes and go to sleep a few nights each year.

What the Giants are mailing to season-ticket holders is an opportunity to merely sit, and sit outside, and occasionally in the bitter cold deep into the night, via a come-on with a cover embossed with a glove hand holding up the Super Bowl trophy through a horizontal blue strip with white block letters.

“Own It,” it says, but here’s what that means: “Own It, or Out.”

Not the trophy, not the team, not so much an uncombed hair on Eli Manning’s head. Just what Giants fans believed they had already sacrificed more than enough for — a seat inside a football stadium, albeit a posh new one that none of them asked for or, considering the consequences, will probably prefer.

Show football fans the architectural eighth wonder and they’ll say, very nice, we will be out here in the parking lot until kickoff, in our metal folding chairs, grilling hot dogs and burgers on grandpa’s old hibachi.

“Twenty-five years people are waiting for a seat in Giants Stadium, dying to get in,” said Lou Palma, who lives in the same town as I do, Montclair, N.J., although we had previously known each other only by reader e-mail.

He is 75, a former union lithographer, a gourmet cook by avocation, a passionate sports fan who is furious at the fan-gouging sports world in general and the Giants in particular, with good reason. He is one of the diehards who got into Yankee Stadium 40 years ago, followed his team to the Yale Bowl and Shea Stadium and stayed in, for the last 32 in Giants Stadium, without complaint.

“There is nothing wrong with the place we’ve been playing in,” Palma said. “Why the heck did we have to move in the first place?”

To keep up with the Eagles, the Redskins and the Jerry Joneses, the Giants would say, even if it means discarding devoted fans, as in the case of Palma, who has resigned himself to the Giants, while still “we,” moving next door in two years to a $1.6 billion luxury palace without him.

Over breakfast this week, he laid the brochure for the purchase of Giants personal seat licenses on the table and said: “I’m not going to sit here and tell you that football hasn’t been important to me and my family, but I
don’t want to do this and not just because I basically can’t afford to. Ethically, it stinks.”

In some ways, Palma feels as if he raised his adult sons, Mark and Jeff, in Section 112 of the lower stands, bonded with them, cheered with them, jeered with them, from the four choice-location seats that became such prized family heirlooms he had them inserted into his will as part of their inheritance.

Granted, he got the tickets 40 years ago because he had, during his days in the printing business, struck up a close, enduring friendship with the Giants’ long-ago defensive back and current broadcaster, Dick Lynch, who in turn introduced Palma to the late Tim Mara one night at P. J. Clarke’s in Manhattan. But Palma never left during the lean years, and might even have talked himself and his sons into cobbling together $700 per ticket per game in the new stadium for the equivalent seats that he said this season will cost $100 per.

But $80,000 in four installments for the right to pay a staggering ticket markup in the midst of an economic downturn? He could go to Europe and live lavishly, or finance his grandchildren’s college educations. After all these years, all the money spent, he was put on the clock, given a month to respond, to peel the sticker containing his personal information, attach it to the application on the interior back cover and surrender to a $371 million fan-fleecing scheme.

When I asked Palma about the option to buy lesser seats for a cheaper seat-licensing fee, he shrugged. “That’ll be the boys’ decision,” he said. “I’m out.”

In a telephone interview, Mark Palma said he had not yet discussed that with his brother. “I do want to look at it long-term, and not make it an emotional decision,” he said. “But I always assumed we’d have these great seats, and to go sit in the upper deck, well, you start to think, ‘I do have a flat-screen TV at home.’

“And I don’t think that I’m owed anything, but I do feel for my father. He always believed the Giants and the Maras were about football and the fans. He paved the way for us and he’s wanted us to share it with our families. And now, he gets this.”

He gets a brochure in the mail and turns to Page 6, to a glittering new stadium set against the nighttime Manhattan skyline, with the accompanying caption, “There is no sports franchise in the world with a greater history than the New York Giants, and no sports franchise has more loyal fans.”

And Lou Palma says, “Where is their loyalty to me?”

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Delay by Goodell Buys Time for Packers

By JUDY BATTISTA

The staredown between Brett Favre and the Green Bay Packers continued Thursday, with Commissioner Roger Goodell delaying Favre’s reinstatement in hopes that the sides can come to an agreement about Favre’s future.

The delay by Goodell until at least Friday afternoon meant Favre would not be at the Packers’ practice Friday, a situation the team wanted badly to avoid.

Once Favre is reinstated, the Packers will have 24 hours to decide whether to add him to their active roster, release him or trade him.

“The Packers and Brett Favre are continuing their discussions,” a statement from the N.F.L. said. “The commissioner preferred to let those discussions continue rather than act on the reinstatement petition today.”

The Packers, who did not practice and were not available to the news media Thursday, appear adamant that they do not want Favre on the team — or apparently anywhere near the team.

As recently as early this week, Packers General Manager Ted Thompson said Favre would not be traded within the National Football Conference North. But with Goodell encouraging the sides to find a solution, the Packers were under pressure to bring an end to a sideshow that has captivated the N.F.L. but was a distraction to their team during the first week of training camp.

So if the team cannot somehow convince him to stay retired — perhaps with a large monetary incentive — the Packers may be forced to consider a trade to one of their division rivals — the Chicago Bears or the Minnesota Vikings — as a last resort.

It is believed that the Vikings have been Favre’s preferred landing spot all along. But a trade to Minnesota would produce a sight that would probably be unbearable for Packers fans: Favre running onto Lambeau Field in the season opener, wearing Vikings purple. Before Favre changed his mind about retiring a month ago, the Packers had planned to retire his jersey that night.

For a while Thursday, it appeared that Favre would come face to face with the Packers, their fans and a news media frenzy in Green Bay. A private plane was chartered to take him from Hattiesburg, Miss., to Green Bay, presumably so he could take a physical and be on the field for Friday’s practices if he had been reinstated.

Favre’s arrival would set off an odd scene at practice: Aaron Rodgers with the starting offense and Favre perhaps participating only in individual drills. Still, Favre’s agent, James Cook, told The Associated Press that
Favre was “prepared to deal with” the circus he would ignite by returning to Green Bay.

“He’s ready to go back,” Cook said, “but he can’t go back until the commissioner reinstates him.”
Defense re-established in 2008 football Hall class

By Jarrett Bell, USA TODAY

Make way for defense.

That's as much of a theme as any for this year's Pro Football Hall of Fame class. Four of the six ticketed for induction at Canton, Ohio, on Saturday are being immortalized because of their defensive brilliance.

How rare is that?

MEET THE CLASS: Capsule look at each inductee
PHOTOS: Class of 2008

Consider that Fred Dean, Darrell Green, Emmitt Thomas and Andre Tippett — who will be joined in the ceremonies by wide receiver Art Monk and offensive tackle Gary Zimmerman — form the largest contingent of defensive players ever enshrined in a Canton class.

Some would suggest that such a defensive-oriented grouping is long overdue. But the notion that defensive players are overlooked for more glamorous stars on offense does not apply this year. This class has the most impressive defensive presence since Buck Buchanan, Jack Lambert and Ted Hendricks went into the Hall together in 1990.

"It's been a life-changing experience for me," Dean, the former pass-rushing phenomenon for the San Diego Chargers and San Francisco 49ers, says of his selection.

That the group includes Tippett, perhaps the best outside linebacker other than Lawrence Taylor during the 1980s, and two elite cornerbacks — a big one in Thomas and a small speed merchant in Green — slightly adjusts the huge gap between offensive and defensive players.

Of the 170 modern-era players enshrined, the total for defensive players increases to 62. With this year's group, the total number of Hall of Famers swells to 247.

Thomas, also an NFL assistant coach since 1981, was Green's position coach for eight years and helped mold his fellow legend.

But categories that define Hall of Famers become secondary once they're elected. This much was evident to Tippett as he received the gold Hall of Fame blazer recently that his wife likened to the green jackets awarded winners of The Masters golf classic.

"It doesn't cost a lot of money to get it," Tippett says of his blazer, "but this thing is really priceless."
Favre: Packers' $20M offer to stay retired may be best

Brett Favre, convinced that Green Bay will never permit him to compete to be its starting quarterback and recognizing its unwillingness to ship him to an NFC North rival, is actively considering an offer from the Packers that would provide the quarterback a paid lifetime role with the franchise that would not involve playing.

"There isn't a perfect solution to this, but [Packers president] Mark Murphy is at least trying," Favre told ESPN's Ed Werder via text message on Thursday night. "We know what they want and where I stand. His solution, although awkward and unsettling for most, may be the best in the end."

Favre could be forced to report to camp unless the Packers reach agreement with him on a non-playing role before commissioner Roger Goodell reinstates him. He has at least until Friday to resolve this standoff after Goodell opted earlier on Thursday to delay granting the quarterback his reinstatement one day.

"Once he's reinstated, Brett's going in, and once that happens Packerland becomes Disneyland -- although that's not what Brett wants for his teammates," Favre's agent, James "Bus" Cook, told ESPN. "He wants them to be successful and do well. But that's what happens if this thing doesn't get resolved, and he decides to report." While Favre had a lengthy discussion with Goodell on Thursday, a source close to the quarterback told ESPN there was no dialogue with the Packers. The New York Jets and Tampa Bay Buccaneers are the only teams that have made direct inquiries about trading for Favre.

Favre had reserved a charter plane to fly him to Green Bay Thursday so he could report if he had been reinstated by Goodell. When that did not occur, Favre postponed the trip to remain in Hattiesburg, Miss., while awaiting Goodell's approval.

"He's ready to go report, but you have to understand he's been told the job is not open to competition," Cook said. "He's been told, 'If you come up here, it's not going to be like it was. You are going to be holding clipboard. You're going to be the backup.' Given those things, would he rather decide to just stay at home and be affiliated with a team he loves with his whole heart and soul rather than go play someplace they tell him to go?"

Favre's first choice is to play for the Packers, a team for which he has started an NFL record 275 consecutive games. Once the Packers refused to accomodate him, Favre informed the team he wanted to play for another team in the division -- believed to be the Minnesota Vikings -- because he is familiar with Brad Childress' coaching staff and would be able to play against opponents he is comfortable competing against.

"My intentions have been to play, and with Green Bay," Favre told Werder. "They say no, so I still want to play in this division for obvious reasons, which I made clear to management. If they won't let me play in Green Bay, let me play against you. That's where I am."

The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel reported Thursday that Packers officials have had internal discussions
about trading Favre to the Minnesota Vikings or Chicago Bears as a "last resort" to resolve the smoldering controversy.

But Packers general manager Ted Thompson said earlier this week that he would not consider trading Favre to one of Green Bay's NFC North division rivals. Then on Wednesday night, multiple reports surfaced that the team had offered to pay Favre up to $20 million to stay retired.

Cook described Favre as mystified by the team's stance.

"It's painfully clear the Packers do not want Brett back, but they will take him back once they have no choice," Cook said. "If the commissioner reinstates him, they have to take him back but they've said, 'Brett your job is to sit on this bench.' And that's where we are unless we make other arrangements that Brett would be involved with the Packers from now on but not as a player."

ESPN NFL reporter Ed Werder and The Associated Press contributed to this report.
NEW YORK -- Wide receiver Chris Henry was suspended by the NFL on Thursday for four games but may play the final 12 games of the regular season for any team that signs him.

Henry was released by Cincinnati in April after his fifth arrest. Commissioner Roger Goodell had suspended Henry indefinitely following his latest arrest. The charges against him on that arrest were subsequently dropped.

The 25-year-old player, one of a number of Bengals in trouble with the law the past few seasons, then applied for reinstatement.

Henry may participate in training camp and exhibition games if he is signed. He will be eligible for reinstatement following the fourth game of the season.

Henry was suspended for the first eight games of the 2007 season under the league's personal conduct policy. He returned to catch 21 passes for 343 yards and two touchdowns in eight games.

But the Bengals released him after he was accused of punching a University of Cincinnati student and breaking his car window with a beer bottle.

A jury failed to reach a verdict on an assault charge, resulting in a mistrial. Prosecutors dropped the case following unfavorable rulings by a judge before the retrial was to start.
ALBANY, N.Y. -- New York Giants coach Tom Coughlin was unaware Thursday of a report in a Virginia newspaper that running back Ahmad Bradshaw would have to serve another 30 days in jail after the NFL season because of an old probation violation.

The second-year running back was released from the Abingdon (Va.) Regional Jail on July 13 after serving most of a 30-day sentence.

Quoting jail sources, The Bristol Herald Courier reported Thursday that the incarceration was the first of a two-part jail sentence sandwiched around the upcoming NFL season.

Bradshaw has refused to talk with the media since reporting to training camp at the University at Albany. Charles A. Stacy, his attorney, did not return a telephone call left by The Associated Press on Thursday seeking comment.

Stacy has said the underlying charge for which Bradshaw was placed on probation stems from an offense that occurred while Bradshaw was a juvenile.

A league spokesman said: "We are now confirming that based on our investigation he will not be suspended for conduct that occurred prior to his NFL career."

Coughlin said Bradshaw has worked hard since reporting to camp.

"He's been one of the most excited people to be here," Coughlin said after practice Thursday. "He's a happy guy, and no matter what you ask him to do, whether it is the scout team or special teams, whatever it might be, he's responded in a positive way to everything."

A seventh-round draft pick last season, Bradshaw played in 12 games and rushed for 190 yards on 23 carries, including an 88-yard touchdown run against the Bills in a playoff-clinching win in Buffalo. The 22-year-old was New York's leading rusher in the playoffs with 208 yards and a touchdown.
Thursday, July 31, 2008

**Jackson a no-show through 7 days of training camp**

Associated Press

MEQUON, Wis. -- Holdout running back [Steven Jackson](http://www.espn.go.com/nfl/player/profile/_/id/3513805/steven-jackson) missed his seventh day and 10th practice of [St. Louis Rams](http://www.espn.go.com/nfl/team/profile/_/id/299/st-louis-rams) training camp Thursday, with no apparent movement in the impasse.

Jackson, entering the final season of a four-year contract he signed after the Rams drafted him in the first round in 2004, is seeking a multiyear deal. The Rams are fining Jackson, who has three consecutive 1,000-yard seasons, $15,000 a day and have told his agent, Eugene Parker, there will be no more negotiations until Jackson reports to camp.

Parker has not responded to a telephone message from the AP.

Rams coach Scott Linehan was late to the field for practice, prompting curiosity, but said that was because he was meeting with some players. He and Jackson have been text-messaging back and forth, and Linehan said he spoke to the running back on the telephone "the other night."

"I called him, talked to him briefly to see how he was doing," Linehan said. "It has nothing to do with anything other than letting him know that everything's going to be OK."