

# Steelers assistant joins short list

Whisenhunt to get 2nd interview for Cards' coaching job

By **DARREN URBAN**  
TRIBUNE

Mike Sherman was the first name revealed on the Cardinals' short list of head coaching candidates.

And Thursday, the day Sherman came back to Tempe to have a second interview with the team, the second name on the list — Steelers offensive coordinator Ken Whisenhunt — was unveiled.

Whisenhunt will return to the Valley today, exactly a week after going through his first interview.

The landscape of NFL head coaching jobs available to him has changed dramatically, however.

During Whisenhunt's first visit, Steelers coach Bill Cowher was resigning, opening a spot in Pittsburgh. Whisenhunt was also considered a leading candidate for the vacant Atlanta job.

The Cards' opening may not have been his top preference.

But the Falcons' job has been filled. The Steelers have decided to interview a fifth head coaching candidate, Chan Gailey. And according to one Pittsburgh source, the team apparently let it be known that if it stays in-house, it will be Steelers assistant head coach Russ Grimm and not Whisenhunt as the top choice.

That would benefit the Cardinals, who are finding that they can take their time with their search and still go after the candidates that interest them.

There was a buzz surrounding Sherman's visit Thursday that he could be immediately hired as the new Cards' coach, including those who noted that Sherman's wife was accompanying him on his trip.

But Sherman's wife did not make the initial interview trip because of their daughter's birthday. The other candidates had brought their spouses the first time around.

Rod Graves, vice president of football operations, had insisted Wednesday the fact Sherman was first with the second round of interviews did not mean he was the front-runner, and Sherman left town without a contract offer.

Sherman did meet with holdover Cardinals defensive coordinator Clancy Pendergast Thursday, and Whisenhunt is expected to do the same today.

The organization, which gave Pendergast a courtesy interview for the head coaching job, remains high on him and

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remain in place on the new staff.

Seven holdover assistants from Dennis Green's staff — Pendergast, offensive coordinator Mike Kruczek, offensive line coach Steve Loney, receivers coach Mike Wilson, linebackers coach Frank Bush, safeties coach Rick Courtright and defensive line coach Larry Brooks — are still under contract.

The team is hoping the new

coach will interview the assistants and consider some of them for the new staff.

The Pendergast factor may be one of the reasons Chicago Bears defensive coordinator Ron Rivera is likely out of the running to be the Cards' next coach.

Another is the probability the Cardinals want a head coach with an offensive background, one of the reasons six of the team's eight candidates come from the offensive side of the ball.

One Chicago-based NFL source said the portion of Rivera's interview about offense did not go well.

The Cardinals are still not tipping off how many — if any — of the remaining four candidates are on their short list: Grimm, Titans offensive coordinator Norm Chow, Chargers offensive coordinator Cam Cameron and Colts assistant head coach Jim Caldwell.

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