

# Hurst holdout: 15 and counting

By Ron Borges  
GLOBE STAFF

SMITHFIELD, R.I. - Maurice Hurst not only isn't being watched by Patriots head coach Bill Parcells these days, he isn't being read by him, either.

Hurst, whose 15-day holdout continued yesterday, sent a fax around New England Thursday announcing that he wished to never play another down for the Patriots, an emotion shared by more than a few former New England employees. What the four-year starter preferred, Hurst said, was to be traded to one of eight NFL teams, none of whom has yet expressed a strong interest in him.

"I heard about it but I didn't read it," Parcells said of Hurst's missive from New Orleans, his offseason home. "Like I said, I don't talk about the guys that aren't here."

Parcells probably doesn't think about them, either, because if he did, it would give him a headache. Hurst is not in the mold of the classic Parcells style of defensive back, but he is still the best corner in this camp even when he isn't here.

At 185 pounds, Hurst is 15-20 pounds lighter than Parcells prefers, and Hurst's aversion to tackling running backs as they turn the corner is a problem that will probably lead to his long-term unemployment in New England. But for the moment, the problem facing Parcells and the Patriots is short-term. Somebody has to play the position Hurst has manned every game since he first arrived here in 1989.

"We've got a few guys who are capable of playing," Parcells said. "I know Reyna Thompson is capable of playing. It looks like Rod Smith is. David Pool has played in the league for quite a while. I'm impressed with [rookie] Vernon Lewis. [Dion] Lambert played corner last year if I have a problem."

That might give Patriot fans some false hope that even if Hurst continues to refuse to accept New England's one-year offer of \$495,000, things will be taken care of. But just in case the public thinks that, Parcells quick-added, "I wouldn't call the position overly strong, but we'll see."

That is what Hurst was banking on when he turned down a three-year deal worth \$3.5 million including a \$600,000 signing bonus and stood by his request for another \$200,000 in bonuses to

push the total to \$3.7 million.

Maurice Hurst realizes his playing style ("I'm a cover guy," which loosely translates into let the linebackers do the tackling) will never mesh with Parcells' philosophy.

If Hurst is concerned about his long-term future with the Patriots, as sources close to him say, it is likely he will sit out as long as possible, the same decision he made two years ago. When he did that, it took him half the season to get back into the swing of the NFL after missing most of training camp.

"Hurst is a great player," said safety Tim Gordon. "I'd like to see him on the field, but if he's got a problem, it's personal. Personally, I like the guy. I wish he'd play. We'll see."

We'll see someone. But who?

...

Parcells said he would begin cutting back his two-a-day practices as he prepared for next week's game with San Diego. "After tomorrow, we will have completed our 27th practice," he said. "I certainly have to lighten the load. A lot of teams are on a more moderate schedule, but I think we need more work." ... Running back Leonard Russell continued to wear the blue no-contact jersey, but indications are he will be out of it this weekend and could play against San Diego ... Tackle Bruce Armstrong began further testing of his repaired left knee in some moderate team work that will allow other bodies around him for the first time since he was injured last November in Buffalo. "Unless he has a major setback, this story may turn out pretty good," Parcells said of Armstrong's comeback from career-threatening surgery. "So far there have been no setbacks. Not anything. Not even blisters." ... Second-round draft choice Vincent Brisby continued to eat the Patriots' food yesterday at training camp but had not yet agreed to a contract, as earlier reported. Brisby's agent and Patriots vice president for football operations Patrick Forte spent the day locked in contract negotiations in Foxborough while Brisby walked around the Bryant College campus. "Brisby is here," Parcells said. "As we speak, negotiations continue, I guess. Hopefully we'll get it resolved fairly soon." ... Family Autograph Day will be today at Bryant from 10:30-11:30 a.m., following the morning practice session.

Still holding out  
With Maurice Hurst  
(right) among the  
missing, Bill Parcells  
looks at other cornerbacks. Page 32.



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