

NFL

Owners approve Rams' relocation to Los Angeles

League also gives Chargers option to join and share

By SCHUYLER DIXON
AP Sports Writer

HOUSTON — The St. Louis Rams are moving back to Los Angeles and the San Diego Chargers will have the option to join them in a compromise approved by NFL owners Tuesday night.

The Oakland Raiders, who also wanted to move to the area, could take the Chargers' spot if they stay in San Diego, Commissioner Roger Goodell said.

The Chargers and Raiders wanted to share a new stadium in Carson, California, and the Rams wanted to move to nearby Inglewood, but neither option got the 24 votes needed for approval. After a day of negotiations in Houston, the owners approved the St. Louis move 30-2, with a first option for San Diego to share the \$1.8



AP Photo/Pat Sullivan
St. Louis Rams owner Stan Kroenke talks to the media after team owners voted Tuesday, Jan. 12, 2016, in Houston, to allow the Rams to move to a new stadium just outside Los Angeles.

billion stadium Rams owner Stan Kroenke is building in Inglewood, California.

The decision ends the NFL's 21-year absence from the nation's second-largest media market.

"I often said over those 21 years what we need is a great facility," Goodell said. "The reason the two teams left in the 1990s ... was they didn't

have an adequate stadium. I think what happened over the last years is we had two outstanding opportunities, both of these stadium projects were outstanding."

The Chargers and Raiders can continue to negotiate with their home cities, and the league will contribute \$100 million if either team builds a new stadium in their

current markets.

"I will be working over the next several weeks to explore the options that we have now created for ourselves to determine the best path forward for the Chargers," chairman Dean Spanos said.

Ray Perez, a 28-year-old Raiders fan from Sacramento who goes by the moniker Dr. Death, traveled to the Houston meeting in his usual Black Hole garb, was cautiously optimistic after hearing the news.

"I will not be completely, fully thrilled until the ink dries on paper and we know we're staying in Oakland in a new stadium," Perez said. "I'm very happy, very happy. But I'm not going to be overjoyed until we sign a stadium deal to keep the Raiders in Oakland with our own stadium."

The Chargers play 120 miles south of Inglewood in Qualcomm Stadium. The Raiders played in Los Angeles from 1982-94 and currently split a facility with baseball's Athletics, the last remaining NFL-MLB

stadium.

"Relocation is a painful process. It's painful for the fans, for the communities, for the league in general," Goodell said. "In some ways a bittersweet moment, because we were unable to get the kind of facilities done we wanted in their markets."

The Rams —based in the LA area from 1946-94 — will play in a temporary facility — probably the Los Angeles Coliseum — until the new stadium is ready for the 2019 season.

No NFL franchise has moved since the Houston Oilers went to Tennessee in 1997. The Raiders and Rams both left Los Angeles after the 1994 season.

In a report to all 32 teams days before the meetings, Goodell deemed the venues in all three existing cities inadequate.

Kroenke has said St. Louis' economy makes it difficult for an NFL franchise to thrive there.

"We understand the emotions involved of our fans," he said. "We made a decision and worked long

and hard at the various alternatives. When they didn't succeed, we worked this one to this point."

The Chargers and the city have been at odds since 2000, when owner Alex Spanos said his team needed to replace Qualcomm Stadium. That was just three years after the venue was expanded to accommodate the Chargers and Super Bowls.

Spanos has had the right to leave San Diego since 2008, but the team's efforts became more aggressive after Kroenke announced plans for the Inglewood facility. The Chargers have played in San Diego for 55 seasons after one year in Los Angeles when the former AFL franchise was born.

Oakland is still in debt from a renovation 20 years ago when the Raiders moved back from Los Angeles. City officials have said they won't seek help from taxpayers with a new stadium, and asked the NFL for more time to develop a project in a response to the Raiders' relocation plan.

Football

Seattle-based company unveils new 'four layer helmet'



VICIS via AP
This undated photo provided by VICIS, shows their ZERO1 football helmet. The helmet, unveiled recently by the Seattle-based company, has an exterior shell that can absorb hits like a car bumper and has four layers of protection.

By TIM BOOTH
AP Sports Writer

SEATTLE — A new football helmet with an exterior shell that can absorb hits like a car bumper and has four layers of protection was unveiled on Tuesday by Seattle-based VICIS, which hopes the benefit of protection will offset an expensive purchase price.

The company introduced the helmet at the AFCA convention in San Antonio this week. The ZERO1 helmet is expected to be available for testing by NCAA and NFL teams this spring with the idea that it will be available

for purchase and use for the 2016 football season, according to VICIS CEO Dave Marver.

"We've had the benefit of being able to talk to NFL and NCAA equipment managers, athletic trainers and players over the last couple of years. I didn't expect the reaction would be all that different. The helmet passes the eye test or the mirror test so to speak which for some people is a surprise because when they hear it's a safer helmet they assume it's going to be an ugly helmet and it's anything but."

The four-layer design includes two separate shells

— the exterior shell that is designed to absorb impact and an interior shell that helps with proper fitting. In between the two shells are absorbent columns designed to accept hits from various angles. The final layer is on the interior of the helmet and features memory foam to help create individual fitting for each player.

The first practical testing for the company will come this spring when the helmets are made available to a handful of Power Five colleges and NFL teams for additional field research.

The top-of-the-line helmet manufactured by VICIS will cost about

\$1,500, which is significantly more than what the majority of helmets cost. Marver said there is a more affordable model being designed for high school and youth players to be unveiled in 2017.

"People understand the sport needs better equipment. The sport needs better and different solutions and they understand we have taken a very scientific approach to this," Marver said. "We've invested millions of dollars into (research and development) in something that is new and different and better. And they understand the importance of head health."

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