

Limbaugh resigns after controversial comments

Rush Limbaugh made disparaging remarks about Donovan McNabb earlier this week on ESPN

By Ed Sherman
Chicago Tribune (KRT)

CHICAGO — ESPN hired Rush Limbaugh to stir up its NFL pre-game show.

It got what it wanted.

Late Wednesday he resigned.

The political commentator parted company with ESPN's "NFL Sunday Countdown," following a day in which he defended his comments on his syndicated radio show and the network distanced itself from his comments on Sunday's show about Donovan McNabb. Limbaugh said the Philadelphia Eagles' quarterback was overrated because the media wanted a black quarterback to succeed.

"I think what we've had here is a little social concern in the NFL," Limbaugh said. "The media has been very desirous that a black quarterback do well. There is a little hope invested in McNabb, and he got a lot of credit for the performance of this team that he didn't deserve. The defense carried this team."

Limbaugh issued a statement late Wednesday night in which he wrote: "My comments this past Sunday were directed at the media and were not racially motivated. I offered an opin-

ion. This opinion has caused discomfort to the crew, which I regret.

"I love 'NFL Sunday Countdown' and do not want to be a distraction to the great work done by all who work on it.

"Therefore, I have decided to resign."

Earlier Wednesday on his radio show, Limbaugh refused to back down from his remarks.

"All this has become the tempest that it is because I must have been right about something," Limbaugh said. "If I wasn't right, there wouldn't be this cacophony of outrage that has sprung up in the sportswriter community."

Limbaugh then added: "This is such a mountain out of a molehill. There's no racism here; there's no racist intent whatsoever."

But late Wednesday, ESPN issued a statement distancing itself from Limbaugh's comments: "Although Mr. Limbaugh today stated his comments had no racist intent whatsoever, we have communicated to Mr. Limbaugh that his comments were insensitive and inappropriate."

McNabb, who led Philadelphia to two straight NFC title games, was taken aback by the remarks. During his weekly news conference Wednesday, he said he would not accept an apology if one were offered.

"He said what he said," McNabb

said. "I'm sure he's not the only one who feels that way, but it's somewhat shocking to actually hear that on national TV. An apology would do no good because he obviously thought about it before he said it."

McNabb was upset that none of the other panelists had confronted Limbaugh. The show features Michael Irvin and Tom Jackson, both of whom are black, along with Steve Young and Chris Berman.

"I'm not pointing at anyone, but someone should have said it," McNabb said. "I wouldn't have cared if it was the cameraman."

While saying he didn't think Limbaugh had "malicious intent," Berman said he wished he had done more Sunday.

"As cut and dried as it seems in print, I didn't think so when it went by my ears," Berman said. "I probably should have looked to soften it. ... As the quarterback of the show, I feel bad about it. I don't think it was meant the way it came out."

ESPN added Limbaugh this year to provide the fan's perspective on the show. An avid follower of the NFL, he does a weekly commentary and has segments in which he debates the other members of the panel.

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Courtesy Utah athletics

Running back Brandon Warfield is fifth in the nation in rushing with 563 yards this season.

WARREN

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"It's a shame," Bellotti said earlier this week. "Parris is a good receiver. We recruited him here, and he chose to leave. And that was his choice, not ours. I feel bad about that. We gave him a lot of breaks and took care of him."

Warren has also recently gotten in trouble with the law. After making his debut with the Utes on Aug. 28 against Utah State — catching seven passes for 103 yards in Utah's 40-20 win — he found himself under arrest.

He had attempted to steal a box of condoms from a grocery store, only to be pulled over. He eventually paid a fine.

"I just got tied up in the wrong place," Warren told the Portland Tribune, declining to discuss the situation further. "Everybody doesn't know the real story."

Running quiet

While Warren has made all the headlines — at least for Oregon fans — this week, Utah running back Brandon Warfield is the true showpiece of the Utes' offense.

He has run for 563 yards this season, crossing the scoring plane eight times. His ability to eat up ground and the clock has given the Utes the ability to spread out their offense.

"It makes it a lot easier when he is

back there," Utah quarterback Alex Smith told the Daily Utah Chronicle earlier this month. "Teams have to game-plan around him and it gives me a lot more time."

Warfield averages more than 130 yards per game rushing and ranks fifth in the NCAA.

He has been the workhorse of the Utes' attack, running the ball at least 30 times in each of Utah's first three games. Against Colorado State last week, he finished with a season-low 78 yards on 20 carries. He did, however, score a touchdown to propel Utah to the 28-21 win.

"He's scary," Bellotti said. "He's scary, one, because of his ability. He's a tremendous running back. He's got speed, he's got shiftiness, he's got power. Because they spread you out more than any team we've played, those are huge concerns because he catches the ball in the option, on reverses, on fly sweeps and just the basic running plays, but all the other things that occur because you are spread out."

Bellotti has a trusted friend in Tedford to rely on for suggestions on how to stop Warfield, but even he may not be able to help. Warfield ran for 94 yards on 30 carries against the Golden Bears, but scored three touchdowns as Utah controlled the game late to win, 31-24.

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