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## Packers: Looks like Favre's gone for good

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GREEN BAY — Brett Favre's career with the Green Bay Packers is almost over. Again.

The only question that remains is where he'll play his 18th NFL season, because it won't be with the team the iconic quarterback came to embody since his arrival in 1992.

And with coach Mike McCarthy saying Tuesday that Favre "wasn't in the right mind-set to play here," it would appear the quality that made Favre so beloved among the green-and-gold faithful — his unbridled emotional nature — is one of the primary reasons why he won't be competing with new starter Aaron Rodgers to win his old job back.

Even though McCarthy said he told Favre he was willing to discuss that possibility during their lengthy Monday night meeting — and even though the two men talked again Tuesday — McCarthy said his meetings with Favre "turned into" a discussion of Favre's feelings and how Favre was unable to get past what he considered the unfair, disrespectful treatment he received from the organization and general manager Ted Thompson since informing McCarthy of his "itch" to play again in a June 20 phone call.

"The path to get to where we are has done some damage," McCarthy said. "I think there's a lot of emotion in what he's going through right now, and rightfully so. It's been a very stressful time for him and his family. He's in a tough spot right now.

"The train has left the station. He needs to jump on the train and let's go, or if we can't get past all of the things that have happened, I need to keep the train moving."

As a result, Favre wants out, and the team was in trade talks Tuesday with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers to end the affair but not Favre's NFL career. Although an NFL source said the Packers and Favre's agent, James "Bus" Cook, had both had multiple conversations with the Buccaneers, ESPN reported that Favre was only "considering talking" to them about a trade.

Cook told the NFL Network that Favre, who announced his retirement at a tearful March 6 news conference, will not re-retire. Meanwhile, two NFL sources said the Packers remain hell-bent on preventing Favre from playing for NFC North rival Minnesota, and those same sources said Favre expressed multiple times to the Packers his desire to play for the Vikings.

Asked whether Favre ever explicitly said in their talks that he wanted to play for Minnesota, McCarthy didn't deny it, saying, "I don't want to get

into specifics of other options and things like that. He's emotional. There are a lot of things that were said."

## **Emotional scars**

The greater problem, based on McCarthy's comments, was that the wounds created by the ugly back-and-forth between Favre and the team over the past six weeks have not healed — and may never go away.

"We talked about everything that has happened since this whole process started. Probably not once, but twice, we re-hashed all of the different things that went on," said McCarthy, who used terms such as "healthy conversation" and "brutally honest" to describe the four-hour talk he and Favre had on Monday night.

Favre's emotions were on full display in an interview earlier Tuesday with Chris Mortensen of ESPN, the main conduit through which Favre had gotten his side of the controversy out.

In the interview, Favre acknowledged that "best thing for this team is for us to part ways."

"The problem is that there's been a lot of damage done and I can't forget it. Stuff has been said, stories planted, that just aren't true," Favre said. "Can I get over all that? I doubt it."

Asked what stories have been "planted," Favre pointed to Thompson saying Favre waffled on wanting to unretire in late March, saying that's "just not the way it went down, at all," but Mortensen did not report the specifics of Favre's side of that story.

Mortensen also reported that Favre expressed anger with the stories that alleged he had a team-issued cell phone that showed the Vikings were tampering with him ("That was bull on both parts," Favre said) and said the Packers "tried to buy me off to stay retired" with their 10-year, \$20 million marketing and licensing offer.

The Vikings were cleared by commissioner Roger Goodell of any wrongdoing on Monday.

"So they can say they welcome me back but, come on, the way they've treated me tells you the truth," Favre said. "They don't want me back, so let's move on. I don't know where it's headed. We'll see."

## **'Agreed to disagree'**

McCarthy said because of Favre's emotional reaction, he and Favre "didn't get that far" on what Favre's role with the team would be.

"We talked about competing for the starting quarterback, but we really didn't get much into it because, once again, we talked about all of the things that happened up to this point," McCarthy said. "We agreed to disagree. We stood on opposite sides of the fence on a number of issues, and I respect the way he feels. But the one thing that I was looking for out of that conversation (was), was he ready and committed to play football for the Green Bay Packers? And his answer frankly throughout the conversation (indicated) that's not where he was. So with that, we didn't really move ahead."

"I had a list of questions for him to answer those questions. I had questions that I felt were important for him to answer. I had questions for him from the locker room, from his teammates. ... I don't want to speak for him, but based on where he is (and) the path that it took to get to this (point), he wasn't in the right mind-set to play here."

Asked directly if Favre has played his last game as a Packer, McCarthy replied, "There has been no decision made, but that's where we concluded in our conversation," before adding that the two men had discussed the possibility of talking again Tuesday night.

Asked whether the Packers are better served to move on without Favre, given the way he feels, McCarthy's initial answer was, "Well, given his mind-set, why would I let anybody of a negative mind-set in our locker room?"

McCarthy was also asked whether he thought Favre wasn't of the right mind-set to play in Green Bay, or wasn't of the right mind-set to play at all.

"I would just say here in Green Bay. He wants to play," said McCarthy, who admitted to Favre that throughout the ordeal, he didn't think when push came to shove that Favre would actually play in 2008. "I said, 'Prove me wrong. Tell me I'm wrong, that you're playing for all the right reasons.' "

Asked if Favre can change McCarthy's mind, McCarthy replied, "I don't think so. I don't think he's in that place."

### **Placed on reserve list**

Even had the situation not escalated the way it did Tuesday, Favre would not have practiced after the team flunked him on his physical because of what McCarthy called a "lower abdominal strain."

The team instead placed him on the reserve/non-football injury list, and McCarthy said Favre would have gone "through rehab" inside the Don Hutson Center instead of practicing.

It never came to that, though, as Favre hugged longtime security director Jerry Parins goodbye and drove away from the Lambeau Field loading dock area at 1:38 p.m. in his now-famous burgundy Cadillac Escalade shortly before the team's practice was about to begin.

While the team practiced at Clarke Hinkle Field amid pro-Favre and anti-Thompson chants, Thompson, president and CEO Mark Murphy, vice president of administration Jason Wied and contract negotiator Russ Ball were meeting at Favre's Ashwaubenon home with Favre, his wife Deanna, and Cook.

Thompson and Ball arrived at practice shortly after 3 p.m., and sources said the meeting adjourned about 15 minutes prior. McCarthy spoke following practice, and his 26-minute news conference ended with McCarthy being asked if the Packers did a good enough job of making Favre feel wanted or welcome.

"That's part of the issue with him, quite frankly," McCarthy said. "Listening

to him talk about that, you respect his opinion. Frankly, I told him, I'll take responsibility, because I had a voice in the building. I never thought he truly was going to play. I thought he was emotionally driven for other reasons. He was very convincing (Monday) night, and again (Tuesday) morning, that he wants to play. He's thought about all the other possibilities and other options, but that's really kind of what happened there."

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