

Weak defense could hurt Chiefs

By Doug Tucker

The Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Remove the two best players from a mediocre defense and what do you get?

The Kansas City Chiefs. Gone from the unit that yielded a generous 5,304 yards and 344 points a year ago are linebacker Donnie Edwards, who defected to San Diego, and safety Jerome Woods, who broke his leg in the preseason.

The only significant personnel upgrade for a defense badly in need of help looks to be rookie tackle Ryan Sims, a 315-pound North Carolina product taken with the sixth pick.

But there's a problem, at least for the short run. By the time he finally set foot on the practice field last week after missing the entire preseason in a bitter holdout, Sims was more like a 330-pound North Carolina product.

"Fat and out of shape," said a disgruntled coach Dick Vermeil. "Just as I expected."

How much help Sims will be in the first few weeks is anybody's guess. The Chiefs may ask for a two-game exemption on Sims that would allow him to practice but not count against the 53-man roster.

"He's a fine football player," Chiefs president Carl Peterson said the day Sims finally showed up. "But he's got a lot to learn, and he knows it."

Another big question mark is how well first-year starter Mike Maslowski does as the replacement for Edwards, the team leader in tackles the past four years.

Replacing Woods will be 10-year veteran Jason Belser.

Two days after Sims got a team-record signing bonus of almost \$10 million, an obviously unhappy Tony Gonzalez, with three Pro Bowl appearances on his resume, signed a one-year tender for \$3.05 million.

Unlike Sims, the 6-foot-5 tight end seemed fresh and exceptionally well conditioned as he went through his first

practice. But he spent the entire training camp on the beaches in Southern California and has much catching-up to do.

"Tony's kind of a gym rat. He likes to play," said offensive coordinator Al Saunders. "We'd much rather have him here than on the beach in LA with an umbrella drink."

But what of his attitude? Will an unhappy Gonzalez be a productive Gonzalez?

"I've put it all behind me," Gonzalez insisted. "The contract issue and all that stuff ... I have to push that out of my mind and I have to do it not only for myself, but for my teammates and my coaches. Now it's time to get down to work and doing what I love to do, what I do best, play football."

Potentially, the Chiefs could put a powerful offense on the field in Vermeil's second year. Priest Holmes, last year's NFL rushing champ, has looked good all summer. So has the big newcomer at left tackle, Willie Roaf.

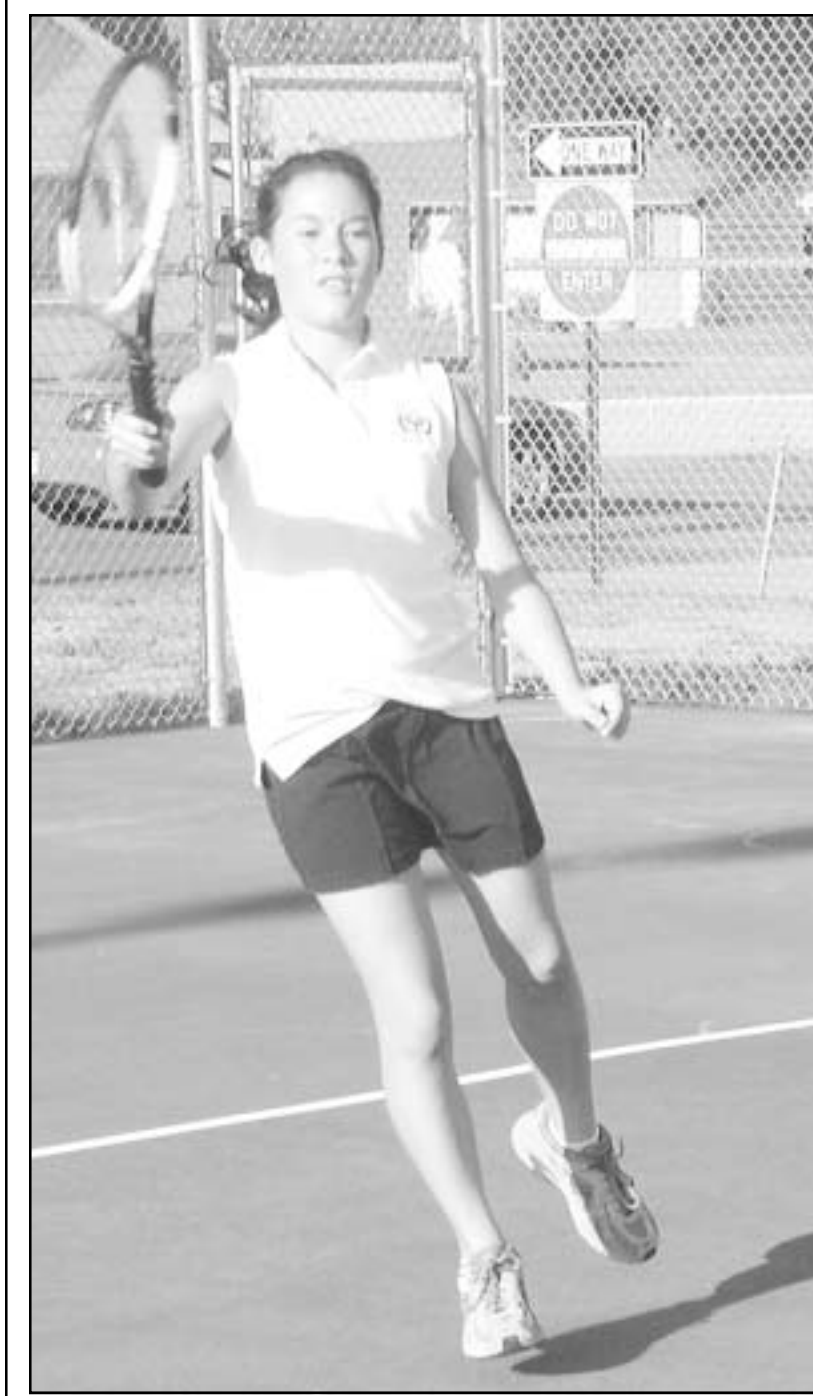
A seven-time Pro Bowler with New Orleans, Roaf came to the Chiefs for a fourth-round draft pick after missing nine games last season following major knee surgery. His mobility may not be what it used to be, but he looked absolutely dominant as a pass blocker all preseason.

"He's gotten better each preseason game," said Saunders.

With Roaf and right guard Will Shields, the Chiefs have two offensive linemen with a total of 14 Pro Bowl appearances. Another key newcomer is WR Johnnie Morton, who had four 1,000-yard receiving seasons the past five years.

So at least on potential, that's a left tackle, right guard, tight end and running back all with Pro Bowl pedigrees.

"But one of them missed all training camp," said Saunders. "One of them is coming off major surgery. We've got three guys on the offensive line that are starting in new positions. We've got two new starting wide receivers."



They're ready to get started



Senior Michelle Kibel (above) returned a serve Tuesday afternoon during the Cowgirls tennis team's sports drink scrimmage at Steever Park. The players practiced playing singles and doubles. Freshman May Davis (left) ran to hit a ball back to her opponent. The varsity team will travel to Larned on Thursday for their first meet of the season. The junior varsity team will play at the same time in Scott City.

Photos by Rachel Miscall/The Goodland Daily News

Arrested Chiefs' tackle won't be punished

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) — Kansas City tackle Willie Roaf, who was arrested over the weekend for allegedly driving under the influence, will face no disciplinary action by the Chiefs, coach Dick Vermeil said Tuesday.

Roaf, a seven-time Pro Bowl per-

former with New Orleans now in his first season with the Chiefs, was stopped by police early Saturday.

"Willie and I talked about it (Monday). I don't really plan any discipline," Vermeil said.

"First off, it comes down from the league more so than us. I think the pun-

ishment for Willie is his own embarrassment. We talked to the whole squad about it ... in an NFL session. In some way, maybe a teammate let him down. If they sensed he had too much beer, they shouldn't have let him drive."

Vermeil said he had decided not to fine Roaf, the starting left tackle.

"Both Willie and I discussed it. I'm not a big fine guy. I think sometimes the greatest punishment is self," he said. "He's embarrassed about it."

In some instances, players who are guilty of driving under the influence are subject to more frequent testing by the league for drug and alcohol abuse.

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