

# CARDS: Completion of staff next on agenda

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What Whisenhunt found was a franchise that, after peeling back the layer of ugliness that comes with too many years of losing, was in good shape.

The roster had some star power and potential. The stadium was brand new. The franchise was in good salary cap shape.

"From an analytical standpoint, being a civil engineer, all those things give you a chance to win," Whisenhunt said, referencing his college degree.

It made agreeing to a four-year contract (with a fifth-year team option) a relatively easy choice.

Whisenhunt promised a physical team, one of the things that sold Bidwill and Graves on his candidacy. So did his philosophies on discipline, something the team has been lacking.

But despite both Bidwill and Graves talking about how close the Cardinals are to being successful, the one thing Whisenhunt was careful to avoid was much talk about how quickly winning might come.

At age 44, Whisenhunt may well be the next young coaching star like Sean Payton or

Eric Mangini, but he wasn't promising first-year playoff bids like those other first-year coaches achieved.

"That isn't going to happen every year," Whisenhunt said, noting the "fine line" between winning and losing.

"It could be as simple as one or two players, it could be as simple as how we do things," Whisenhunt added. "You can't put a timetable on it."

Considering the expectations the Cardinals have failed to meet the last couple of seasons, caution is probably appropriate.

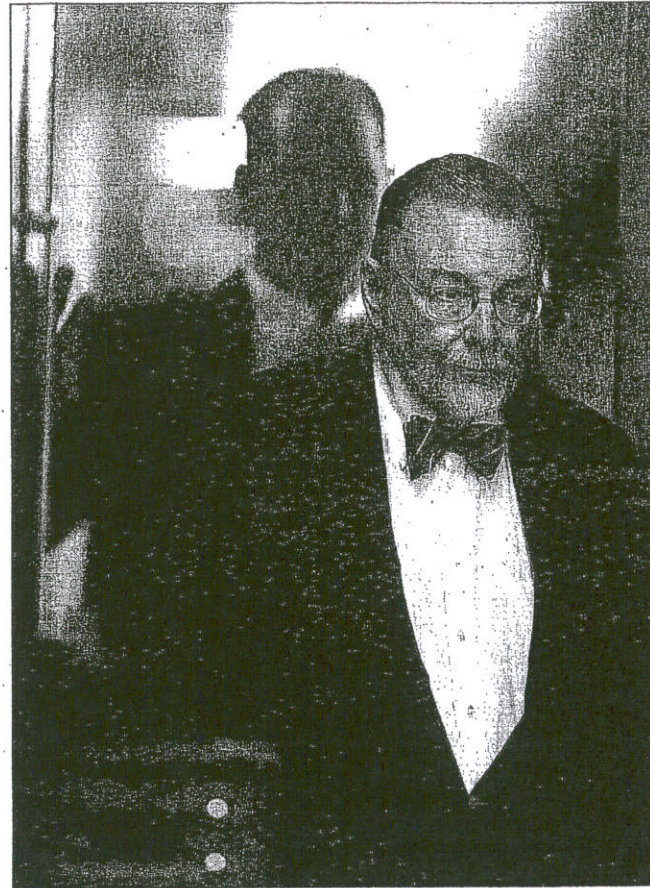
"He's not going to hang us out there," safety Adrian Wilson said.

Still, Bidwill said Whisenhunt will "breath life into the locker room."

He will unquestionably be a more hands-on coach than his predecessor, Dennis Green, including calling his own plays.

First, he must assemble a coaching staff, something that may take a little time as he seeks to get permission to interview and/or hire assistants under contract.

Holdover defensive coordinator Clancy Pendergast will have a full interview with Whisenhunt. Whisenhunt called Pendergast a "good young coach" but also noted the Cards' dropoff defensively



RALPH FRESO, TRIBUNE

**BRAIN TRUST:** Cardinals owner Bill Bidwill leads his newest head coach, Ken Whisenhunt, into a news conference Tuesday to announce the hiring.

last season.

One strong possibility for his staff would be recently

fired Panthers offensive coordinator Dan Henning, one of Whisenhunt's mentors.

Whisenhunt said Henning "would be considered," but Henning's grandchildren live in the South and an NFL source said he may not want to move so far west.

Whisenhunt said he felt "very comfortable" with the direction the organization is going in terms of making personnel decisions — decisions that will land on the desk of Graves for final say.

And Graves' increasing role is unmistakable.

It was Graves, and not a Bidwill, that introduced Whisenhunt at the press conference, just as it was a Graves quote that was used on the press release announcing Whisenhunt's hire.

It's Graves and Whisenhunt — the man who now loves his opportunity to come to Arizona — as the latest brain trust to try to turn the Cardinals into winners.

"We're not trying to change the world," Whisenhunt said.

"We understand it isn't always going to be easy or smooth. In this business you are judged on wins and losses. We just want to be consistent."

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