

Owens finally released by Eagles

Rob Maaddi
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

PHILADELPHIA — Terrell Owens is free to play for any team willing to have him.

The Philadelphia Eagles released the exiled Owens on Tuesday, ending a tumultuous, two-year relationship with the wide receiver.

Owens was due a \$5 million roster bonus on Wednesday, so the Eagles had to cut him or trade him before then to avoid paying him the money.

The move was a formality because Owens was kicked off the team in November following a series of incidents and infractions, including repeated criticism of quarterback Donovan McNabb.

The Eagles announced the cut in a one-sentence statement. Team officials said they would not comment.

The Eagles gave Owens and his agent, Drew Rosenhaus, permission to talk with other teams in January. The former All-Pro met with the Denver Broncos. Miami and Dallas reportedly have interest in Owens, and Kansas City president Carl Peterson has said he'd consider giving him a one-year, incentive-laden deal.

Owens helped the Eagles reach the Super Bowl in his first season in Philadelphia, but his problems started when he demanded a new contract just one year into a seven-year, \$48.97 million deal.

He criticized management, feuded with McNabb, violated team policies and eventually was banished seven games into

last season. An arbitrator upheld the Eagles' decision to suspend Owens without pay for four games and deactivate him for the final five games.

Owens was set to earn base salaries of \$770,000 plus \$7.5 million in bonuses in 2006, \$5.5 million in 2007, \$6.5 million in 2008, \$7.5 million in 2009, and \$8.5 million in 2010.

It's unlikely he'll get a similar deal from another team.

The Eagles were 17-5 in games Owens played, including playoffs, and 4-9 without him. They finished 6-10 last year, missing the playoffs for the first time since 1999.

Owens came to the Eagles after eight often-controversial seasons in San Francisco with a reputation for being a playmaker. However, his selfish behavior and flamboyant touchdown celebrations often overshadowed his performance on the field.

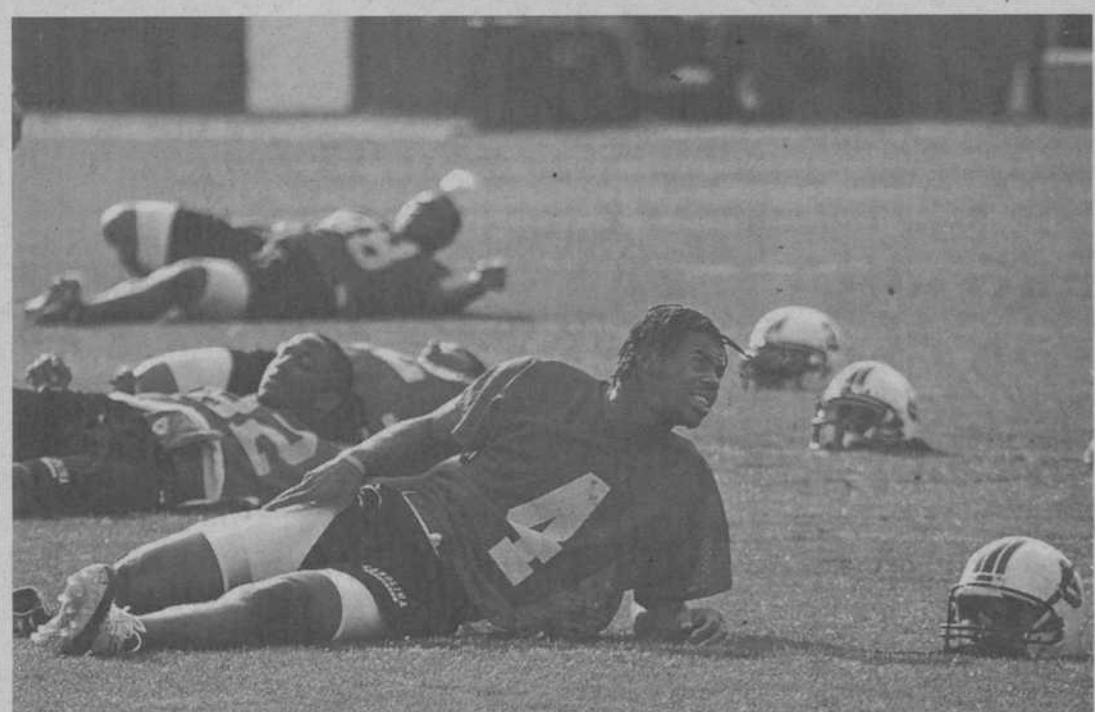
He caught 77 passes for 1,200 yards and 14 touchdowns in 2004, and made a valiant return from ankle surgery to play in Philadelphia's loss to New England in the Super Bowl.

From there, it was downhill.

Owens took his first verbal shot at McNabb last April, suggesting the five-time Pro Bowl quarterback was tired in the fourth quarter against the Patriots.

McNabb responded harshly, and the two didn't speak for a prolonged period in training camp. They briefly reconciled their relationship and performed well together on the field — Owens had 47 catches for 763 yards and six touchdowns in seven games last year.

Owens was sent home for one week from training camp last August after a heated dispute with coach Andy Reid.



Juan Blas / THE GAMECOCK

USC receiver Sidney Rice warms up before spring practice Tuesday. Rice leads a corps of receivers that includes sophomore Kenny McKinley and a returning Syvelle Newton.

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to graduation, Spurrier indicated there was an emphasis on coaching the new players at these positions. "We're trying to get these new linemen, offense and defense, and linebackers ready to play. It's an important spring for

a lot of guys."

3. Running back Cory Boyd continued to look sharp in his second day of practice, especially receiving passes out of the backfield. Boyd missed all of last season because of suspension.

With the practice open to fans and media, more than

100 people showed up at the Bluff Road practice facility across from Williams-Brice Stadium. The players wore shorts and jerseys but no pads. The Gamecocks will participate in their first contact practice Thursday.

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about Tennessee's chances of making it past that point.

Watch out for Gonzaga. They played a weak schedule and racked up wins going undefeated in a weak conference. But even so, they have the easiest path to the Final Four.

They are in the bracket with Memphis, the weakest No. 1 seed, and UCLA, the weakest number two seed (Tennessee doesn't even count).

Plus, Adam Morrison is single-handedly bringing the White Trash 'Stache back to the forefront of American facial hair. And I respect that.

Don't be a hero and pick Air Force. Listen, I love the Air Force. It is fantastic. My brother-in-law is in the Air Force. But Air Force isn't going to beat Illinois. Air Force lost to New Mexico, BYU, San Diego State and Wyoming (twice).

Air Force couldn't beat Illinois if Dee Brown and

his knee socks were the only two Fighting Illini who showed up — and his knee socks had a pulled groin.

Finally, if you really want to make good picks, just ask the person who knows the least about basketball. They will be the ones sitting at the computer making comments like "Oh, I'll pick Florida! I wish I had Joakim Noah's hair!"

And they will be the ones bumping me back down to my home in second place — again.



Bring a completed bracket to The Gamecock office, located on the 3rd floor of the Russell House by Thursday, March 16, at noon to enter. Make sure to include your name and phone number.

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