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Jets' Favre says Green Bay told him he couldn't be a Packer

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HEMPSTEAD, N.Y. -- As the tears rolled down his gray-stubbled cheeks, [Brett Favre](#) was saying goodbye to football and fighting his persistent doubts.

Even at his retirement news conference in March, he couldn't shake the feeling that he was making a huge mistake.

"I said, 'I might just be writing my career off right now,'" the [New York Jets](#) quarterback recalled earlier this week. "I've had 17 great years and there's no guarantee what the future holds, but you won't know unless you take that chance. And I was thinking that."

Nearly six months later, Favre is back on the field -- with the Jets instead of the [Green Bay Packers](#). It's been an improbable whirlwind for the three-time MVP, who talked candidly with reporters about the events surrounding his retirement, his comeback, his bitter divorce from the Packers and joining the Jets.

"I think now that I'm here, that part is over and done with," Favre said. "No one in that locker room is worried about it. Not once has a guy said, 'Hey, sit down and tell me what happened.' They may want to know or whatever, but we're too busy. And I'm having a blast.

"It's been hard, but, really, I know I made the right decision."

Favre couldn't say the same of his choice to walk away from the game a few weeks after losing the NFC championship game against the [New York Giants](#).

"I knew I wanted to play," the 38-year-old quarterback said. "Everyday I would wake up and say, 'Boy, I'd like to play.' At some point in the day, I'd go, 'Ahh, I don't know.' With each day that passed, I got more and more committed to do it, and that was all I was looking for from Day 1.

"As time passed by, I said, 'You know, I've still got the fire.'"

Favre appeared completely at ease during the informal 40-minute session, wearing a gray T-shirt and green Jets shorts while sitting casually in a chair in front of about 10 reporters. He cracked jokes at

times, but turned serious when he spoke of the events of the last several months.

"I finally got to a point where I was committed, and to me, that includes everything," he said. "I've always considered myself the ultimate teammate, regardless of how I've been portrayed this year."

During the weeks leading to his retirement, Favre said Packers coach Mike McCarthy told him that the team wanted to know what his plans were for this season. Favre had waffled between playing and retiring several times during the previous few offseasons.

"The day I told McCarthy I was going to retire, he said, 'Are you sure?'" Favre recalled. "I said, 'No, I'm not sure, but you want an answer and I'm giving you an answer: I'm not sure.'"

Favre told McCarthy he felt a pull to play but, after 17 seasons, wasn't sure he still had the desire to go through minicamp, OTAs, training camp and other workouts.

"Now, I could've told them, 'All right, I'll come back,' even though at that time, I didn't want to," he said. "And then, July rolls around and we start camp and I go, 'God, I just ain't got it,' and then just walk away. Well, to me, that was worse than saying, 'Guys, if you want an answer right now, I'm just not 100 percent committed, and because of that, I'm retiring.' I was just honest with them."

Favre said he spoke to Packers' general manager Ted Thompson only once during the process, the day after the NFL draft in April.

"I always liked Ted and I don't want to say I dislike him now," he said. "I'm disappointed."

Thompson flew to Favre's Mississippi home, and the quarterback thought the general manager was there to ask him to come back. Instead, Thompson told him that the team was going to do something special for him: dismantle his locker and send it to him.

"That was the craziest thing I ever heard of," Favre said. "What the hell am I going to do with a locker anyway? So, I said, 'OK, Ted, that's great.'"

Thompson left shortly after the conversation, but not before Favre told him he might have reservations about retiring.

"I started getting the impression in May that, 'Boy, I feel like I need to play,'" the quarterback said. "The tough part was how do I get myself out of this jam? And that was before any of this ever came out. I was thinking, 'Boy, this is not going to look good.' ... Finally, I don't know the day, I woke up and said, 'I can't control what people are going to say, so why worry about it?'"

Favre called McCarthy on June 20 and told him that he wanted to come back.

"When he picked up the phone again after he dropped it, he said, 'Oh, God, Brett. You're putting us in a tight spot,'" Favre said. "He said, 'Brett, playing here is not an option.' Those were his exact, exact words."

The Packers made it clear they were moving forward with [Aaron Rodgers](#) as their starting quarterback.

"There's no guarantees I come back and I play as well as I did last year, but if you're a betting man and you said, 'OK, who gives us the best chance to win right now?' and this is not bragging, but I would think I would," said Favre, who threw for 4,155 yards and 28 touchdowns last season. "Aaron may play great and then they all look like geniuses, but to not welcome me back -- and I'm just assuming -- for fear of upsetting Aaron, not only now, but in the future, is totally ridiculous. Totally ridiculous."

Favre shot down reports that Thompson and McCarthy had chartered a flight to Mississippi to talk to the quarterback in late March about finalizing his comeback, only to have Favre back out at the last minute. Favre said McCarthy told him they were heading to Orlando, Fla., for the owners' meetings and wanted to stop by to speak with him.

"The next day I told him, 'Mike, don't worry about coming down or dropping by. I still can't commit,'" he said. "They made it sound like they had chartered a plane just to see me and I had made a call and said, 'I'm coming back,' which is not true."

A series of he-said, they-said accusations followed, as did rumors of where Favre might end up. The Packers wouldn't grant Favre his release to become a free agent, but Tampa Bay and the Jets entered the picture as trade partners.

Favre agreed to come to New York after a persuasive conversation with general manager Mike Tannenbaum.

"Mike called me on the phone and I couldn't get him to shut up," he said with a grin, "but he sold me."

Favre has promised the Jets nothing beyond this season. And, he says, none of that matters now, not with the season opener at Miami a week away.

"I didn't want to go anywhere, including Green Bay, and go through a bad season and lose and get beat up and everyone say, 'What the hell did he come back for?'" Favre said. "Now, that could happen here, it could happen in Green Bay and it could happen anywhere. I've always felt like I give whatever team I'm on a good chance to win, but there's way more to it than one guy. ..."

"The bottom line was that I wanted to play and I felt like this team had a good chance to win. It would be difficult, as it would be anywhere, but I felt like this would be a good fit for me."

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