

Cards demote offensive coordinator

Quarterbacks coach Kruczek takes over for Rowen

By DARREN URBAN
TRIBUNE

The quarterback has been changed. The offensive line has been shuffled. The game plan has been simplified.

And still, Cardinals coach Dennis Green isn't happy with his offense.

So the latest fall guy for the

reeling Cards, this time after a crushing 24-23 loss to Chicago on Monday night, was offensive coordinator Keith Rowen, who was essentially fired Tuesday.

Quarterbacks coach Mike Kruczek was promoted to coordinator, and he will handle play-calling duties, Green said. Green added that he was "discussing" another role for Rowen.

"Nothing surprises me anymore," Cards fullback Obafemi Ayanbadejo said.



Keith Rowen

these are the things that do happen.

"I know people are feeling pressure, I know people are not happy. This is a business, and this comes with the territory."

Neither Kruczek nor Rowen were available for comment Tuesday.

Kruczek becomes the Cardinals' third offensive coordinator in 2½ seasons under Green. Green has also had three offensive line coaches in the same span. Kruczek has never been a coordinator in the NFL, but the one-time Steelers quarterback was offensive coordinator or head coach at the University of Central Florida from 1985 through

2008. He has also developed a close relationship with rookie quarterback Matt Leinart. Green said Kruczek will call his plays from the sideline. Rowen did his play-calling from the coaches booth above the field. Green also said he will not be any more involved in the offense than he has been, which is to help the coordinators "any way I

SEE CARDS • PAGE C4

2&Z

TRIBUNE

OCT 1 8 2006

CARDS: Kruczek 3rd in job in last 2½ seasons

FROM PAGE C1

possibly can." "We are not scoring enough points," Green said. "That does not just fall on me, that does not just fall on the offensive coordinator. We need more leadership in our offense."

"If you asked who are leaders were defensively, I could give you six names, just like that. ... I could not do that offensively, and that has hurt us."

Kruczek is "old school" and a "taskmaster," Green said, something Rowen apparently wasn't.

The Cards have averaged 18.5 points a game, 17th in the 32-team NFL. They are 23rd in the NFL in total offense. Arizona hasn't scored an offensive touchdown after the first quarter the past three games.

"Obviously Coach Green was upset with the way the game went," guard Reggie Wells said. "If (demoting Rowen) is the move that needed to be made, we have to take it in stride. Changes have been made with players; changes can be made with coaches."

Rowen couldn't have felt comfortable in his job after last week. James complained about the play-calling after the loss to Kansas City, and Green agreed with James the next day. Then Wednesday, Leinart also subtly got in a shot, emphasizing how much more James should be running the ball.

But the run game isn't producing. James has just 398 yards in six games, on 148 carries — a mere 2.7 yards per attempt. The Cards fed James all night Monday and gave him 36 carries, but he finished with just 55 yards.

The irony is that Green went out of his way Tuesday to point out Rowen had nothing to do with the plays that killed the Cards against the Bears: the two fumbles Chicago returned for touchdowns, the two missed field goals.

Green also emphasized Rowen "doesn't block."

Even Leinart said after the game, "We had a great game plan going in, and I think we executed well early." But Leinart also said he wished he would have thrown the ball more, despite 42 pass attempts.



RALPH FRESO, TRIBUNE

STRUGGLING RUNNER: Edgerrin James tries to break a tackle by Chicago's Charles Tillman on Monday during the Bears' 24-23 victory on "Monday Night Football." James carried 36 times for only 55 yards, a stat that led to the firing of offensive coordinator Keith Rowen.

ESPN scores big with Bears' wild comeback

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK • The Chicago Bears' big comeback against the Cardinals on Monday night had viewers glued to television sets.

ESPN's telecast of the Bears' shocking 24-23 victory was watched in 10.8 million homes (11.7 rating), the third-highest total in cable television history. It trailed only a 1993 debate between Al Gore and Ross Perot and the return of football to New Orleans on Sept. 25 when the Saints topped Atlanta, also on

"Monday Night Football."

When factoring in the Chicago and Arizona television markets, where ESPN's broadcast was shown on over-the-air channels, the game was watched in 11.98 million homes. That marked the first time an NFL game on cable drew more viewers than a telecast the same week on an over-the-air network.

Denver's 13-3 victory Sunday night over Oakland on NBC was watched in 8.8 million households.

A cable ratings point represents 923,000 households.

Asked what he isn't getting out of his coordinator that has forced him to have three in a short period, Green said, "I am very demanding, but I don't know."

The Cards, losers of five straight after winning their opener, haven't had a lot of answers. That didn't stop Green from expressing

optimism about his most recent change.

"I think," Green said, "it's going to work for us."

EXTRA POINTS: Green was asked if he is worried about kicker Neil Rackers "between the ears" after Rackers missed two last-second field goals the past two games that have contributed to the losses.

"I'm not worried between the ears, I'm worried about the foot,"

Green said. ... Green said while his team has no new injuries, receiver Larry Fitzgerald (hamstring), guard Milford Brown (ankle) and defensive tackle Kendrick Clancy (ankle) all are unlikely to be able to return for this weekend's game in Oakland.

CONTACT WRITER: (480) 898-6495 or durban@aztrib.com