The Cleveland Browns released defensive end Frostee Rucker on Tuesday as they begin the transition to new defensive coordinator Ray Horton's version of the 3-4 defense.

Rucker has spent his entire NFL career as a traditional 4-3 defensive end and the Browns clearly did not think the 29-year-old veteran would be a fit in Horton's defensive scheme.

Signed in March as a free agent to a five-year deal worth $20.5 million with a $5 million signing bonus, Rucker was brought on board to help the Browns run defense. In that regard he paid off, as the defense went from giving up an average of 147 rushing yards per game in 2011 to 118 yards per game in 2012, moving from 30th in the NFL to 19th.

Rucker had four sacks, 48 tackles and a forced fumble as he appeared in all 16 games for the Browns

He was also a vocal supporter of former general manager Tom Heckert and coach Pat

Shurmur. (Not that that would play any role in the decision to release him, we're sure.)

"It is upsetting," Rucker said in published reports when Heckert and Shurmur were fired . "We all have the same goals and the same vision to win. It didn't happen, but we took huge strides from the team they had last year to the one this year and we competed in every game. We didn't win them all. But we competed, and we can hang with anyone and part of it is just getting over the hump. It never got to that point, but I believe in both those guys."

If Rucker was still on the Browns come Wednesday, $2 million of his base salary of $2.5 million for the 2013 season would have been guaranteed, according to published reports. So if the Browns had decided he wasn't a fit it makes sense they would release him now.

In the end, Rucker was the kind of player who was nice to have on the roster, but certainly not someone that was irreplaceable.