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White changes mind, will play in '98

*Reggie White will explain
his decision to play one
more season at a press
conference today*

By Arnie Stapleton
The Associated Press

MILWAUKEE — Just two days after announcing his retirement from pro football, Reggie White changed his mind Tuesday and said he intended to play for the Green Bay Packers next season.

"I have reevaluated my decision," White said in a statement released by the Packers. "I decided I would not retire and that I would play one more year."

On Sunday, coach Mike Holmgren said the 36-year-old defensive end told him that he was retiring because of a bad back that bothered him for most of last season. White had planned a farewell news conference in Green Bay today.

The NFL's all-time leading sacker, an ordained Baptist minister, said he would explain why he changed his mind at the news conference, which is still planned.

Packers spokesman Lee Rempel offered no details why White changed his mind.

"It is his decision and his story and he is going to explain that," Rempel said.

According to CNN-Sports Illustrated, White was getting his back worked on Monday when "the Lord spoke to him and told him that he had to be a man of his word and play one more season for the Packers."

Packer fans rejoiced at White's change of heart.

"Wonderful. What can be better? He's the greatest," Louis Gardipee of Green Bay said. "If he says he's healthy enough to play, he is. He's got the good Lord on his side." White had 11 sacks last year, giving him 176 1/2 for his 13-year career. He was selected to the Pro Bowl for a record 12th consecutive time despite the back problems that limited him to part-time duty. He also had walking pneumonia the last month of the season.

White helped lead the Packers to two consecutive Super Bowl appearances, including the team's 35-21 victory over New England

in 1997. The team lost this year to the Denver Broncos.

A member of the NFL's 75th anniversary all-star team, White joined the Packers in 1993 for four years and \$17 million after eight seasons with the Philadelphia Eagles as the first big-name free agent to switch teams.

White recently was criticized for a March 25 speech to Wisconsin lawmakers in which he spoke in racial stereotypes and assailed gay lifestyle.

White is affiliated with a Baptist church in Knoxville, Tenn. Citing Scripture, White told the Wisconsin Assembly that one of the biggest sins is homosexuality and the Bible speaks against it.

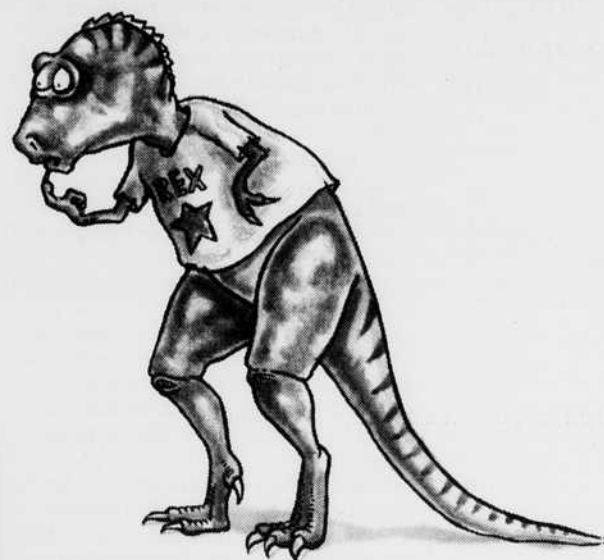
White, who is black, also told the largely white audience that blacks, whites, Hispanics, Japanese, Asians and Indians have different "gifts."

White said his comments were meant to point out the positive traits of different groups.

White later apologized for any harm his remarks may have caused.

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