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Bulls' Curry refuses test; is swapped to New York

BY ANDREW SELIGMAN
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The Bulls dealt center Eddy Curry to the New York Knicks on Monday, ending a contentious negotiation in which Chicago insisted the restricted free agent take a DNA test over a heart problem.

In making the announcement, an obviously frustrated Bulls general manager John Paxson did not specify what Chicago got in return and he did not field questions.

"We will have an announcement tomorrow morning," Bulls public relations director Sebrina Brewster said Monday night. "All we can say right now is we traded Eddy to the Knicks."

Knicks spokesman Jonathan Supranowitz said the team declined comment on Paxson's announcement.

The Bulls had insisted that Curry take a DNA test to determine whether he's susceptible to a poten-

tially fatal heart problem. Curry, who missed the final 13 games of the regular season and the playoffs after experiencing an irregular heartbeat, balked, saying it violated his privacy.

"I would never put a player on the floor in a Chicago Bulls uniform if I didn't do everything in my power to find out all the information that was available," Paxson said. "You can debate genetic testing 'til you're blue in the face. But from what I know, from what I've learned over the last six months, that test could have helped us determine the best course of action."

Curry, drafted out of high school, averaged a career-high 16.1 points in his fourth NBA season.

The standoff stemmed from a benign arrhythmia that caused Curry to miss the final 13 games of the regular season and the playoffs.

Several prominent cardiologists cleared Curry to play, but Barry

Maron, a world-renowned specialist in hypertrophic cardiomyopathy, suggested the DNA test.

Paxson has said he understands the privacy issues involved but insisted the Bulls do not have an ulterior motive; they simply do not want a situation similar to those of former Boston Celtics guard Reggie Lewis or Loyola Marymount star Hank Gathers — players with hypertrophic cardiomyopathy who collapsed and died.

Paxson, speaking during the team's media day, told reporters the Bulls had offered Curry \$400,000 annually for the next 50 years if he failed the genetic test.

"So he would have an above-average lifestyle that would put him in a position that most other people aren't in," Paxson said. "Our intention through that whole process was to show him that we did care about him and that we were concerned about his well-being."

Phoenix signs Stoudemire to five-year contract extension

BY BOB BAUM
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Amare Stoudemire signed a five-year contract extension Monday with the Phoenix Suns worth about \$73 million.

The deal is the maximum allowed under the NBA collective bargaining agreement for the forward who jumped from high school to stardom. The exact figures won't be known until next year's salary cap is set, Suns president Bryan Colangelo said.

The extension kicks in after this season and has an opt-out clause after the 2009-10 season.

"What I've achieved now is something that I always figured I would as a kid," Stoudemire said. "I've had that type of determination since I was a youngster playing around the playgrounds, getting dirty after school."

He signed the contract a month shy of his 23rd birthday as the Suns gathered for media day preceding the start of their training camp in Tucson on Tuesday.

The 6-foot, 10-inch, 245-pound power forward played out of position at center and dominated opponents last season for the high-scoring, fast-breaking Suns.

Known for his breathtaking slam

dunks and uncanny quickness, Stoudemire averaged 26 points per game, fifth-best in the league, as a key member of a Phoenix team that won an NBA-best 62 games.

"It's huge for the franchise," said teammate and last season's MVP Steve Nash. "He's the cornerstone of this franchise."

Stoudemire, the No. 9 pick in the 2002 draft, won the Rookie of the Year award over Yao Ming in 2002-03 and has improved each season. He averaged just under 30 points a game in last year's playoffs — 37 against Tim Duncan in the Western Conference finals.

The signing follows a lucrative deal with Nike last month.

"I've just been working on my game the whole summer to try to take us to the top," Stoudemire said. "This has been a \$100 million summer for me, so I'm very proud of that. I'm just looking forward to bringing the championship home right here in Phoenix."

The Suns never have won an NBA title.

Stoudemire is one of basketball's great success stories. He was 12 when his father died, and his mother was in and out of jail. His older

brother is in federal prison. But Stoudemire never has been in trouble.

"My main thing is I just stay focused on my all-time goals, and that's to become a role model for my family and also become the best basketball player I can be," he said.

Moments after he saw the then 19-year-old work out before the 2002 draft, Suns chairman Jerry Colangelo told fellow team officials "this is our guy."

"Someone asked me a short time ago 'You know, Amare's accomplished so much what do you think his upside is?'" the elder Colangelo said on Monday. "And I said, 'If you recognize how far he's come in his game, you combine God-given talent with a work ethic that is terrific and a heart to be the very best, I don't know how high is high.'"

The long-term contract should keep him in Phoenix at least five more years.

"The fans are just a pleasure to be around," Stoudemire said. "When I'm out in public, they greet me with open arms. Also the organization has been great from the beginning. I think it's only right that I stay here and continue what I started."

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