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## CONLAN ANXIOUS TO LEARN RAMS DEFENSE

The doors at Rams Park on West Lincoln Avenue in Anaheim, Calif., were locked early Monday morning. There wasn't a soul around.

But the well-dressed man in the suit and tie wanted desperately to get in. It didn't matter that it was only 7:30 a.m.

Finally, someone opened the doors, the man asked where he could find the film room and he went right to work.

Shane Conlan had reported for his first day on the job.

His self-imposed assignment?

Learn the Los Angeles Rams' defense.

And in the early-morning hours, the Rams' newest member pored over the films.

"(Coach) Chuck Knox couldn't believe it," Bret Senior, Conlan's agent, said Tuesday.

But now that the Frewsburg native has signed a guaranteed three-year, \$1.8 million contract to be the Rams' starting middle linebacker in their 4-3 defense, Senior said Conlan was anxious to get started.

"He's going to be the main man," Senior said. "He's not going to be overshadowed by anybody."

So, after a six-year career in Buffalo in which he was overshadowed by the likes of Bruce Smith and Cornelius Bennett, Conlan figures to be the prime force in improving the Rams' run defense.

Last season, the Rams' had the second-worst run defense in the NFL, something the defensive-oriented Knox wanted to improve. He thinks he has the man in Conlan, Senior said.

"(Conlan) has the opportunity to play for a defense that is tailored to his skills," Senior said.

The Philadelphia-based agent said Knox told Conlan that he wanted him not only for his athletic ability, but also for the intangible things he brings to Los Angeles.

"(Knox) said, 'I need a guy to lead by example,' Senior recalled the coach saying. "I need a character guy like that to lead this defense."

Conlan, who will wear No. 56, will be replacing starting middle linebacker Larry Kelm, who the Rams apparently are making no effort to sign. Conlan will be joined by another free agent linebacker, Henry Rolling, who was formerly with the San Diego Chargers.

Senior said Conlan was expected to return to Rich Stadium today to clean out his locker.

"It's going to be emotional," Senior said.