



Bears sign center Kruetz to 3 year extension: \$25 Million

By John Clayton
ESPN.com

Four years ago, Olin Kruetz had the opportunity to make more money by leaving the Chicago Bears and going to the Miami Dolphins. He wanted to stay a Bear.

On Thursday, Kruetz reiterated that desire, signing a three-year, \$17.5 million extension -- with \$9 million in guarantees -- that will keep him with the Bears through 2010. He was scheduled to be a free agent after the 2007 season.



Kruetz

"It means a lot," Kruetz told The Associated Press. "The Bears didn't have to re-sign me right now and they did, and I'm thankful for that. "I can retire a Bear now."

Kruetz has been the leader of the offensive line since 1998, when the Bears drafted him in the third round. He's a great communicator along the line. Plus, he adds a degree of toughness with his blocking style.

"He's been very loyal to us," Bears general manager Jerry Angelo told AP. "Not only has he been a good football player, he's been a very loyal player and I also told Olin this: 'loyalty is a two-way street.' I wanted to make sure he saw that first hand from our perspective."

Teammates applauded the contract extension.

"He's the one guy that we can't lose," linebacker Brian Urlacher told AP. "And we're not going to."

In 2002, he stayed with the Bears by signing a six-year, \$22.56 million contract. That contract made Kruetz the fourth-highest paid center in the league. He will make \$17 million over the next two seasons before the extension kicks in.

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The Associated Press contributed to this report.