

Knicks bringing back Chauncey Billups next season

Former CU Buff, Denver Nugget will receive \$14.2 million next year

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NEW YORK — The New York Knicks are bringing Chauncey Billups back for next season.

The Knicks announced Wednesday that they are keeping the veteran point guard, deciding his leadership outweighs the savings they would have earned by waiving him this week.

The Knicks would have been obligated to pay Billups only \$3.7 million if they cut him within five days after the season. Instead, he will be on the books for \$14.2 million next season, when he will run a team in its first full season with Amare Stoudemire and Carmelo Anthony together.

“Chauncey, Amare and Carmelo are a great nucleus, as we continue to look to improve our team going into the offseason,” team president Donnie Walsh said in a statement. “Chauncey is an extremely talented and experienced point guard — we are very happy to have him back.”

The Knicks acquired Billups along with Anthony from Denver in February. He averaged 17.5 points with the Knicks but battled a pair of injuries, missing six games with a bruised left quadriceps in March, then straining a tendon in his left knee during Game 1 of the playoffs and missing the final three games of New York's loss to Boston. Walsh said those injuries weren't long-term concerns.

Billups will be 35 in September and said this week he hoped to return to New York for his 15th NBA season. After playing most of his career at 215 pounds, Billups said Monday he planned to come in at 210 next season to better handle the pace of Mike D'Antoni's system. he insists he has plenty of basketball left.

“My body has been great,” Billups said. “I'm 34, not 39. My first five years I didn't play that much anyway, unfortunately, but my body is fine.”

There wouldn't be many point guard options this summer better than Billups, a former NBA finals MVP who is a top late-game performer. He didn't take long to prove it in New York, hitting a go-ahead 3-pointer with 1:01 left in a win at Miami on Feb. 27, just four days after his Knicks debut.

But the sweep by Boston was an unusually early exit for the five-time All-Star, who reached the conference finals seven straight years with Detroit and Denver from 2003-09, and said he wanted to be around when the Knicks brought championship-caliber basketball back to New York.

“Getting swept in the first round, I don't do this,” Billups said. “This is not fine with me, so I like to play later in the season, I want an opportunity.”

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