

Cardinals notes

Starks still a priority

Talks ongoing, but free agent clock is ticking

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TRIBUNE

The Arizona Cardinals haven't signed any free agents yet, but they haven't given up on their targets.

And the way the NFL free-agent market is going, those players are going to be limited in where they might be able to go.

The Cards' top priority remains cornerback Duane Starks. Starks' agent, Drew Rosenhaus, said he had no comment on reports Oakland is Starks' preferred destination.

"All I want to say is we're having ongoing discussions with the Cardinals," Rosenhaus said.

The Raiders do want Starks, but are looking at cheaper options. The Contra Costa Times cites a Raider source saying Oakland won't wait much longer for Starks to lower his contract demands before signing someone else. Baltimore wants to re-sign Starks, but can't afford his asking price.

The Cards did lose out on cornerback Walt Harris, who

signed Thursday night with the Indianapolis Colts. Harris got a five-year deal for \$15 million and a \$3.5 million signing bonus — numbers higher than what the Cardinals thought Harris was worth.

Besides Starks, defensive tackle Derrick Ransom — the third player the Cards have extended a contract offer to — also hasn't signed yet.

The free agent money traditionally dries up following the owner's meetings, which run next week, so there would seem to be some sense of urgency for players still without jobs.

"We've got offers out there," coach Dave McGinnis said. "No one is taking the deals."

The Cardinals have extended offers to a couple of their own free agents. Cornerback Corey Chavous and safety Pat Tillman have deals on the table if they choose to accept them. Chavous continues to make visits elsewhere. Reportedly Minnesota and Carolina are planning to host Chavous, who has already been to Buffalo, Atlanta and Tampa Bay.

The Atlanta Falcons have received permission from the Cardinals to speak to assistant to the president Rod Graves about their open general

manager job. Graves, the Cards' chief contract negotiator, is currently working without a contract himself.

Graves had no comment on the Falcons' situation. Cardinals owner Bill Bidwill would only say, "We don't talk about things like that."

Graves isn't expected to be a front-runner for the job. If Graves did leave, however, it would leave a large hole in the Cards' front office when it comes to contract talks.

EXTRA POINTS: The Cardinals have taken an initial interest in Tampa Bay cornerback Donnie Abraham and Detroit receiver Johnnie Morton, both salary-cap casualties, but have not contacted them.

The deadline came and went Friday for the Cards to re-sign franchised safety Kwame Lassiter. Lassiter now has until July 21 to field offers from other teams, although that team would have to surrender two No. 1 draft picks for signing Lassiter. Lassiter still has his one-year, \$3.34 million tender offer on the table, but there has been no progress toward a long-term deal. Of the nine franchised players in the NFL, only three — Pittsburgh linebacker Jason Gildon, Indianapolis tackle Tarik Glenn and New England kicker Adam Vinatieri — worked out new contracts before Friday, the last day teams could do so before jeopardizing getting their franchise tag back next season. Tampa Bay reportedly is considering bringing in Cards free agent running back Michael Pittman for a visit.