

Eskimos release veteran linebacker Lloyd

New head coach Reed opts 'to go with a younger guy with a clean slate' for 2011 season

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Published: Tuesday, March 15, 2011



Edmonton Eskimos head coach Kavis Reed talks to reporters about the release of linebacker Maurice Lloyd at Commonwealth Stadium on Monday.

Photograph by: Candace Elliott , The Journal

Maurice Lloyd has played his last down with the CFL's Edmonton Eskimos.

On Monday, the Green and Gold released the veteran import middle linebacker after two seasons with the team in a move first-year head coach Kavis Reed said was a "Kavis decision" based solely on schematics.

"Coach (Rich) Stubler and I have studied our scheme very closely and the things we wanted to accomplish scheme-wise and we thought it was better to go with a younger

guy with a clean slate, so we can indoctrinate him in the system that we want," said Reed, who told Lloyd that he was being cut loose.

Reed said Lloyd accepted the decision, but Lloyd said he didn't see it coming.

"Shocked. Devastated," Lloyd said in a phone interview, describing his reaction to being released.

"What I did last year ... I thought coach Reed would give me a chance, but they want younger linebackers. They want to build around more of a scheme aspect at linebacker," said Lloyd, 28, who signed with the Eskimos before the 2009 season after three years with the Saskatchewan Roughriders. He was named a CFL West Division all-star in 2008.

In his first season with the Eskimos, Lloyd was named a CFL Players Association all-star, recording 55 tackles in 15 games.

Last season, Lloyd, who played college football with the University of Connecticut Huskies, started 17 games at middle linebacker, tallying 82 tackles, five sacks and one interception. He led the team with six tackles for losses.

The native of Daytona Beach, Fla., said he had hoped to prolong his relationship with linebackers coach Mark Nelson, who took over the job after Dan Kepley resigned on Aug. 17, 2010, just two days after a humiliating 56-15 loss to the Calgary Stampeders.

Kepley didn't always see eye to eye with his middle linebacker.

"Once he left, I felt great," Lloyd said of Kepley. "I learned more from coach Nelson than coach Kepley and I think I became a better linebacker under coach Nelson."

Lloyd believes money was also a reason why he was released.

"Salary came into play as well, but I think I earned what I was getting paid," he said.

Reed said Lloyd's presence in the locker-room will be missed, but others will have to step up their leadership roles.

"He has had a tremendous value to this locker-room, but now we have to find other guys to replace that," Reed said of Lloyd.

With some salary-cap space freed up, the Eskimos can now invest in a younger and different type of athlete to fill Lloyd's shoes, Reed said. The club is zoning in on that player.

"From the guys we've studied and the guys that Eric (general manager Tillman) has recruited for us, we have a pretty clear idea who that guy is going to be," Reed said.

Despite his release, Lloyd is sure to garner calls from teams interested in his services for the 2011 season, possibly even the Roughriders.

Lloyd said he will always cherish his time with the Eskimos.

"I have a lot memories; from 2009, when we came out at 9-9 after winning our last two regular-season games; to crying in the locker-room after coming up just short (to make) the playoffs last year."

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