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Neck, head problems land Chiefs' Holmes on PUP list

By Len Pasquarelli
ESPN.com
(Archive)

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In a move that had been anticipated, and which might well speed up the end of his career, the [Kansas City Chiefs](#) on Monday afternoon placed injured tailback [Priest Holmes](#) on the reserve/physically unable to perform list, meaning the nine-year veteran will miss at least the first six games of the season.

Kansas City also placed defensive back [William Barte](#) on the PUP list as the Chiefs made 16 transactions to reach the 75-player roster limit that is mandatory by Tuesday.



Holmes

The Chiefs also released 14 players. With the exception of three-year veteran receiver [Darrell Hill](#) and two-year veteran quarterback [Jeff Smoker](#), all were either rookies or first-year veterans. About the only notable member of that group was wide receiver [Craponson Thorpe](#), a fourth-round choice in the 2005 draft.

Head coach Herm Edwards had strongly suggested last week that Holmes, who was on the PUP list at the outset of camp but has not been with the Chiefs for weeks, would not be ready for the start of the season. And there remains considerable speculation that Holmes, believed to be back in his hometown of San Antonio, will never play again because of severe neck and head trauma sustained in a head-to-head collision with San Diego linebacker [Shawne Merriman](#) last Oct. 30.

Holmes has been treated by specialist Dr. Robert Watkins of Los Angeles since suffering the injury, which ended his 2005 season after only seven games. The team has been closely monitoring Holmes' situation and has been closely following the reports of Dr. Robert Watkins, a spine surgeon who has examined many athletes.

It appears that Holmes, who has appeared in only 15 games over the last two seasons, first because of a career-threatening hip injury in 2004 and then last year's head-and-neck trauma, is prepared to abide by Watkins' verdict on his football future.

"It's not what it will do to me today," Holmes said during the offseason. "It's what it will do when I'm 40 or 50."

Holmes, 32, has not worked out in organized football drills in the offseason and his usual conditioning and weight lifting regimens have been curtailed by his back woes. Because he was on the PUP list at the start of camp, Holmes could not work out with the team until he passed a physical exam. It is doubtful he will be back on the field anytime soon, but the Monday move does buy him some time.

Watkins has cautioned Holmes about the potential long-term ramifications of another back or neck injury. To bolster the tailback depth chart in Holmes' continuing absence, the Chiefs in early August acquired [Michael Bennett](#), a former Minnesota first-round selection, from New Orleans for a fourth-round draft choice. Bennett will serve as the top backup to starting tailback [Larry Johnson](#).

In his first three seasons in Kansas City (2001-03), after signing as an unrestricted free agent, Holmes averaged 1,530 yards and 18.7 rushing touchdowns. In the past two seasons, the nine-year veteran totaled 1,343 yards and 20 touchdowns. In 2005, he ran for only 451 yards, his lowest output since his 1997 rookie season in Baltimore.

One of the game's top all-around tailbacks, Holmes has carried 1,734 times for 8,035 yards and 86 touchdowns in 109 games. He also has 334 receptions for 2,945 yards and eight touchdowns.

Len Pasquarelli is a senior NFL writer for ESPN.com. To check out Len's chat archive, [click here](#).

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