

Keyshawn officially headed South

By Fred Goodall
The Associated Press

TAMPA, Fla. — The Tampa Bay Buccaneers are counting on Keyshawn Johnson to be a man of his word.

The two-time Pro Bowl receiver promised one thing Wednesday — to be himself — after signing an eight-year, \$56 million contract with a \$13 million signing bonus that makes him the highest-paid player at his position in the NFL.

For the Bucs, who failed to go to the Super Bowl because they couldn't score enough points, that would be enough.

The team traded two first-round draft picks to the New York Jets and committed nearly \$7 million per season to him to finish the deal because of his track record as a productive and charismatic player whose top priority is winning.

"I'm not a savior ... I can't say I'm a hired gun and come in here like Dennis Rodman did with the Bulls when they were missing a rebounder to win a championship. All I can say is I'm going to do my part," Johnson said.

"It's refreshing to know the Bucs wanted to give up two first-round draft picks to acquire me," he added later, turning on a podium to look toward Tampa Bay owner Malcolm Glazer. "And, I guess, dig into their checkbook to pay a

small fee."

To make room under the salary cap for Johnson, the Bucs released receiver Bert Emanuel, who was scheduled to earn \$4.2 million next season. One of the reasons the team was in the market to acquire an impact player was Emanuel had been a disappointment after signing as a free agent two years ago.

"I think we're getting one of the best receivers in the game, and his play week-in and week-out exhibits that," said tackle Warren Sapp, NFL defensive player of the year. "He's been performing in this league for four years and we expect him to do the same thing here."

Tampa Bay failed to score an offensive touchdown in five games, including the NFC title game, and ranked 30th among 31 teams in passing and 28th overall while averaging just over 13 points.

Nevertheless, the Bucs had their best season in franchise history because of a defense that was so dominant that the team won two of those five games, even when the offense couldn't get into the end zone.

"Everybody knows the Tampa Bay Bucs have an extraordinary defense that put them in the NFC championship game last year," Johnson said. "I hear all the time, all they need is 17. Well, we're definitely going to try to give them

that 17."

New York gets the 13th and 27th overall picks, making it the first team ever with four first-rounders. The others are No. 16 and No. 18.

That gives them the wherewithal to deal during the draft if they have to move up to get a player they want.

"The acquisition of two more first-round picks creates many opportunities for us in the draft, including more maneuvering," Jets coach Al Groh said.

In four NFL seasons, Johnson has caught 305 passes for 4,108 yards and 31 touchdowns, despite playing only one year — 1998 with Vinny Testaverde — with a high-quality quarterback throwing to him.

The 27-year-old receiver goes from a well-balanced, imaginative attack to one of the most conservative, run-oriented offenses in football. He won't have a veteran at quarterback, either, with second-year pro Shaun King.

Johnson said he's ready to do whatever is necessary to help King develop, even if it means catching fewer passes.

"As long as I can contribute in the blocking scheme or something," he said. "Just don't pay me as a \$7 million receiver and stand

me on the sideline."

That shouldn't be a problem.

Johnson is the third Pro Bowl player to be added to the Bucs' offense since the team failed to score a touchdown in an 11-6 loss to the St. Louis Rams in the NFC title game, joining center Jeff Christy and guard Randall McDaniel.

Mike Shula was fired as offensive coordinator and replaced by Les Steckel, who is installing the offense the Tennessee Titans used to make it to the Super Bowl last season.

Johnson, who had been scheduled to earn \$2.4 million with the Jets next season, is the highest-profile offensive star in Bucs history and adds the deep passing threat Tampa Bay has lacked for years. Johnson's receiving yardage for last season alone surpassed the career numbers for all but two of Tampa Bay's other receivers.

Johnson had 89 catches for 1,170 yards and eight TDs in 1999.

The receivers who started much of the 1999 season for the Bucs didn't begin to approach that kind of production. Jacques Green had 56 receptions for 791 yards and three TDs, while Reidel Anthony had 30 catches for 296 yards and one TD and Emanuel finished with 22 receptions for 238 yards and one TD.

Unpopular Olympic sports to lose funding

By Steve Wilstein
The Associated Press

BOSTON — Declaring the bottom line is the medal count, new U.S. Olympic Committee boss Norm Blake plans to push through a radical change this weekend that would slash the budgets of some 20 sports while enriching traditional powerhouses like swimming.

Other big winners in Blake's plan are expected to be gymnastics, figure skating, ice hockey, track and field, and boxing. The losers would be sports like team handball, biathlon, field hockey, weight lifting and table tennis.

"We feel we are accountable to making America proud, and that comes down to the medal count," Blake said before presenting his plan to the 19-member USOC executive committee on Friday. "So we are consciously allocating resources to that end, which means we are taking from some to give more to others."

By eliminating or sharply cutting what Blake called, in the business jargon he frequently employs, "low value-added programs," the USOC hopes to speed the development of athletes, improve coaching and boost the overall haul of medals.

Of the 45 national governing bodies of the sports the USOC funds, including 39 Olympic national bodies, about half are going to feel cuts, Blake said.

"I've employed sort of a portfolio management discipline where we've attempted to evaluate the medal potential that each sport has and then to critically assess the capability of that sport to achieve the winning of those medals," Blake said.

The USOC, which budgeted \$160 million for grants to the national governing bodies from 1997 through 2000, should not waste money on sports with a small following in the United States and little hope of medals, Blake said.

"There are certain sports that are not indigenous to the United States, so the available feedstock of potential athletes is limited, the amount of support available in the U.S. from a fund-raising standpoint is limited, and we are therefore disadvantaged," he said.

"We have to very seriously look at

These are the sports that, for all practical purposes, are not really a concern to the American public...

Norm Blake
olympic committee

what level of support we give those particular sports.

"These are sports that, for all practical purposes, are not really a concern to the American public, and the level of athletic involvement at the grassroots level is relatively nominal. Do we want to throw money at a sport that, frankly, would not have the means to ever medal or to make America proud. And how much money is that?"

Each national governing body will be evaluated on its own merits, Blake said, and some will suffer deeper cuts than others over the next few years.

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