

Titans owner: It's time to draft a new quarterback

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tract, agent Bus Cook told The Tennessee.

"All I know is Steve is a starter and he is one of the best quarterbacks in football," Cook said. "And if the Titans do in fact draft a new quarterback and they want Steve to stay around and be a mentor to him, then he needs to have a long-term deal. Otherwise it doesn't make sense for him to stay around."

The drama took another turn Monday when McNair was told to leave the Titans' practice facility until his contract situation is ironed out.

McNair is scheduled to count \$23.46 million against Tennessee's salary cap in 2006, including a base salary of \$9 million. The Titans would like to restructure his contract to lower the cap number, but talks between Cook and the team are stagnant, leading to a chance the

Titans could release McNair.

The Titans have been reluctant to offer McNair a deal containing guarantees beyond 2006. Cook is interested in a contract that would pay McNair a hefty signing bonus, along with guarantees.

"He is a starter. Why would he want to mentor a young guy to take his place? He is not ready for the rocking chair," Cook said. "It doesn't make sense for Steve McNair to take a huge cut in pay ... to be a mentor for some young guy no matter who it is. It might be great for Tennessee, but it wouldn't be good for Steve."

USC's Matt Leinart, Texas' Vince Young and Vanderbilt's Jay Cutler are the top three quarterbacks in the draft. The Titans have sent scouts, coaches and officials to Cutler and Young's pro days, and expect to do the same for Leinart.

Cook said he didn't believe the Titans could afford both McNair and a top-rated quarterback draftee.

McNair has a Super Bowl appearance, two AFC Championship berths and a share of the MVP award in 2003 on his resume, and he also threw for 3,161 yards last season with 16 touchdowns on an offense that featured three rookie receivers.

Titans General Manager Floyd Reese said the team is getting closer to working out a deal with McNair. Reese deferred to the team owner for talk on draft decisions.

"Coming from his lips, he carries a bunch of weight. He's the boss," Reese said. "But I think he is probably right. It is no surprise to anybody in the football world that it's getting about time (to draft a quarterback). It is a position we have to address."

WNBA DRAFT

Sting adds versatility in Currie

By Herbert L. White
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The Charlotte Sting hope a dash of Currie will take them out of the WNBA basement.

The Sting, which finished a league-worst 6-28 in 2005, selected 6-0 guard/forward Monique Currie from Duke with the third overall pick and selected 6-5 center Tye'sha Fluker from Tennessee with the 10th. In the second round, Charlotte selected 5-7 Missouri guard LaToya Bond with the 27th pick.

Currie averaged 15.2 points, 6.2 rebounds and 3.0 assists in 140 career games with the Blue Devils. She finished her career as the only player in ACC history to register over 2,000 points, 800 rebounds, 400 assists and 200 steals.

"Monique is a very versatile player who sees the floor well, passes well, is a good rebounder and has the ability to get to the free throw line often," said Sting General Manager Trudi Lacey. "We thought she would be a good fit with the core of players we have."

In 2005-06, Currie averaged 16.4 points, 5.8 rebounds and 2.8 assists while hitting 47.5 percent (202-425) and a career-best 42 percent (42-100) from three-point range as a senior. She turned in the ACC's only triple double this season, against Florida State.

A Kodak All-American for the second straight year, Currie is only the second player in Duke history as a repeat honoree.

During the course of her career, the Washington, D.C. native helped the Blue Devils to three Final Four appearances, including the championship game Tuesday when they lost to Maryland.

In 2004-05, Currie averaged 17.5 points, 7.1 rebounds and 3.4 assists and was named the 2005 ACC player of the year.

"This is a dream come true for me," said Currie. "I've been a fan of the league since its inception, and this season, I have really been looking forward to becoming a part of the

league. I am looking to come in and contribute and make an impact. I can score, and I am really looking to put the ball in the basket, if that's what they need me to do."

Fluker averaged 9.3 points and 4.9 rebounds while shooting 532 (133-250) from the floor this season for Tennessee. She finished ranked seventh in school history in games played (140) and 12th in career blocks (88).

"With the 10th pick, we wanted to fill a void in our post position. We wanted some help in terms of rebounding," Lacey said. "We think that she will be able to give us that."

A three-time All-SEC academic selection, Fluker helped lead Tennessee to three Final Four appearances, two regular season SEC titles, two SEC tournament titles and a record of 125-19 over her four-year career.

"I am so excited," said Fluker. "I'm ready to work hard and do whatever the coaching staff needs me to do. I'm a physical post player and I like to get in on the block and bang and post up."

A native of Pasadena, Calif., Fluker was named a Top 10 finalist for the Naismith National Player of the Year Award and was selected to participate in the inaugural McDonald's All-American game following her senior season at John Muir High School.

Bond averaged 17.2 points, 3.8 rebounds and 3.1 assists while shooting .501 (185-369) from the field for the Tigers this season. An All-Big 12 first team pick, she was also named to the All-Big 12 defensive team.

"LaToya is a versatile athletic guard who can score off the dribble," said Lacey. "That will be a great asset to us considering the rule change to a 24-second shot clock. She adds depth to our team at the point guard position."

A native of Urbana, Ill., Bond averaged 10.8 points in 110 games as a Tiger and is one of three players in Missouri women's history to score 1,000 points and pass for 300 assists.

The Sting's season begins on May 20 at home against the expansion Chicago Sky.

Sporty M45 could use some beefing up on amenities

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When Infiniti entered the car market in 1989 it seemed bent on taking on Jaguar with its marvelous Q45, at the time with the most powerful production sedan available.

Fast forward to 2006 and Infiniti seems more concerned with BMW. With each revision or new introduction, Infiniti's cars are becoming more sports oriented with luxury getting second billing.

Not that the latest version of the M45 isn't a great place to spend time. The saddle-bag tan seats are as comfortable as your favorite armchair, but far more supportive. The generous rosewood inserts throughout the cabin rivals fine furniture. And the

stereo system could easily blow your home stereo system away.

But every luxury car offers those amenities these days. Few offer the kind of performance Infiniti does. The M45's V8 comes straight from the Q45. At 335 horses and 340 pounds-feet of torque available, it should easily outpace the Q to 60 mph. It's lighter but not what I would call a lightweight. The M45 is also rear-wheel drive, which gives it an entirely different feel. Coupled with a four-wheel independent suspension and stability control, the M45 is an adroit handler, allowing you to sweep around curves and blast down straightaways with a big grin plastered on your face. The five-speed transmission clicks through its gears smoothly. The manual shift mode is a plus.

Despite the car's attention to your need for speed, the interior wasn't given short

shrift. The dash befits a luxury sedan but it is a little busy. There are lots of buttons to push as well as a huge control knob, called a Controller. Yes, it's a big joystick, but you don't have to use it a lot. It's not intuitive. I couldn't figure out how to change the radio station quickly. Tinkering with the controller a few minutes revealed the secret. That's not a good thing while driving.

That aside, the M didn't have a lot of faults. The cabin was roomy enough for five and was finished with luxury car panache. Everything was power operated and such features as Bluetooth, adaptive headlights, climate controlled seats, intelligent key, dual zone climate controls, brake assist, voice recognition and 19-inch, five-spoke wheels were standard. Missing was a rear backup camera and navigation. At \$50,760, those are things expected.

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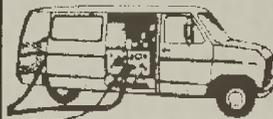
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