

# Hornets GM confident Paul will stay

By the Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS -- Hornets star guard Chris Paul did not request a trade Monday in his meeting with new coach Monty Williams and top team officials, general manager Dell Demps said.

Demps, essentially in his first day on the job since his hiring last week, added that he was confident Paul would still be with New Orleans when the coming season opens.

The meeting was held at an undisclosed downtown location before Demps made his way back to the Hornets' corporate offices to meet with reporters.

Although Paul did not speak with the media, the team released statement from him that indicated the three-time All-Star was encouraged by the Hornets' recent coaching and front-office overhaul.

"The meeting went well. It was great to get an opportunity to sit down with coach Williams, president Weber and our new general manager, Dell Demps," Paul's statement said.

"I expressed my desire to win and I like what they said about the direction that they want to take the team. I have been a Hornet my

entire career and I hope to represent the city of New Orleans and state of Louisiana for many years to come."

Paul has two years remaining before he can opt out of his current contract with the Hornets. However, he said at his charity golf outing earlier this month that he would welcome a trade if the Hornets did not demonstrate a willingness to give him a supporting cast that would make the club good enough to compete with any team in the NBA.

Only days after making that statement, Paul fired his agent and hired Leon Rose, who also represents LeBron James. Paul also agreed to work with James' LMRM marketing agency.

Soon after, Paul's representatives told the Hornets that Paul was interested in being traded, but the Hornets countered by scheduling a meeting in New Orleans that included Demps, Williams and team president Hugh Weber, Paul's brother, C.J. Paul, and Rose.

"It was a very productive meeting. I was encouraged," Demps said.

"It was the first time I met Chris. It was a good opportunity for us to open the lines of communication. Chris had some very good points. ... He was energetic,

he was open, he was honest. He showed that he wants to win, and that's what we want to do, as well."

Williams and Weber stood nearby but did not comment as Demps discussed the meeting with Paul, which Demps said lasted about an 90 minutes.

While Paul cannot force a trade, the Hornets opted to trade Baron Davis during the 2004-05 season when he had a falling out with the club. New Orleans then began a rebuilding process that essentially began with the drafting of Paul in the summer of 2005. Paul went on to become rookie of the year and quickly became the face of the franchise.

Demps said he hoped Paul would not become disruptive as long as he remains in New Orleans.

Demps did not go into detail about the Hornets' presentation to Paul. He said for competitive reasons he needed to keep much of what they discussed private.

The Hornets' payroll is close to the NBA's luxury tax threshold, and team officials have said they do not want to pay the tax or take on new debt while a planned sale of the club from majority owner George Shinn to his partner, Gary Chouest, is pending.

Still, Demps asserted, "There's always ways to be creative."



Chris Paul takes a break during a game last season. Paul met with team officials on Monday to discuss the state of the Hornets and his future.

# Hinrich adjusting to rebuilding Wizards, Wall

By The Associated Press

WASHINGTON -- Kirk Hinrich still remembers his surprise and dismay being traded to the Washington Wizards.

That was more than a month ago. Now he gets to help John Wall adjust to the NBA.

"Whenever you get the No. 1 pick and a guy has talented as John, you have the young cast around him, it's a sense of rebuilding," Hinrich said Monday. "But I feel like we have the talent and if we play the right way and consistently play hard every night, I feel like we can surprise a lot of people."

Hinrich originally said he was a bit surprised when the Chicago Bulls dealt him in June to free up cap space for a free-agent class that included LeBron James.

While admitting that he has "maybe a little bit" of a chip on his shoulder following the deal, Hinrich emphasized his enthusiasm over the new start.

"I'm very appreciative of my time in Chicago, they gave me an opportunity to first of all become a pro player and then grow as one," Hinrich said. "I was in Chicago for so long and I appreciate my opportunity, but I'm excited to go to a new organization. It's like almost coming into the league again. I'm very motivated and excited to play great basketball."

Hinrich, who averaged 13.4 points and 5.8 assists for the Bulls since being drafted seventh overall in 2003, from a playoff



Kirk Hinrich (middle) talks to reporters after joining the Wizards.

team to one that won 26 games.

"The direction we are trying to go -- obviously we are building -- but when you build you also need some veterans, some leaders, players that have been through the wars before," Wizards GM Ernie Grunfeld said. "Kirk is definitely one of those players. He's been a winner his whole career in college and in the pros. ... We expect him to provide a lot of leadership on our team."

In Chicago, Hinrich played alongside and mentored Bulls point guard Derrick Rose, who, like Wall, was the first player selected when he entered the league in 2008.

"I really feel like I got too much credit. He was very good," Hinrich said. "I think most of it was by example. That's the way I lead. I became more vocal as I get to know my teammates better and I've gotten older. I'm just

excited to have a chance to play with John. He's a very athletic and talented young kid and I'm just excited to play with him."

The Wizards currently have eight players on the roster 25 years old or younger, including four rookies.

Gilbert Arenas, who was suspended for 50 games last season for bringing guns to the locker room, will also return.

That leaves the Wizards with three players who are primarily point guards.

Though Grunfeld emphasized that Hinrich is a "very, very versatile player."

"I probably feel more comfortable playing the one, it's a little easier," Hinrich said. "But I feel I am very capable of playing both positions and starting in training camp, that's going to be a challenge, trying to figure exactly where I fit in."

# McGrady works out with Bulls, wants deal

By Andrew Seligman  
AP SPORTS WRITER

CHICAGO -- Seven-time All-Star Tracy McGrady worked out for the Chicago Bulls on Monday with hopes of landing with the team he turned down a decade earlier.

McGrady could be a low-risk addition for a reconfigured team coming off back-to-back first-round playoff exits. The Bulls wouldn't have to pay him much and could refuse to fully guarantee the deal if they make an offer, but there are big questions surrounding his health.

The two-time scoring champion had microfracture surgery on his left knee in February 2009 and appeared in just 30 games last season with New York and Houston, averaging 8.2 points. Besides concerns about his condition, another issue is whether he'll accept a more limited role.

On his Twitter account in the past week, McGrady praised the Bulls and referenced the courtship 10 years ago when he was one of the top prizes in a free agent class that included Grant Hill and Tim Duncan.

A three-piece band, cheerleaders, team mascot Benny the Bull and then-general manager Jerry Krause greeted him at O'Hare,

but with little talent in place, the Bulls struck out. McGrady wound up leaving Toronto for Orlando, instead.

Chicago went after top prizes LeBron James, Dwyane Wade and Chris Bosh.

They decided to former a superstar trio in Miami, and the Bulls landed two-time All-Star forward Carlos Boozer, sharpshooter Kyle Korver and guard Ronnie Brewer, who all played together in Utah.

They also added backup guard C.J. Watson and signed veteran forward Kurt Thomas to a one-year deal in a move that was announced on Monday, giving them a strong defender and rebounder to go with Boozer and Noah. And they have a new coach in Tom Thibodeau.

"I've been looking forward to seeing Thibodeau get a head coaching job for a number of years," said Thomas, who played for New York when Thibodeau was a Knicks assistant.

"He definitely put in his time. He's a hard worker. He's very passionate about the game. And to finally see him get this opportunity and be a part of it is definitely a blessing."

The new coach, new additions and core that was in place were big draws for Thomas.

# Bengals owner would sign Owens

By Joe Kay  
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

CINCINNATI -- Bengals owner Mike Brown is trying to produce his own reality show.

Terrell Owens. Chad Ochocinco. Together in Cincinnati.

Brown said on Monday that the team has discussed a contract with Owens and his agent, Drew Rosenhaus. The Bengals passed on the chance to sign the 36-year-old receiver after a tryout in March, but have given it more thought now that he remains a free agent.

If Owens accepts the offer, the Bengals would lead the league in reality show stars. Receiver Chad Ochocinco appeared on "Dancing With the Stars" in the offseason, and has a dating show called "Ochocinco: The Ultimate Catch" currently playing on VH1. Right after Ochocinco's show comes "The T.O. Show."

While Ochocinco eliminated two contestants in his recent show, Owens donned a metrosexual look for a fashion show -- bare chest under an open jacket and a wig.

What they'd do together in a locker room would get some attention, too.

Brown noted that Owens caught the winning 57-yard touchdown pass in Dallas' 31-22 victory over the Bengals in 2008.

"I think that I would rather have him line up on our side of the ball than the other side of the ball," Brown said, at the team's annual preseason luncheon. "I can remember playing Dallas a few years ago when he caught a pass across the middle that won the game for them."

"So I've seen him do it. I've seen him do it against us. I'd like him to be here and do that against somebody else."

So would Ochocinco, who is a close friend and lobbied unsuccessfully for the Bengals to sign Owens in March.

Instead, they chose receiver Antonio Bryant and gave him a four-year deal.

One change since then: Cincinnati's quarterback has joined the lobbying effort. Carson Palmer has been working out with Owens in California, and excitedly called coach Marvin Lewis about making a run to sign the receiver.

"Carson was really impressed with a lot of the things that Terrell was doing," Lewis said. "Carson's comments to me -- I guess the



Terrell Owens could be heading to the Bengals this season.

word is they resonate well."

The final say rests with Brown, who has a history of giving chances to players with trouble in their past. He repeatedly brought back receiver Chris Henry, who was arrested five times and died last year in a fall off his fiancée's truck.

In an interview with The Associated Press earlier this month, Owens pointed out that he was on good behavior last season in Buffalo, where he caught 55 passes for 829 yards and five touchdowns -- his least-productive full season since early in his career with San Francisco.

"Yes, people can make mistakes," Brown said. "It doesn't mean that they go on the rest of their lives making mistakes. They can get their ship pointed in the right direction. This is a 36-year-old man. He's been through a lot."

Brown formed his opinion about Owens during a one-on-one meeting last March in conjunction with his tryout.

"When he was here, I was surprised," Brown said. "I met with him personally and privately. He is not at all the way his public image is depicted. He's a pleasant person, a quiet person. I found him engaging. And I do trust my own eyes on this sort of thing. I think that if he chose to come here, that he could help our team, and we'll see how that plays out. It's going to be his decision."

Lewis had to defend against Owens throughout his career.

The St. Louis Rams reportedly are also interested in Owens.

If he chooses Cincinnati, he could be paired on the outside with Ochocinco. Lewis said Bryant could move into an inside slot position.

## SAVE THE LAST PITCH



Team U.S.A. pitcher Jennie Finch responds to a teammate's play in the World Cup of Softball. Finch, 29, announced she would retire from softball after this season to spend more time with her family. The World Cup was her final international competition.