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Wilkins' status unclear for NFC title game

Associated Press

ST. LOUIS -- Nick Lowery, who last kicked in 1996, could be the St. Louis Rams' field goal specialist in the NFC championship game.

Lowery, 43, is among the possible replacements being considered for [Jeff Wilkins](#). Wilkins has been hampered by patellar tendinitis in his left knee, his plant leg, since midseason. He missed a 42-yard field goal attempt in Sunday's 49-37 victory over the Minnesota Vikings.



Wilkins

"I do not know his status," coach Dick Vermeil said Monday. "He kicked off well, but it's a different movement. Field goal kicking bothers him; there's a lot of pain."

Vermeil said Wilkins' first kickoff aggravated the injury. He had an MRI Monday.

Other potential replacements being brought in are Scott Bentley and Marshall Young.

A player the Rams would have liked to have brought in was former Tennessee kicker Jeff Hall. The Rams already have signed Hall as a street free agent for next season, so under league rules they cannot use him now.

Lowery was fourth on the career scoring list when the season began with 1,711 points in 18 seasons, but the New York Jets let him go in 1996 because he had no leg strength. Vermeil had Lowery in for a tryout in 1998, however, and remains impressed by what he saw.

"Nick Lowery's numbers were among the best ever," Vermeil said. "The day we worked him out he hadn't lost a bit. He popped 50-yarders through like most guys pop through 40-yarders."

Lowery would give the Rams an aged set of specialists. [Mike Horan](#), 40, signed after a midseason injury to [Rick Tuten](#), is the oldest punter in NFL history.

Lowery holds the Kansas City Chiefs' record with 329 career field goals, and made 80.2 percent during his tenure from 1980-93. He also holds team records for extra points attempted and made.