

Hurst returns — for now

Cornerback ends holdout but Patriots may attempt to trade him

By Frank Dell'Apa
GLOBE STAFF

SMITHFIELD, R.I. — Maurice Hurst ended his holdout and reported to the Patriots' training camp at Bryant College yesterday, but the team is hoping to trade the cornerback, according to sources.

Should they be unsuccessful, Hurst, 25, will settle for a one-year contract worth \$495,000 and place himself on the free agent market following the season.

"This is a lose-lose proposition," said Hurst's agent, Doug Sunseri. "It is an unwise business proposition. This is the first year of a rebuilding time for the Patriots. So what good is it to have a veteran who is going to play one year and leave? In fact, it's a disruption to have someone like that.

"Maurice is very disappointed. But if he is disappointed or distraught, it will not be reflected on the field. This will not be in his thinking once he hits the field. But after Jan. 2, he packs his bags and he leaves New England."

Hurst had sought a contract worth \$3.7 million for three years, including incentives should he be selected for All-Conference or All-Pro teams. The Patriots originally offered \$3.5 million for three years, with no incentive clauses.

But the Patriots then changed their offer to last year's salary (\$450,000) plus the minimum 10 percent raise.

"If I had any inkling that negotiations would be con-

ducted in this way, we would have taken the \$700,000 that was on the table," Sunseri said. "In order to have a successful organization, you don't have to give every player what he wants but there has to be some give and take.

"There is no bitterness as far as making a business decision. They're the people with the pocketbook. I just find it an interesting way to treat someone who has given them four good years. Maurice was one of the outstanding players on a franchise that performed poorly. He came out and played every day when not everyone else did, and he's being penalized for a lot of poor results of the franchise. Maurice had a bad break — he was a top performer for a bad franchise."

The Patriots may be reluctant to meet Hurst's terms because he does not appear to exemplify the type of cornerback that coach Bill Parcells prefers. Parcells has said one of the best players he has ever seen is Reyna Thompson, who started at cornerback in the team's exhibition season-opening 13-7 loss at San Diego Saturday, and who is bigger and stronger than Hurst and is also an accomplished performer on special teams.

Hurst's strengths are his speed and covering ability, rather than versatility and an ability to disrupt running attempts.

"The Patriots indicated before minicamp that money wasn't going to be a problem," Sunseri said. "If this is what they wanted to do from the very beginning, they could have traded Maurice for a second- or third-round pick.

"Parcells said to Maurice prior to minicamp that if you don't want to be here, we'll trade you. Maurice said he would be there if the money was fair. When we are talking fair, we are talking market value.

"Two years ago, we heard that nobody on a 1-15 team should make a lot of money. But if everyone did their job as well as Maurice, maybe they wouldn't have had such a bad record."



MAURICE HURST
Very disappointed