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Four Cardinals players were named to the Pro Bowl

on Tuesday and six others were selected as alternates.

But forgive head coach Ken Whisenhunt for hoping none of them end up playing in the Pro Bowl Game itself.

That's because the Pro Bowl will be played the week before the Super Bowl in Miami, and if the Cardinals return once again as NFC champions, their Pro Bowl players will be busy preparing for a much bigger game - Super Bowl XLIV.

"That's the plan," Whisenhunt said. "We're hoping that they're busy and talking with some of them this afternoon, that's what we said. We told them, 'This is great, but we'd really like for you to be working at that time.'"

Receiver Larry Fitzgerald, strong safety Adrian Wilson and defensive tackle Darnell Dockett each were named Pro Bowl starters for the NFC squad, while cornerback Dominique Rodgers-Cromartie was selected as a reserve.

Quarterback Kurt Warner, free safety Antrel Rolle, punter Ben Graham, kicker Neil Rackers, special teams player Sean Morey and right tackle Levi Brown were named as alternates.

"It's exciting," Whisenhunt said of the selections. "It's a further sign of respect that a number of other teams' players, fans, coaches have for our football players."

The three defensive selections were the most for the Cardinals since 1970 when safety Larry Wilson, linebacker Larry Stallings and defensive back Roger Wehrli made the Pro Bowl team.

Fitzgerald, meanwhile, became the first Cardinals player since cornerback Aeneas Williams (1994-99) to earn three consecutive Pro Bowl selections and four overall.

Whisenhunt said he was surprised Graham only made the Pro Bowl as an alternate, adding, "I don't think we need validation from that, but I certainly would have liked to have seen that because he has had a huge impact for us and our football team this year."

The selection of Brown as an alternate was a bit of a surprise, but he's obviously gaining some national respect given that two-thirds of the Pro Bowl voting is conducted by NFL players and coaches.

"I hope it provides the impetus for him to become even better," Whisenhunt said. "I think this will be recognition of the progress he's made and a lot of times when this happens, it spurs the player to work even harder in order to take that next step."

Fitzgerald's 12 receiving touchdowns tie him with the 49ers' Vernon Davis for second in the NFL behind the Patriots' Randy Moss (13). Fitzgerald also ranks second in the NFC in catches (94) and seventh in receiving yards (1,075).

Wilson has a career-high five interceptions this season and during Sunday's 31-10 win over the Rams, he also became the 10th player in NFL history to record at least 20 sacks and 20 interceptions in his career.

Dockett's seven sacks are the most in the NFL among defensive tackles and he has 15 tackles for losses.