

## Minnesota Vikings

# NFL Free Agency: Has Ray Edwards Played His Last Down as a Viking?

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By  
**Daniel Lewis**  
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Minnesota Vikings defensive end Ray Edwards officially became a boxer when he made his pro debut on Friday night.

As he takes up a new sport, Edwards maintains he will not return to the Vikings, even if NFL rules prevent him from becoming an unrestricted free agent.

“I’ve openly said I won’t play for the Vikings, because of the simple fact of my backup is getting paid 70 more percent than I am—there’s no way I can do that to myself,” Edwards explained. “I’d rather do what I love doing. I love doing football as well. But if there’s nobody that’s going to trade for me, I will be definitely focusing on boxing.”

The backup to whom Edwards is referring is Brian Robison, who signed a three-year, \$14.1 million contract just after the season.

But Edwards might have to consider playing again for the Vikings if his only other choice of employment is professional boxing.

Indeed, his pro boxing debut did not go quite as planned Friday night.

Though he scored a unanimous victory over T.J. Gibson in four rounds, his performance was not pretty. He stumbled against an undersized opponent at the Grand Casino in Hinckley, Minn.

He heard the same boos that Vikings fan directed at him last year. Others chanted “Overrated! Overrated!”



Tom Zbikowski he is not.

Edwards himself was the first to admit that he has a lot of work ahead.

“I got some things to work on,” Edwards said.

The fight featured minimal meaningful action. The only excitement during the match came when Edwards threw the much smaller Gibson to the mat during the second round.

Even then, the move was illegal.

“This ain’t football. You can’t throw people like that,” said Edwards’ manager Jeff Warner.

The underwhelming performance might force the sixth-year player to return to the Vikings if the rules of the 2011 season make him a restricted free agent.

Edwards has asserted, though, that he is seriously considering a future in boxing and not just toying with another occupation as the NFL labor fight persists.

His current status in the NFL is in limbo because of the lockout and his contract situation, but he said he’ll weigh his next move as his boxing career takes shape.

“It’s neck to neck. I love boxing, football and basketball,” he said.



Rick Stewart/Getty Images

At this point, the only thing he is certain about is not playing another down in a purple uniform.

“In this business, and I understand that, sometimes there’s an odd man out, and I believe that I was always that odd man out.”

The only chance of a reunion with the Vikings, Edwards said, would be if he doesn’t receive a better offer elsewhere.

As the Vikings install Robison as their new starter opposite Jared Allen, Edwards will continue to focus on boxing until the labor struggle is resolved.

He has a second bout scheduled next month.



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