

Players played key role in coaching hire

Whisenhunt met with several members of Cardinals' roster

By **DARREN URBAN**
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When the Cardinals were interviewing Ken Whisenhunt about their coaching job, they also let Whisenhunt get a chance to do some interviewing himself.

So Whisenhunt sat down with players such as safety Adrian Wilson, defensive tackle Darnell Dockett and quarterback Kurt Warner.

It was an unusual step, but something the Cardinals felt was important for all their head coaching candidates.

"When you look across a table and get a sincere expression from the players about their frustrations and what they are looking for and what they need to be in place to be successful,"

vice president of football operations Rod Graves said, "(candidates) came away thinking, 'If you have 53 men like that, you have a chance to do something special.'"

In the NFL, players are almost never part of the search for a new coach. Too many lines are blurred.

But in this case, the Cards — and Whisenhunt — got the intended results.

"It gives great insight into the organization because the players are going to tell it like it is for the most part," Whisenhunt said. "The thing that came to me from that meeting is you have guys that want to win football games, and they want to do it the right way. That is exciting."

Receiver Anquan Boldin and quarterback Matt Leinart were a couple of other players who met with candidates.

Wilson, who interestingly was the only player on hand for Whisenhunt's



Adrian Wilson

has been to the Super Bowl."

Graves said it would be misleading to say the players were recruiting potential coaches.

While there was give and take with the questions as the players quizzed Whisenhunt about his background, the players were there to underscore the potential of the team.

The new coach is still figuring out the details, however.

Whisenhunt talked about calling his own plays and said the Cardinals will run a base 4-3 defense and not the 3-4 the Steelers run.

introductory news conference Tuesday, said Whisenhunt was "sharp" and "obviously the best guy for the job."

"My whole thing is he is a young coach," Wilson said. "He knows what he wants and he

But mostly, he has not yet broken down the roster, waiting until his coaching staff is in place.

Graves said one of the reasons Whisenhunt was a good fit was because his schemes fit with the personnel already on the roster.

Changes — like the ones that accompanied Dennis Green's arrival — should not be necessary, Graves added.

"We feel we have talented players," Graves said. "We have just not always played like a talented team."

The Cardinals trust much of that talent. That's why they let key players be a part of such a crucial time for the franchise.

"It means a lot," Wilson said. "As a player you never know what kind of situation you are going to get into. We are definitely thankful to be included."

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