

# All for the best

## *In the end, Cards get their Wadsworth*

By Steve Schoenfeld  
The Arizona Republic

Irving, Texas

Only Andre Wadsworth could sign a \$42 million contract and then apologize.

Wadsworth, the Cardinals' rookie defensive end, apologized for being a distraction before the season-opening loss to Dallas at Texas Stadium. Then, he apologized again for costing rookie free-agent defensive lineman Mike Moten of Florida a job.

Moten was led off the team plane on the tarmac at Sky Harbor Airport, minutes after Wadsworth ended his 44-day holdout



Andre Wadsworth

on Sept. 5. The Cardinals needed to cut a player to leave a spot for Wadsworth on the roster.

"I really did feel bad because I know him personally," Wadsworth said. "He worked hard in two-a-days. He came from nowhere. I'm just glad it all worked out."

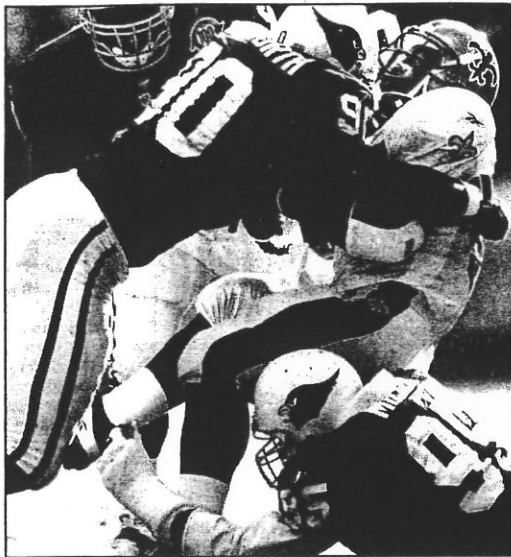
The Cardinals re-signed Moten to the practice squad on Oct. 27, and he was promoted to the active roster Dec. 10.

Both Wadsworth and Moten are expected to play against the Cowboys today at Texas Stadium in an NFC wild-card playoff game.

"I was happy Andre got his contract, and I knew I would get another chance," Moten said. "I just didn't know when. But, even now, when I tell people what happened on the plane, they don't believe me. I wasn't mad. I'm just glad the way everything went down."

Nearly four months later, Wadsworth acknowledges that playing against the Cowboys one day after he signed was bizarre. He hadn't even practiced with the team, except for a three-day minicamp last May.

"I hadn't put on full pads since the (bowl) game," said Wadsworth, the third pick overall in the 1998 draft out of Flori-



Dave Cruz/The Arizona Republic

A \$42 million crush. Cardinals defensive end Andre Wadsworth (90) may have apologized for his contract holdout and for temporarily costing defensive lineman Mike Moten a job, but he has no qualms about making hits like this one against Saints running back Wilmont Perry on Dec. 20.

da State. "I don't think I'd ever been that unprepared."

Despite the health risks, Bob Ferguson, Cardinals vice president-player personnel, agreed with the coaches' decision to play Wadsworth immediately.

"He was excited to get on the field," Ferguson said of Wadsworth. "Like Vince (Cardinals Coach Vince Tobin), I say, 'Put him out there and let him play.'"

Wadsworth assisted on one tackle in the game. He also put heat on Cowboys quarterback Troy Aikman on one play and drew a holding penalty on offensive tackle Erik Williams.

"I think I did all right for a pop quiz," Wadsworth said.

Cardinals defensive coordinator Dave McGinnis thinks Wadsworth, who finished the regular-season with 5½ sacks, will become a dominant player next year after going through a training camp.

Earlier this week, the two reminisced about their last trip to Dallas.

"I said, 'Andre, we're going back to where it all started,'" McGinnis said. "I told him it seems like it was 100 years ago."

"I've been through a lot in this league. I've been through two strike teams — the 'Spare' Bears and the real Bears, but I never had been through anything like that, one guy signing and playing the next day and another guy having to be taken off the plane. That was hard."

"We didn't know what Andre could do that day. We didn't know what Andre could do in the NFL. We knew what he could do at Florida State."

"But we found out what kind of person Andre was. He felt awful about what happened to Mike. Then, when we brought Mike back, Andre was the guy who went to get him."

## Graham can't meet ticket demand

The Arizona Republic

Cardinals center **Aaron Graham** grew up in Denton, Texas, and said playing in the NFL playoffs in Texas Stadium was his boyhood dream. He also said he could use "probably 500 tickets" for family and friends.

"When I was a rookie, I bought 50 tickets when we played there," Graham said.

The Cowboys made only 500 tickets available to the Cardinals.

### Loaner ball?

After Cowboys running back **Emmitt Smith** broke the NFL record for rushing touchdowns with two against the Redskins in the regular-season finale, giving him 125, the Pro Football Hall of Fame came calling — and Smith put them on hold. His father advised him to keep all the balls he scored touchdowns with, and he has 121 of them in his possession. He has given four of them away, three to teammates and one to a Vietnam veteran he met in Alaska.

### CARDINALS NOTES

"He gave me a Congressional Medal of Honor," Smith said. "He had one simple request — the first touchdown I scored that year (1995), he wanted me to dedicate to him. I told him I'd do better than that. The first one I scored, I'd send him the football."

On the request from Canton, Smith said: "I might loan it to them, as long as I get it back."

### After-Christmas sale

Phoenix artist **Bill Tomsa** has been sitting across from the Cardinals practice facility this week, trying to sell two acrylic paintings. One, titled "Center of Attention," depicts **Larry Centers** walking past fans. The other, called "Birds of a Feather," shows Cardinals paraphernalia. Asking price: \$1,750 each.

"This is an excellent time to be out

here," said Tomsa, who did the paintings for a show during Super Bowl XXX. He said he has one potential buyer for the Centers picture.

He also has a third Cardinals-related painting that's not for sale, but it may turn out to be a prediction. In the rendition, a newspaper gives a final score: Cardinals 35, Cowboys 0.

### Extra points

**Keith Brown**, who has been the team chaplain for the Cardinals and Suns for 11 years, will be in Dallas to hold a prayer service — and he's paying his own way.

It will be the first road trip this season for Brown, who is also the football coach at Phoenix Christian High School, will conduct the service at the team hotel.

• **Eric Metcalf** is third all-time in the playoffs with 22 kick returns for 499 yards. The leader in number of returns is former Cardinal **Kevin Williams**, now a member of the Bills.