

Bonds, Giants pen deal, almost

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Barry Bonds is back with his hometown team — well, maybe. Bonds and the San Francisco Giants finally completed negotiations on a \$15.8 million, one-year contract Monday night after the slugger spent hours at the ballpark being examined by team doctors. But, in the deal that was set to be finalized, a new development today has brought it to a halt — for the moment, at least.

Bond's contract is not final yet because the commissioner's office rejected the deal, reportedly because it contained a personal-appearance provision and other contested language. The team revised and delivered documents, but according to WashingtonPost.com, Jeff Borris, agent for Bond's, said, "At this time, Barry is not signing the new documents."

Bonds had earlier said his body feels great and he's ready to chase down Hank Aaron — no matter how long it takes.

The club had announced the deal, which was two months in negotiations, after the sides agreed on financial terms Dec. 7, the last day of baseball's winter meetings. Those terms do not seem to be the matter in contention, language is, according to Borris.

The 42-year-old Bonds was planning to focus on next season. He has 734 home runs, 22 from breaking

Aaron's career record, and he plans to play beyond this year if he fails to set the mark in 2007.

"I think I'll be around until I'm 100, or at least try to," Bonds said.

Before the anticipated deal could be completed, Bonds had to pass a physical and the parties had to work out complicated language regarding his behavior and what would happen if he were to be indicted.

A federal grand jury is investigating whether Bonds perjured himself when he testified in 2003 in the Bay Area Laboratory Co-Operative steroid distribution case that he hadn't knowingly taken any performance-enhancing drugs.

"I knew things would work out. This is where I always wanted to play and always loved to play. The city of San Francisco is what I love. The people of San Francisco are who I love. There's no better place for me to be," Bonds said. "This is my history. The people in San Francisco deserve it all."

Before the deal hit a snag, on a conference call late Monday night, Bonds was asked why it took so long for the pending deal to be completed.

"I was on a skiing vacation," he said, laughing. "It didn't take any time. It's normal procedure."

As part of the original contract terms, Bonds' trainers — Harvey Shields and Greg Oliver — would not

have been allowed in the clubhouse, where they previously had their own lockers next to Bonds' space.

"I have no problems with it," Bonds said. "(Oliver) and Harvey will be with me, just outside the ballpark."

Shields and Oliver would no longer be on the Giants' payroll and they wouldn't be permitted in restricted areas in any big league ballpark. If they were to make road trips, it would be on Bonds' dime or their own, two baseball officials said, speaking on condition of anonymity because of the sensitive nature of such contractual details.

Bonds, who traveled to the Bay Area from his offseason home in Southern California, underwent X-rays and many other tests from multiple team doctors Monday.

The seven-time NL MVP waved and smiled as he left the stadium and then quickly drove away, with agent Jeff Borris in the passenger seat. The monetary terms, at least, seem to be an acceptable part of the embattled deal.

Bonds could earn another \$4.2 million in performance bonuses based on how much he plays. If he matches last year's effort — 493 plate appearances, 130 games — he would receive the entire amount.

"I'm very excited and very happy we got it all done," Bonds said earlier in the week. "I'm just glad to be on the team and glad things worked out. I think we

should be talking about team. We've got a good team that's got a chance to do something."

He may yet be able to re-join, but not at this moment. After missing all but 14 games in 2005 following three operations on his right knee, Bonds batted .270 with 26 homers and 77 RBIs and drew 115 walks last year. He passed Babe Ruth to move into second place on the career home run list May 28.

But the Giants failed to reach the playoffs for the third straight year, leaving Bonds no closer to the elusive World Series ring he has always coveted.

Bonds, who is coming off surgery on his troublesome left elbow, has been deemed healthier by the team than last year at this time. And he wound up playing regularly in 2006.

What does that mean for his chances of breaking the record?

"You can't predict what's going to happen," he said. "Pray to God my body holds up. ...I'm great."

He reportedly failed an amphetamines test last season. The *New York Daily News* said that when Bonds first learned of the result, he attributed it to a substance he took from teammate Mark Sweeney's locker.

"Everything is false. Mark Sweeney never did anything wrong. Period," Bonds said. "My relationship with Mark Sweeney is phenomenal. We are very good friends.

...We're fine."

In a previous public statement, Bonds cleared Sweeney and said, "he did not give me anything whatsoever and has nothing to do with this matter." At the time, Bonds didn't address whether he took amphetamines.

When asked Monday whether he used amphetamines, Bonds said, "I'm not going to comment on that."

Bonds, who has played 21 major league seasons, has repeatedly denied using performance-enhancing drugs.

Sabeian declined to discuss details of the pending contract, such as why the

trainers would not be allowed to be around.

"Every contract has its own twists and turns," he said.

Bonds has spent 14 years with San Francisco and helped the Giants draw 3 million fans in all seven seasons in their waterfront ballpark. He has long hoped to end his career with the team for which his late father, Bobby, and godfather, Willie Mays, once played.


"I just want to win. I want to win a championship here in San Francisco," Bonds said.

And perhaps it will come to pass.

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