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New York expected to release Collins

The 31-year-old led the Giants to the Super Bowl three seasons ago

By Ralph Vacchiano
 New York Daily News (KRT)

EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J. — Kerry Collins' visit to Giants Stadium Monday morning will not be his last one. But when he returns in the near future, it will only be to say goodbye.

The 31-year-old quarterback, who led the Giants to the Super Bowl three seasons ago, said Monday he expects to be released in the next few days. He met with GM Ernie Accorsi at Giants Stadium Monday morning and told him he "wouldn't be interested" in renegotiating his

contract. And the Giants aren't interested in keeping Collins as a backup to Eli Manning at a cost of \$7 million this year.

"He basically asked me how I felt about the situation and I told him that I wouldn't be interested in doing any restructuring or taking any sort of pay cut," Collins said. "I also think it would've made things very awkward for Eli and I. I think in fairness to myself and my history here, (backing up Manning) is just something I wasn't interested in doing."

That stance was not unexpected, even though Accorsi insisted he wanted to find a way to keep Collins even after he engineered the blockbuster deal for Manning. Accorsi hoped Collins would agree to a restructuring

that would reduce his \$8.95 million salary cap number this year.

Collins said that Accorsi, who will scour a very limited trade market before releasing Collins, had laid out several options, including a contract extension with "voidable years" that would allow him to become a free agent after this season. And Accorsi insisted any renegotiation would've allowed Collins to earn his full \$7 million salary in a combination of bonuses and salary in 2004.

But the conversation between Collins and Accorsi apparently wasn't specific. One source close to Collins insisted the quarterback would have strongly considered an offer to stay if it meant he'd get his \$7 million and 2005 free agency, but an actual offer

was never made.

"We didn't talk about numbers or anything like that," Collins said. "But (restructuring) wasn't something I was interested in doing."

Besides, Collins said, he knows his future lies elsewhere since the Giants are committed to Manning.

"They feel Eli is going to be a special, special player," Collins said. "Ernie this morning even said to me he felt he's one of the three or four best college prospects that he's seen come out in the last 20 years. He mentioned guys like (John) Elway and (Dan) Marino. Hey, if they feel that strongly about him I don't blame them."

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KELLEY

continued from page 10

Tillman was motivated by a personal challenge. He believed in a call to duty. He believed he hadn't done enough for his country.

Apparently all you believed was the Chargers hadn't done enough for you.

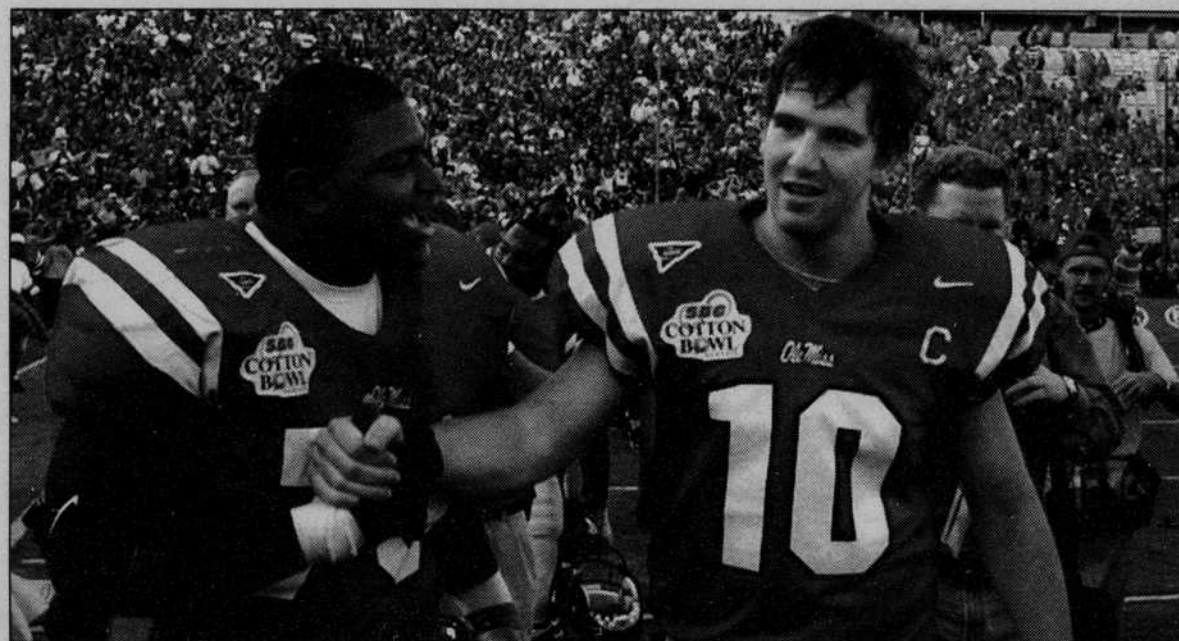
So now you're going to New York, where Friday night the fans booed Yankees shortstop Derek Jeter. You're going to New York, where a newspaper headlined a story on the struggling Alex Rodriguez, "Alex in Blunderland."

Remember the boos you heard Saturday? They were a mere harbinger of your life to come as a Giant. You're going to play in Boo York, where the fans will jeer your every incompletion. You're going to a city that expects the Giants to be in the Super Bowl every year.

When that doesn't happen you will be the focus of everything that goes wrong. Every talk show will be questioning the three draft picks the Giants gave up for you. You will be in the center of a quarterback controversy that won't disappear.

Kerry Collins? Eli Manning?

You'd better hope you're the next John Elway, who refused to go the Baltimore Colts in the 1982 draft. My guess is you won't be.



David Purdy Biloxi Sun Herald

Eli Manning (10), seen here at this season's Cotton Bowl, was selected No. 1 by San Diego but later traded to New York.

The league is littered with first-round QB flops — Akili Smith, Tim Couch, Ryan Leaf, Cade McNown.

You could have made it easy on yourself. After the announcement of Tillman's death you could have called a news conference and said you had rethought your decision.

You could have said that you wanted

to stand on the same kind of principles as Tillman. That you would accept your fate, go to San Diego and help turn around a franchise.

"I will tell you this," Holmgren said Saturday. "The Manning family — and I know Archie and I know (Indianapolis quarterback) Peyton — that's as classy a group of people as

you'll ever meet."

But this week, the Manning family's timing stunk.

Steve Kelley is a columnist for The Seattle Times. His opinions do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald. (c) 2004, The Seattle Times. Distributed by Knight Ridder/Tribune Information Services.

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