

Tillman maintains silence

Ex-Cardinals safety visits team complex

BY DARREN URBAN
TRIBUNE

Pat Tillman showed up at the Arizona Cardinals' Tempe complex Tuesday morning to wrap up some loose ends with the team — such as lining up his insurance — before joining the Army.

But the former safety made it clear one loose end that wouldn't be taken care of is telling his side of the story.

Tillman, who through the team last week announced he was leaving the NFL to join the military, politely but firmly declined an interview request. When told reporters would be available if he ever wanted to talk, Tillman said, "I'm not going to, but thanks for the offer."

He also declined to talk on the record about the specifics of his enlistment, such as where and when he will be going.

Tillman's silence likely will squash any chance the Army has to capitalize on such a high-profile recruit. Nancy Hutchinson, public affairs officer for the U.S. Army recruiting battalion in Phoenix, admitted Tillman's decision didn't necessarily mean a public relations boon to the service.

"One, we try not to differentiate between recruits," Hutchinson said. "And second, Mr. Tillman asked for no publicity."

Hutchinson said Tillman even turned down the run-of-the-mill press releases the Army usually sends to a recruit's hometown newspapers announcing the stages of a recruit's progress.

Tillman, who walked away from a \$1 million-a-year contract offer from the Cardinals, made about \$1.3 million during his four-year NFL career. The starting salary for an Army enlistee is anywhere between \$1,022 and \$1,443 a month.

Tillman may not be publicly revealing his motivations, but to those who know him it really doesn't matter — the general feeling is that Tillman will be a success in the Army. He is expected to try to join the Rangers, an elite Special Forces unit.

"He has such focus," said Bruce Snyder, Tillman's coach at Arizona State. "If he says he's going to get bin Laden, I would be worried if I was bin Laden."

EXTRA POINTS: The Cardinals announced they signed seventh-round pick Mike Banks, a tight end from Iowa State, to a three-year contract Tuesday. The contract is expected to be worth about \$935,000. Banks is the first of the Cards' eight draft picks to sign. . . .

The Cardinals brought in former Holy Cross safety Michael Blake for a tryout Tuesday.