



*Photo Courtesy: CUBuffs.com*



04/28/2011 Curtis Snyder, Associate SID

## Solder, Smith Drafted In First Round Of NFL Draft

**BOULDER** – University of Colorado offensive tackle **Nate Solder** and cornerback **Jimmy Smith** were both selected in the first round of the 2011 National Football League Draft Thursday.

Solder, 6-9 and 315-pounds, was selected by the New England Patriots with the No. 17 pick. Smith, 6-2, 205-pounds, was selected by the Baltimore Ravens with the No. 27 pick.

Solder is the highest pick for the Buffaloes since 1997 when OG **Chris Naeole** went No. 10 overall to New Orleans. He is the highest drafted offensive tackle since **Stan Brock** went No. 12 overall to New Orleans in 1980 and he is the fourth-highest drafted offensive lineman out of CU and the fifth offensive lineman taken in the first round.

Smith is the third CU cornerback taken in the first round and first since **Deon Figures** was selected No. 23 overall in 1993 by

### BUFFALO EXTRAS



**Watch:**

Jimmy Smith Selected in the 2011 NFL Draft

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**Watch:**

Nate Solder Selected in the 2011 NFL Draft

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**Watch:**

Nate Solder Senior Bowl Interview

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**Watch:**

Jimmy Smith Interception

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Pittsburgh. The highest was **Mark Haynes**, taken by the New York Giants in 1980.

With the new format of the draft, just the first round is complete as of Thursday. The second and third rounds will take place Friday with rounds 4-7 taking place Saturday.

Solder was the first offensive tackle to earn All-America honors at CU since Brock in 1979 and the first to earn consensus honors at the position for the Buffaloes. He played 2,540 out of 2,542 plays the last three years at tackle for the Buffaloes and the Buffaloes called 1,400 passing plays in that time and Solder gave up just three sacks. He allowed 21 pressures (14 as a sophomore), so in those 1,400 plays, the man he was blocked influenced the play just 26 times, or 1.8 percent.

Smith finished his CU career with 183 career tackles, ranking 77th all-time with his 16 pass deflections the 21st most in CU history.

He allowed just 11 completions in man-to-man coverage over his junior and senior years combined and just one of those 11 were for a first down.

Solder is the 12th CU player taken in the draft by the Patriots and first since CB **Terrence Wheatley** went in the second round in 2007. Since 1995, the Patriots have now drafted seven former Buffaloes. He is the third first-round selection by the Patriots and second-highest, the others being C **Pete Brock**, who was the No. 12 overall pick in 1976, and TE **Dan Graham**, who was No. 21 in 2002.

The Patriots have had success with CU players on their roster, as on the 2001, '03 and '04 Super Bowl Champion teams, there were four Buffaloes on the roster each of those seasons.

Smith is the third draft choice by the Baltimore Ravens and first since TE **Quinn Sypniewski** was drafted in the fifth round, No. 166 overall, in 2006. He is the second defensive back taken by the Ravens joining **FS Ryan Sutter**, who was a fifth-round pick, No. 133, in 1998. He is the highest selection by the Ravens in CU history.

The duo is the 23rd and 24th first-round NFL draft picks from Colorado and it's the eighth time in CU history the Buffs have had two first round picks, and first time since 1997 when offensive guard Chris Naeole was the No. 10 pick for New Orleans and wide receiver Rae Carruth was the No. 27 pick by Carolina. Only once have the Buffs had three first-round picks, in 1976. The list:

- 1974 – FB **Bo Matthews** (2nd, San Diego); TE **J.V. Cain** (7th, St. Louis)
- 1976 – C **Pete Brock** (12th, New England); DT **Troy Archer** (13th, N.Y. Giants); OT **Mark Koncar** (23rd; Green Bay)
- 1980 – CB **Mark Haynes** (8th, N.Y. Giants); OT **Stan Brock** (12th, New Orleans)
- 1991 – WR **Mike Pritchard** (13th, Atlanta); OLB **Alfred Williams** (18th, Cincinnati)
- 1993 – CB **Deon Figures** (23rd, Pittsburgh); DT **Leonard Renfro** (24th, Pittsburgh)
- 1995 – WR **Michael Westbrook** (4th, Washington); RB **Rashaan Salaam** (21st, Chicago)
- 1997 – OG **Chris Naeole** (10th, New Orleans); WR **Rae Carruth** (27th, Carolina)

They are the 258th and 259th players in CU history to be drafted into the NFL.=

The Buffs were one of just six teams with multiple first-round selections and the only team from what will become the Pac-12 conference next season. Alabama led the way with four first-round picks and the Buffs were joined by Auburn, Baylor, Missouri and Wisconsin with a pair of first-rounders.



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04/22/2011



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Solder/O-line Highlights  
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#### Watch:

Jimmy Smith Senior Interview  
04/22/2011



#### Watch:

Jimmy Smith Interception  
04/22/2011



Autographed Solder Jersey

**NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS FIRST ROUND DRAFT PICK (#17) NATE SOLDER CONFERENCE CALL  
April 28, 2010**

**Q: Where were you when you got the call that you had been drafted?**

NS: In my parents' bed and breakfast in Leadville, Colorado.

**Q: Were you surprised?**

NS: I was sitting there hoping and praying that they pick me because that's such a great organization.

**Q: How much contact did you have with them?**

NS: Fairly limited contact.

**Q: Did you come up here for a visit?**

NS: No, I never came up for a visit.

**Q: Can you explain how that unfolded, because I believe you were scheduled to do so and then it got cancelled?**

NS: I don't know exactly what happened. I was scheduled to visit. The minute before I left it was cancelled. That's all I know.

**Q: So you were on your way to the airport and you turned back?**

NS: It was the day before I was going to go that they cancelled.

**Q: What was going through your mind as that was happening?**

NS: There have been so many question marks going through my mind this whole process that I didn't even think anything of it.

**Q: Did that happen with other teams?**

NS: No, it did not.

**Q: Did they come out to visit you at all?**

NS: Yes, they did.

**Q: When did that happen?**

NS: Monday

**Q: How did you miss two snaps in three years? What happened?**

NS: I think that was an end of game situation. I think one of the backups was in there just to kneel the ball.

**Q: What did you say when he came out to say you were going out?**

NS: I don't know. It's funny - when they told me I missed two snaps, I had to think about what the heck happened because I couldn't remember missing those two snaps.

**Q: Is that a point of pride for you?**

NS: Well, I'm extremely proud of my play and things, but it's a lot of hard work, too. Sometimes you don't control when freak things happen, so I've been blessed as well.

**Q: Are you comfortable playing on either side of the offensive line? I know you're a converted tight end. Have you played both sides of the line at tackle yet?**

NS: I've never played the right side. I've always plays left tackle.

**Q: You mentioned on Monday the Patriots came out. Who was it that came to see you?**

NS: Coach Dante Scarnecchia.

**Q: What was your impression of working with him?**

NS: He's an unbelievable coach, one of the best in the NFL and that was completely obvious when I met with him. And I look forward to the opportunity to play with him.

**Q: You say you really wanted to come here. Is part of that the fact that they've had such offensive line success here?**

NS: All of those guys do great and Scarnecchia is an incredible coach and that's absolutely part of it.

**Q: What did he explain to you in terms of the Patriots system and things that you'd have to work on if the Patriots drafted you?**

NS: You know, I have a lot to work on and the great thing about that is that I'm a coachable player and Coach Scarnecchia and Coach Belichick and the whole staff is great to play for.

**Q: How do you feel about potentially having to block for potential future Hall of Famer Tom Brady on his blindside?**

NS: You know, I think Tom Brady is a great quarterback and I think all my teammates are great players and I'm looking forward to the privilege of playing for the Patriots.

**Q: What's your opinion of watching the Patriots offense from games you've watched?**

NS: Like I said, I think it's a fantastic organization. I like the way that they do things and I'm honored that they picked me.

**Q: What's the name of the bed and breakfast?**

NS: Peri and Ed's Mountain Hideaway.

**Q: Can you tell us about the moment you got the phone call?**

NS: I talked to Coach Belichick. He was congratulatory about bringing me into the organization. I talked to Mr. Kraft as well.

**Q: Is there someone in the league you model your game after?**

NS: I just play my game and I'm going to do what Coach Scarnecchia tells me to. That's who I'm going to model my game after.

**Q: I hear you are a hunter and you shot an elk once?**

NS: Yes, that's true.

**Q: Have you shot anything else?**

NS: I shot an elk and I shot a deer once.

**Q: Which did you like better to eat?**

NS: Deer meat is the best. It's funny that when you go hunting, you kind of get hungry, so I enjoy both of them.

**Q: What's been the most surprising part of the whole process?**

NS: I didn't really know what to expect to be honest. You know, how can you know? I just feel blessed and honored to be a part of it.

**Q: Can you talk about the transition from tight end to tackle?**

NS: My coaches came to me and told me I'd be an alright tight end, but a great tackle. That's why I chose to move to tackle. It's been a process. I have a lot to learn and that's a great reason to have Belichick and Scarnecchia coaching me.

**Q: Can you talk about the video of you flattening that scout on your pro day?**

NS: I don't know about grief. I think they thought it was pretty cool. Matt Russell was the guy - the scout was named Matt Russell. He was a guy that played at CU, he was a Butkus award winner at CU and he's around the program a lot, so he kind of thought that was kind of comical, too.

**Q: What was the workout with Coach Scarnecchia like when he came out to visit you?**

NS: It was not really exhaustive. But like I said, all the great things I heard about him were confirmed. I could tell he was an absolutely great coach and I was hoping and praying - though I didn't want to put in my mind to go there, but I'm so honored to be there.

**Q: When do you expect to arrive in Foxborough?**

NS: I don't know what the travel plans are going to be. It's going to be in the next few days I would imagine, but we'll have to see how that pans out.

**Q: You participate in many recreational sports. You're kind of like a New Englander already.**

NS: Well I'm coming to New England to play football and that's my sole purpose right now.

**Q: What do you think about a potential positional battle with Matt Light and Sebastian Vollmer?**

NS: I have all the respect in the world for those guys. I know this: competition makes everyone better, so that's going to be a great opportunity.

**Q: Is that something Dante Scarnecchia imparted upon you - that nothing is going to be given to you, you're going to have to earn it?**

NS: Well, that wasn't specifically said, but that's my mentality. I don't want anything given to me. I want to earn everything I get.

**Q: Did you have an opportunity to attend the draft in New York City?**

NS: No, I stayed home with my family in Colorado.

**NFL DRAFT FIRST-ROUND PRESS CONFERENCE**

***GENERAL MANAGER/EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT OZZIE NEWSOME, HEAD COACH JOHN HARBAUGH,***

***DIRECTOR OF PLAYER PERSONNEL ERIC DECOSTA & DIRECTOR OF COLLEGE SCOUTING JOE HORTIZ***

**Ravens executive vice president/general manager Ozzie Newsome's opening statement:**

"With the quarterbacks going early in the Draft, we started to anticipate several players that had the potential of making it to the 26th pick. There were not a lot of trades that occurred. I think maybe three, four trades occurred before us. We were prepared to pick, but we were also waiting to see if any calls came - and a call did come. John [Harbaugh] was on the phone with the player we drafted, Jimmy Smith. John was on the phone with him, and I was on the phone with another team in the League. There was an agreement made between the team and I. I got on the phone with the National Football League, but the other team never got confirmation from the League. At that point, I was asked by the League to make the pick. We made the pick. There's probably been about maybe six or seven times that we've had the opportunity to have a player that was rated fairly high on our board that we were able to get down in the 20's. That's where Jimmy fits. I know you'll have a lot of questions about him. We brought him in. We put him through a process, even more so than we do with some of the other players, and we came away feeling that he would be able to come here and continue to be the type of player and person that he's been for the last couple years."

**Ravens director of player personnel Eric DeCosta's opening statement:**

"We spent a lot of time looking at Jimmy. He's a guy that, as a player - we have a chance to watch a lot of corners every year - and he's a very unique talent. We've tried to find a guy like him for several years. He makes us a lot better as a football team. He tackles well, he's got great coverage skills, he's a big kid, he matches up very well against the receivers in our division, and we're very excited to get him. Sometimes you have to adjust on the fly, and I'm proud of

our guys. We were able to adjust throughout the first round, and particularly at the end in a difficult situation. We got a great player."

**Ravens head coach John Harbaugh's opening statement:**

"To talk about Jimmy as a player, our coaching staff is excited. This guy, he's a special player. He's exactly the type of corner that we're looking for. He fits our defense just the way we need him to fit our defense. I know Chuck [Pagano] is excited; Teryl Austin is excited; I'm excited. He was in this building for a day. He was in my office for almost two hours. He was in Ozzie's office, Eric's, Joe [Hortiz]'s. We all spent a great amount of time with him. All the things that you're going to ask questions about, that's all fine, that's good. But we think he's got a good heart. We think he's very committed to being a great football player, and we're going to do everything we can to help him be that. I want you to know, as a head football coach, I'm excited about this pick. This guy makes us better."

**At what point were you comfortable with CB Jimmy Smith becoming a Raven despite his character issues?**

(HARBAUGH) "When I talked to him the second time. We've done so much homework. Ozzie and Eric and Joe and their staff... It's unbelievable the homework [they do]. And what I like about Jimmy [is he] came right out from the beginning and has been forthright with everything that's happened to him. He's had a lot of situations. He didn't try to hide anything. He put it all out there for the whole world to see. He's going to have to deal with that, and we're going to have to deal with that. That's OK. This guy, I think, is a good person at heart. He's a heck of a football player. We got a great locker room for him, I think we have the right coaches for him, and he makes our team better."

**What was going on inside the War Room during the pick, and were you poised when the clock was running down?**

(NEWSOME) "Yes, everyone was poised. Like I said, I was on the phone with the other team, and John was on the phone with Jimmy Smith. Once that agreement was made, then you have to call the League. We've been in this situation before that when you get close to the clock, in order for a trade to happen, both teams have to talk to the League, and the other team did not get the confirmation."

**Was it your intention to trade down and still draft Smith with a lower pick?**

(NEWSOME) "When you trade down you don't know who is going to be there. When we were trading back several spots, someone could have picked him between the time we would have gotten back on the clock. But, if we would have gotten back on the clock and Jimmy would've been there, yes, we would have taken him."

**How did you decide that Smith hasn't had recent issues that could be of concern?**

(DeCOSTA) "I think we've got the best area scouts in the League, and their job is to do everything they can to know all the players in the Draft. He's not the only player in this Draft that has issues, certainly. We spent nine months really looking at Jimmy Smith. He's one of the first players I looked at this fall because he's 6-2, 210 pounds. So, I went out to Colorado early this year. We had two other area scouts go out there early. We had two other scouts go in there after the fact. We had coaches work him out; we talked to him at the Combine. We expressed our interest in Jimmy, but we needed to get some information from Jimmy as well. At the end of the day, we just had a comfort level with the kid, both as a person and as a player. He's a good fit on our team, on our defense, with Chuck coaching him [and] coach Austin coaching him. We think we've got a great locker room, and we think he's going to be a guy that comes in and flourishes in our system."

**Was size the No. 1 factor for drafting Smith?**

(HARBAUGH) "I think what you do is you look at the tape. Just the way he plays on tape attracted me. But, the size is a big plus [and] the speed is a big plus. He doesn't move like a 6-2 man; he's rare that way. He's got special talents, and he plays real hard. He's a good tackler. He's very physical. He plays the ball well downfield. Those are all things you look for in a corner."

**Will having a strong veteran locker room help make the transition to the NFL easier for Smith?**

(DeCOSTA) "We've seen it many times with our guys. They come in here, and we've got a great locker room, even better coaches and a great system and structure in place. I think he's going to be great."

**Do you see Smith as a risky pick?**

(NEWSOME) "As I said during the Draft luncheon, every pick there is some bit of a gamble in it. But, we trust our

process. We trust the people that got the opportunity to spend time with him, and there was a number of people that had that opportunity to spend some time with him. So, we trust the process, we trust the people that are in this building that are going to be interacting with him on a day-to-day basis, and we also got to know Jimmy – what his aspirations [are] and what he wants to do and what he wants to be. That kind of matched up with what we thought.”

**Was there a threat of you losing Smith after the time ran out on your pick?**

(NEWSOME) “[Kansas City] got their pick in before us, so that was a potential for us to lose him, yes.”

**Did you save some money getting Smith with the 28th pick instead of the 26th?**

(NEWSOME) (laughter) “We’ll have to talk to the agent about that when we get to that point. But we got the player, and we’re just happy to have him. Whatever contract that we end up signing with him will be compensatory to where he got picked.”

**Were several teams talking with you about trading during your time on the clock?**

(NEWSOME) “Yeah, there was more than one team. Yes, there was. Like I said, there is a value that we put into trading back, and the other team did not meet the value that we wanted for us to go back to that spot.”

**Was it important to not trade back too far in order to try to still draft Smith?**

(NEWSOME) “No. We weren’t looking at that because I think we’ve got a strong board. If we’d have lost Jimmy, then we felt like there were other players on this board... There are other players on this board that are going to be able to help this football team that we will be able to get.”

**Did anything happen in the first round that changes how you look at the future rounds?**

(NEWSOME) “No, not really, other than the quarterbacks going early. And there was a lot of speculation that that could happen. You could sit there, and maybe we were thinking over the last three or four days that the top of the second round would have been heavy with quarterbacks, [which] could have pushed some other guys back down to us, but not necessarily. We felt that those guys were going to go at some point, so where we’re picking at 58, we think we’re going to get a really good player.”

**Explain exactly what happened with the trade not going through?**

(NEWSOME) “I’m only able to talk to the League. The number of trades that we’ve made – and this group knows we’ve made a lot of trades – the only way the League will tell me, ‘OK, you’ve got a trade,’ is after they talked to the other team. Then, they’ll [say], ‘OK, Ozzie, you’ve got a trade. Baltimore, you have a trade.’ That never came about. They told me, ‘Ozzie, you need to pick.’”

**Was the decision difficult because so many high-rated players fell to the end of the first round?**

(DeCOSTA) “They’re all hard decisions, but it was a hard decision. Sure, there were a lot of talented players still on the board. In the end, we felt like Jimmy was the best fit for us from a need perspective, certainly from a talent perspective, overall. As I have said, I think he is a unique talent, and he makes us a lot better as a football player.”

**Comment on how you think the other AFC North teams did tonight, specifically Cleveland’s trade with Atlanta.**

(NEWSOME) “They got the trade. They got a trade similar to the trade that we got the year we got [Joe] Flacco. They basically did the same thing – they came back up to get the big nose tackle [Phil Taylor]. In our division, you’ve got to stop the run, so they probably saw themselves doing that. I don’t know what Pittsburgh has done. A.J. Green is a phenomenal player, a phenomenal player. But, we’re fortunate enough to have a corner that we think is a phenomenal player, too.”

**Are there any players you are considering trading up for tomorrow?**

(NEWSOME) “As the Draft unfolds tomorrow and we have a high enough player graded, with the number of picks that we have – I think we’ve still got eight picks and two of them we can’t move – then there is the potential to move up, but there is the potential that we could move back and accumulate more picks also.”

**Did you entertain any calls about moving up for anyone?**

(NEWSOME) “No. There were a couple players that started to slide down the board that we talked about as a



group, but as we started to talk about them, they got picked.”

### **FIRST-ROUND PICK CB JIMMY SMITH: CONFERENCE CALL**

#### **On how he convinced the Ravens that his past mistakes will not lead to future issues:**

“It was just basically going in and being honest, putting everything on the table and letting them know that I was about business. The things that I did are old mistakes and bad decisions that I made when I was younger and immature. It’s in the past now, and I’m just trying to be the best player and person off the field for the Ravens that I can possibly be.”

#### **On what was going through his mind when the Ravens were on the clock:**

“They called me and told me that they were talking about me. I didn’t want to get my hopes up because I was thinking worst-case scenario [that I’d be selected] in the second round. When they picked me, it was truly an honor and a blessing that they chose me and believe in me.”

#### **On whether he felt like he made a good impression during his meetings with the organization:**

“It was basically going in there and being yourself. I didn’t want to go in and try to say all the right things. I wanted to go in and let them know [that] this is really who I am, and as a person, this is how much I’ve grown and that the mistakes I did are behind me. I didn’t have to sell. You just have to be honest, and they can tell you’re honest and believe you.”

#### **On what mistakes he has made in the past:**

“I don’t really want to get into the specifics, but like I said, it’s all past decisions and bad mistakes. They are done with and over with – a long time ago. I’m looking, from here on out, to be the best player and person on and off the field that I can be.”

#### **On when the last time was that he made a mistake:**

“It’s been awhile – over two years.”

#### **On how he will fit in with the Ravens’ defense and whether he expects to start immediately:**

“I don’t expect anything. I just expect to go out there and do everything that they want me to do. If they need me to start, then I’m going to start. If they need me to play special teams, then I’m going to play special teams. Whatever they need, then that’s what I’m going to do.”

#### **On what he brings to the table as a football player:**

“I think I bring passion to the game and competitiveness. I’m a very smart player. As for as cornerback, I have size, I can tackle, and I can cover well. I think I bring a lot to a defense. If they scheme around me and try to lock me up on a man, I feel like I’m that guy who can lock up.”



**On whether he is excited to play with S Ed Reed and LB Ray Lewis:**

"I'm more excited about that than everything else, just to know that I have basically three Hall of Famers playing defense and they are going to be the guys to teach me how to be a better player. Who else would you want to learn from than an Ed Reed, Ray Lewis and Haloti Ngata? It's truly a blessing to have players like that to be on the team with."

**On whether he was disappointed to have fallen in the Draft:**

"I don't think that I fell at all. I kind of figured that all the stuff that happened in the past was going to mess with everything. But I feel like everything happens for a reason and I was destined to go to the Ravens. So, I guess that's the way things worked out. I'm very happy with it and not disappointed by any means."

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## CU Buffs' Jimmy Smith drafted by Baltimore Ravens

### CB headed to Ravens as 27th overall pick

**By Kyle Ringo** Camera Sports Writer  
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 04/28/2011 09:18:44 PM MDT

The talent and potential of former Colorado cornerback Jimmy Smith trumped questions about his character Thursday when he was selected in the first round of the NFL Draft by Baltimore with the 27th overall pick.

The Ravens were initially slated to pick 26th overall, but their time ran out before they were able to submit a selection and Kansas City was allowed to pick ahead of them.

But the Chiefs selected Pitt wide receiver Jonathan Baldwin, allowing the Ravens to get their man.

"This guy is a special player," coach John Harbaugh said. "He's exactly the type of corner that we're looking for. He fits our defense. We all spent a great amount of time with him. We think he's got a good heart, we think he's very committed to being a great football player and we're going to do every thing we can to help him bethat."

Smith is the 24th first-round draft pick in CU history joining left tackle Nate Solder, who was picked 17th overall by New England earlier in the evening. It is the first time since 1997 that the CU program has produced multiple first-round picks in the same draft.

"I'm not disappointed. I feel like I was destined to go to the Ravens," Smith said in a conference call.

Colorado is one of six college programs to produce multiple first-round picks this year along with Alabama, Auburn, Missouri, Baylor and Wisconsin.

Smith is only the third defensive back in CU history to be drafted in the first round, joining Deon Figures in 1993 and Mark Haynes in 1980. He is the first Colorado defensive back to be drafted since Terrence Wheatley was taken in the second round in 2008 by New England.

Smith had been dogged for several months by franchises, draft analysts and reporters questioning whether he was too big a risk as a first-round pick because of failed drug tests and citations for underage drinking during his time in Boulder.

However, on the field, Smith was a dominant force and opposing quarterbacks often shied away from throwing to his side of the field. He allowed only 11 completions in man-to-man coverage over his junior and senior seasons with only one of those passes producing a first down, according to the CU sports information department.

Smith was the Buffs' third leading tackler as a senior in 2010, making 70 total stops with a forced fumble and fumble recovery.

Smith has been a mainstay in the CU defense over the past three years, playing a total of 1,980 snaps in 34 games in that span.

Joining a Baltimore Ravens team that has built its reputation on stingy defense is a perfect fit for Smith, who will immediately compete for a starting job. Smith will learn from veteran All-Pro players such as Ray Lewis and Ed Reed.

Ravens cornerbacks produced only five interceptions in 2010, so drafting Smith definitely fills a need.

Baltimore did its homework on Smith and invited him to town for a pre-draft workout and interview. General manager Ozzie Newsome said it was after meeting with Smith one-on-one and listening to him that the organization began feeling comfortable making him its pick if he was still available.

"We brought him in, we put him through a process, even more so than we do some of the other players," Newsome said. "We came away feeling that he would be able to come here and continue to be the type of player and person he's been the last couple of years."

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# New England Patriots draft CU Buffs' Nate Solder

## Patriots pick tackle with No. 17 selection

**By Kyle Ringo** Camera Sports Writer  
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted: 04/28/2011 07:56:39 PM MDT

Add this to the list of accomplishments by former Colorado left tackle Nate Solder.

He made a proud program relevant once again on the first day of the NFL draft when he was selected Thursday by the New England Patriots with the 17th overall pick in the first round.

New England actually made a late visit to see Solder in Colorado earlier this week after Solder's planned visit to Foxborough was canceled.

"I was sitting there hoping and praying that they pick me because that's such a great organization," Solder told reporters in a conference call.

Solder transitions from blocking for the likes of Tyler Hansen, Cody Hawkins and Rodney Stewart to protecting quarterback Tom Brady's blindside.

"You know, I think Tom Brady is a great quarterback, and I think all my teammates are great players and I'm looking forward to the privilege of playing for the Patriots," Solder said when asked about blocking for Brady in the future.

Actually, Solder could end up playing either tackle position for the Patriots who could try to re-sign free agent Matt Light. Fellow tackle Sebastian Vollmer would be paired with Solder if Light does not return. Solder noted he has never played on the right side.

Later in the evening Belichick indicated he has no plans to try Solder on the right side of the line.

"He's played left tackle," Belichick told reporters. "That will be his position in the National Football League."

Solder, who received the news while watching the draft surrounded by family, friends and television cameras from the NFL Network and ESPN at the family's horse ranch in Leadville, is the first Buff to be drafted in the first round since 2003.

Solder said he received congratulatory phone calls from Belichick and Patriots owner Robert Kraft.

He is the fifth CU offensive lineman to be taken in the first round and the 23rd Colorado player in history to become a first-round pick. Only 13 other Buffs have been selected earlier in the draft than Solder, who grew up in Buena Vista.

Solder was the second tackle taken in the draft behind USC's Tyron Smith, who was the ninth selection by Dallas. The Cowboys were one of four teams that asked Solder to make personal visits to team headquarters in advance of the draft. The others were Indianapolis, Washington and the New York Giants.

Prior to the draft, Solder was reluctant to name a favorite team or one he hoped would select him, but after he was taken by the Patriots, he made it clear that he was thrilled with the way things turned out. He said he is excited about working with New England offensive line coach Dante Scarnecchia.

"I could tell he was an absolutely great coach and I was hoping and praying -- though I didn't want to put in my mind to go there, but I'm so honored to be there," Solder said.

Solder is the second Buff to be drafted by Belichick, joining former CU cornerback Terrence Wheatley who was taken by the Patriots in the second round in 2008.

At nearly 6-foot-9 and 318 pounds with agile feet that first had him playing tight end in Boulder, Solder has the potential to

play for years in the league. He is aware of that potential and spoke about it with the NFL Network in a pre-draft feature in which he said, "You're going to have a guy here that's going to be your All-Pro left tackle 15 years down the road. And if that's what they want, then I'm the guy for them."

Solder proved to be tough and durable throughout his CU career. From the time he became a fulltime starter at the outset of his sophomore season in 2008 through his senior season in 2010, the Buffs snapped the ball 2,548 times on offense. Solder was on the field for all but eight of those plays.

He allowed only five sacks in three seasons as a starter in a total of 36 games.

As a senior, Solder became a consensus All-American and was a finalist for the Outland Trophy, given annually to the nation's best interior lineman. He was named the Big 12 Conference Offensive lineman of the Year.

Solder wasn't just a football player at CU. He also earned accolades for his academic performance and citizenship. Solder graduated prior to his senior season and was named one of 16 finalists for the William Campbell Trophy, also known as the academic Heisman. He received an \$18,000 postgraduate scholarship from the National Football Foundation in December as part of that honor.

In an interview Wednesday before the draft, Solder said the whirlwind of workouts and interviews during the past five months will be an experience he will never forget.

"It was actually really extremely fun," Solder said. "I've had a great time. I've been training really hard. There has been a lot of stress. I've had a lot of very unique experiences in terms of people I've met and places I've gone. What can I say? It's a dream come true.

"But now I'm glad for it to be over. All good things must come to an end and I think it's kind of worn out its stay. I'm ready for the next thing. I'm ready for the next step for sure."

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nfl draft

## Colorado's Nate Solder picked by Patriots with 17th pick in NFL draft

By Tom Kensler  
The Denver Post

Posted: 04/28/2011 07:57:44 PM MDT

Updated: 04/29/2011 07:37:44 AM MDT

LEADVILLE — That roar reverberating down the Arkansas River Valley on Thursday night from the Mountain Hideaway Bed & Breakfast operated by the Solder family might have been heard as far away as Buena Vista. That's where, a dozen or so years ago, young Nate Solder put away his fly rod and skis long enough to toss around a football.

With a dozen or so family members and close friends staring at the big-screen television and seemingly holding their breath with every announced draft choice, everybody — especially the man of the hour — finally was rewarded for the wait. The former Colorado star is headed to New England.

They had been tipped off a couple of minutes before the rest of the world received

word from NFL commissioner Roger Goodell. Nate's cellphone was ringing.

"Everybody quiet!" yelled his mother, Peri Solder. "Turn down the TV! This might be the call!"

Sure enough.

"Patriots! Thank God!" Solder shouted after

hanging up. Then he hugged everyone in sight.

All grown up at 6-foot-9 and 315 pounds, Solder was selected No. 17 in the first round. Patriots coach Bill Belichick and owner Robert Kraft informed Solder that he will be blocking for quarterback Tom Brady. Solder had trouble speaking through his smile.

"(Belichick and Kraft) said they wanted me to be a New England Patriot," Solder told the guests. "I couldn't be more honored. What a privilege and a responsibility."

Then, as if getting ready for a football game, family members surrounded the Western Slope's new hero and jumped up and down for a rah-rah cheer of "Ooof! Ooof! Ooof!"

It's a wonder the Western-themed artifacts decorating the B&B didn't rattle off the walls.

"I'm just so glad he's going to a place where he wanted to go," Peri Solder said.

New England offensive line coach Dante Scarnecchia had flown to the Front Range on Monday to work out Solder privately in the CU practice bubble.

"I would have been excited being picked by any



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team," Solder said, "but there was something about the Patriots. It's such a perfect situation for me. They're a team that doesn't open their mouths. They just go about their business and win games. That's what I'm all about."

How's this for fast company: Solder became only the fourth in-state player for the Buffaloes to be selected in the first round, joining tight end Daniel Graham (2002, New England), running back Bobby Anderson (1970, Denver) and Byron "Whizzer" White (1938, Pittsburgh).

"Wow, I didn't know that," Solder said. "To be in that group, with guys that were the foundation of Colorado football, that's amazing."

Solder was born in Denver but



Colorado offensive lineman Nate Solder runs a drill during the scouting combine in Indianapolis on Feb. 26. (Darron Cummings, The Associated Press)

grew up in Buena Vista and became an all-state football player there. Unlike other high-profile picks who went to Radio City Music Hall in New York City to attend the draft, Solder preferred to

share the moment with loved ones in more relaxed surroundings.

"I thought about going to New York, because it's such an honor and a once-in-a-lifetime experience," Solder said. "But I decided against it because here you're grounded with family. You get a perspective on things. That can get lost in the shuffle with all the glitz and glamour."

An honor student who received a National Football Foundation post-graduate scholarship in December, Solder almost didn't play college football. If Colorado hadn't offered, he was strongly considering playing basketball at Dartmouth.

It appears he made a wise choice.

"To have my brother play in the NFL, we're just so excited for him," said older brother John Solder, a linebacker at Stanford (2004-05) until a neck injury ended his playing career. "I remember us throwing the football around in the front yard. The NFL wasn't on our minds back then."

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nfl draft

## Colorado's Jimmy Smith goes to Ravens as the No. 27 pick in first round

By John Henderson  
The Denver Post

Posted: 04/28/2011 06:18:25 PM MDT

Updated: 04/28/2011 11:58:47 PM MDT

DOWNEY, Calif. — It reached a point by Thursday that Jimmy Smith was resigned to his fate. Off-the-field issues had dogged Colorado's two-time all-Big 12 cornerback ever since he graduated in December.

How far would the player ESPN's Jon Gruden called the "best bump-and-run cornerback in the draft" sink? Sitting with about 100 friends and family members in his stepfather's home, Smith was the calmest one in the room.

"I was kind of prepared to go in the second round," Smith said, "so I wasn't sitting there super nervous."

Turns out he went about where the Thursday morning line had him. The Baltimore Ravens took him with the 27th pick in the first round, a selection that inserts him into one of the best defenses

in the NFL.

"It's a perfect fit," Smith said in the backyard,

exchanging hugs by the darkened pool. "With leaders like Ed Reed and Charles Suggs and Ray Lewis, I'm excited I get to play for a defense that requires that much excellence. That's going to make me a better player."

The Ravens had told Smith before their pick at 26 they might trade down with Chicago at No. 29, figuring he'd still be available and they'd get an extra pick. The trade fell through, and the Ravens passed.

"I've never seen that in 23 drafts," said Smith's agent, Drew Rosenhaus.

After Kansas City took Pittsburgh receiver Jonathan Baldwin, Baltimore pulled the trigger on Smith, sending the house into delirium.

Most draftniks felt Smith would have gone in the top 10 if not for off-the-field issues, which included two minor-in-possession tickets and a positive marijuana test.

This week, a third-degree assault, stemming from Smith hitting a man in a Phoenix-area restaurant last summer, surfaced. Smith owned up to all of it while vehemently denying the rumor that he failed three drug tests.

"If I had three positive drug tests, I'd be in really

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big trouble," Smith said. "Three you're off the team."

While many teams dropped him off the board, many wouldn't overlook the talent and size of a 6-foot-2, 211-pound cornerback.

"They said I have to come in with the attitude of working hard and, 'We can't have any of the hiccups that came up in the past.' I gave them my word that it won't happen," Smith said. "(General manager) Ozzie Newsome looked me dead in the eye to see what kind of person I am."

Smith's mother, Tracy Webster, sat on the couch wiping her tears. She made her sons play football for the purpose of going to college.

"I've been crying off and on all day," she said. "I'm happy he's where he is. I'm also glad whatever the things they keep talking about, those are behind him. Now the work begins. Now he gets to show them what he's really made of."

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APRIL 28, 2011, 6:33 PM

## Ex-CU standout Solder applauds Broncos picking Von Miller

By **TOM KENSLE** |  No Comments

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LEADVILLE — Waiting for his name to be called while watching the first round of the NFL Draft with family and friends here Thursday night, former Colorado offensive tackle Nate Solder gave a big thumbs up to Denver's selection of Texas A&M linebacker Von Miller with the second overall pick.

"I trained with Von (in Irvine, Calif.)," Solder said. "He's a great guy. That's a great choice for the Broncos."

Solder and Miller went head-to-head at times in 2008 and 2009 games.

"It was give and take," Solder said. "He won some of the battles. I won some of the battles."

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**<http://blogs.denverpost.com/sports/2011/04/28/ex-cu-standout-solder-applauds-broncos-picking-von-miller/17053/>**

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**ESPN.com:** NFL Draft 2011[\[Print without images\]](#)

Thursday, April 28, 2011

## Pats take OT Nate Solder at No. 17

By Mike Reiss  
ESPNBoston.com

FOXBOROUGH, Mass. -- The [New England Patriots](#) selected offensive tackle [Nate Solder](#) of Colorado with the 17th overall pick in the NFL draft.

"I was sitting there hoping and praying that they pick me because that's such a great organization," Solder said via conference call.

Solder, 6-foot-8 and 319 pounds, was a three-year starter after converting from a blocking tight end prior to the 2008 season.

Last season, Solder was a unanimous All-Big 12 first team selection, and was one of three finalists for the Outland Trophy, given to college football's best offensive or interior defensive lineman.

Solder started all 12 games for Colorado in 2010 and was named the team's most valuable player, as well as the Big 12's offensive lineman of the year.

In 2009, he was named to the first team All-Big 12 after also starting all 12 games.

### Patriots blog



ESPNBoston.com's Mike Reiss covers the New England Patriots in his [blog](#). You can send questions and comments to his [mailbag](#).

- [ESPNBoston.com](#)
- **ESPN.com:** [AFC East blog](#)

Solder was on the field for 2,540 out of a possible 2,542 plays on offense from the beginning of his sophomore season to the end of his senior campaign.

In 1,400 pass plays, he allowed just five quarterback sacks.

In selecting Solder, the Patriots take a big step toward revamping their offensive line, which is one of their offseason goals.

"Nate has been a solid player for Colorado," Patriots coach Bill Belichick said Thursday night during a news conference, " [a] left tackle and certainly there are a lot of things that he'll need to do to improve, but I feel like he's a good, talented guy, a hard-working kid, and if he can keep doing that, then I think he'll be able to contribute for us and we'll work him at left tackle."

Solder could be the team's left tackle of the future. Starting left tackle [Matt Light](#) is an unrestricted free agent.

If the Patriots like Solder more on the right side, they could flip third-year pro [Sebastian Vollmer](#) to left tackle.

Solder was featured in ESPNBoston.com's "10 possible Patriots" series because he fits the profile of what the Patriots look for in an offensive lineman. He was a team captain. Like [Bruce Armstrong](#), the Patriots' Hall of Fame tackle from the 1980s and 1990s, Solder made the transition from tight end to offensive tackle and is considered a solid athlete for his size.

The Patriots had to feel good entering this draft, knowing that the strength of the draft matched up nicely with their top areas of need -- offensive line, defensive line and running back. The pick might disappoint those who were looking for a defender to bolster the pass rush, such as Cal's [Cameron Jordan](#), but the Patriots must feel the depth in that area is such that they can address it later.

The offensive line is also in transition, requiring an influx of youth, and this gives respected line coach Dante Scarnecchia a prized pupil to work with.

Solder said Scarnecchia came out to visit him Monday in Leadville, Colo.

"He's an unbelievable coach, one of the best in the NFL and that was completely obvious when I met with him," Solder said.

Added Solder: "I have a lot to work on and the great thing about that is that I'm a coachable player and Coach Scarnecchia and Coach Belichick and the whole staff is great to play for."

The Patriots also possessed the No. 28 selection of the first round entering the draft, but opted to trade that pick to the [New Orleans](#) in exchange for the Saints' 2011 second-rounder (56th overall) and 2012 first-rounder.

The Saints turned around and selected running back [Mark Ingram](#) at No. 28.

If Ingram becomes a star, perhaps the Patriots will look back and regret this two-for-one move, which has been an annual part of their draft-day dealings -- moving down in the current year to pick up a prime selection the following year. How the Patriots address the running back spot later in this draft will also be part of the analysis.

"We thought it was a good value for the pick and we feel like there are players on the board that will give us good value at our picks that we have tomorrow," Belichick said during a news conference Thursday night. "We certainly gave up something in moving back, but we felt like what we got in return for that was beneficial to the organization and the team.

Meanwhile, this sets up a big second round for the Patriots in which they figure to address the defense -- with the first pick of the round (No. 33), followed by Nos. 56 and 60. There are several good defensive players on the board. The Patriots also have two third-round picks (Nos. 74 and 92).

At this point, with the void on defense left unfilled, it's an incomplete picture.

Friday, it should come into sharper focus.

The Patriots also have a fourth-rounder (No. 125), a fifth-rounder (No. 159) and a sixth-rounder (No. 193) in this year's draft.

*Mike Reiss covers the Patriots for ESPNBoston.com. Mike Rodak contributed to this report.*

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[ESPN.com: BlogsColumns](#)[\[Print without images\]](#)

Thursday, April 28, 2011

Updated: April 29, 3:31 AM ET

## Nate Solder a solid pick for Patriots

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By Mike Reiss  
ESPNBoston.com

FOXBOROUGH, Mass. -- It's hard to argue when the [New England Patriots](#) invest their top draft choice to protect quarterback Tom Brady's blindside, which is what they did in tapping mammoth Colorado offensive tackle [Nate Solder](#) with the 17th selection of the 2011 NFL draft on Thursday night.

It's a no-frills pick, but one of substance, similar to what last year's Super Bowl participants -- the [Green Bay Packers](#) and [Pittsburgh Steelers](#) -- did in the first round a year ago.

The 6-foot-8, 319-pound Solder fills a large void in an area the Patriots had targeted to rebuild this offseason. But another large void remains, and how the wheeling-and-dealing Patriots fill it will ultimately tell the story of their 2011 draft.

They still need help with the pass rush and in the defensive front seven.

If the Patriots don't come out of the next few rounds with help in that area -- where they have five picks -- there will be plenty of second-guessing in New England. And it would be hard to argue with that.

Defensive linemen [Cameron Jordan](#) (24th, Saints), [Muhammad Wilkerson](#) (30th, Jets) and [Cameron Heyward](#) (31st, Steelers), all of whom projected as solid fits, were available. And potential stud outside linebacker [Robert Quinn](#) slipped all the way to 14th -- well within striking range of a trade-up -- but the Patriots took a different course with Solder before swapping the 28th overall pick to the [New Orleans Saints](#).

That deal with the Saints, who selected running back [Mark Ingram](#), netted a 2011 second-round choice (56th overall) and a 2012 first-round choice. That is terrific value, but again, doesn't answer the big question: Where's the pass rush and front-seven help?

This puts some pressure on the Patriots to come up with the answer Friday, and Belichick clearly likes some of the remaining options on the board. Add a strong pass-rushing outside linebacker like Pittsburgh's [Jabaal Sheard](#), for example, and the draft suddenly looks a lot different.

"There are players that are going to be able to help teams in this league," Belichick said late Thursday night.

For now, it's understandable why some fans might have been left scratching their Patriots helmets, but Belichick has earned the benefit of the doubt with his track record. From the sound of it, Belichick had narrowed his first-round choices to Florida center/guard [Mike Pouncey](#) or Solder, and when the Dolphins nabbed Pouncey at 15, the choice was an easy one.

"We turned in the pick relatively quickly; we felt pretty good about what was on the board and picking Nate there," said Belichick, adding that Solder will be locked in at left tackle, potentially putting the future of [Matt Light](#) -- an unrestricted free agent -- with the Patriots in question.

Unlike other top prospects in the draft, Solder wasn't present at Radio City Music Hall on Thursday night, instead watching from the bed-and-breakfast his parents run in Leadville, Colo. -- Peri & Ed's Mountain Hideaway. That reflects his personality and also the pick itself: No sizzle, just solid.

### Patriots Draft Coverage

What will the Pats do with their bevy of picks come April 28? Oh, the possibilities. [Patriots Draft Center »](#)

Solder, who worked out for Patriots offensive line coach Dante Scarnecchia on Monday in what amounted to the team putting the exclamation point on its scouting report of him, sounded humbled to be chosen as the leading candidate to become Brady's new blindside protector. If he proves as durable and productive as he was at Colorado, where he was on the field for 2,540 out of a possible 2,542 plays over the past three seasons and allowed just five sacks, Brady will be well-protected as he plays into his late 30s.

"I think [Tom Brady](#) is a great quarterback; I'm looking forward to the privilege of playing for the Patriots," said Solder, who is scheduled to arrive at Gillette Stadium on Friday for the traditional photo shoot with owner Robert Kraft and president Jonathan Kraft. "My mentality is that I don't want anything given to me. I want to earn everything I get."

Spoken like a Patriot, which is why Solder should fit in just fine here. That was reinforced by one scout who graded Solder closely leading up to the draft and summed up his thoughts this way: Prototypical Patriot.

Belichick hasn't missed on many first-round picks in his 11 drafts with the team -- running back [Laurence Maroney](#) was arguably his biggest swing-and-miss in 2006 -- and this year it will be interesting to see what type of pro Ingram becomes. If Ingram is the next [Emmitt Smith](#), as some have projected, the trade with the Saints might be one Belichick regrets.

It's deals like those that might lead some to question whether Belichick sometimes outsmarts himself on draft day, but again, the track record deserves respect. Only Belichick has the true gauge of the quality left on the Patriots' board, how deep the running back class is and how realistic it is to find an impact pass-rusher in the next few rounds.

It's an incomplete picture right now, and more time is needed to assess.

Friday should tell us more, and it starts with answering the question: Where's the pass rush and front-seven help?

*Mike Reiss covers the Patriots for ESPNBoston.com.*

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**[PRINT]****ESPN.com: Patriots**[\[Print without images\]](#)

Thursday, April 28, 2011

## Rapid reaction: OT Nate Solder

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By Mike Reiss

FOXBOROUGH, Mass. -- In selecting Colorado's [Nate Solder](#) with the 17th overall pick of the NFL draft, the Patriots take a big step toward revamping their offensive line, which is one of their offseason goals.

Solder is 6-foot-8 and 319 pounds and could be the team's left tackle of the future. Starting left tackle Matt Light is an unrestricted free agent.

Solder was featured in ESPNBoston.com's "[10 possible Patriots](#)" series because he fits the profile of what the Patriots look for in an offensive lineman. He was a team captain, is smart, and is passionate about the game of football. Like Bruce Armstrong, the Patriot Hall of Fame tackle from the 1980s and 1990s, Solder made the transition from tight end to offensive tackle and is considered a solid athlete for his size. He will be worked solely at left tackle, Bill Belichick said.

The Patriots had to feel good entering this draft, knowing that the strength of the draft matched up nicely with their top areas of need -- offensive line, defensive line and running back. The pick might disappoint those who were looking for a defender to bolster the pass rush, such as Cal's [Cameron Jordan](#), but the Patriots must feel the depth in that area is such that they can address it later.

The offensive line is also in transition, requiring an influx of youth, and this gives respected line coach Dante Scarnecchia a prized pupil to work with.

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## Sold on Solder

By Shalise Manza Young

Globe Staff / April 29, 2011

FOXBOROUGH — With several projected defensive playmakers there for the taking, and with New England perceived to be in need of a pass rusher, the Patriots did just what all of their fans thought they'd do:

They chose an offensive lineman.

With the 17th overall pick in the NFL draft last night, the Patriots selected Colorado tackle Nate Solder, a 6-foot-8-inch, 319-pound converted tight end who allowed just five sacks in more than 1,400 pass plays over his last three seasons with the Buffaloes.

Solder was at his parents' bed and breakfast in Leadville, Colo., when he got the call from Bill Belichick that the Patriots had made him part of their team.

"I was sitting there hoping and praying that they picked me because it's such a great organization," Solder said via conference call.

The 23-year-old didn't have a lot of contact with New England before the draft, he said, working out Monday with offensive line coach Dante Scarnecchia. He had been scheduled to make a visit to Foxborough, but the team canceled it the day before he was to arrive.

A source who played with Solder at Colorado called him "a physical beast" who "has all the tools" but is also very soft-spoken.

Having Scarnecchia work Solder out was just "a piece of the puzzle," Belichick said. "He's been a pretty consistent player for them. It's not like he was any big secret."

A native of Buena Vista, Colo., where he was a highly rated tight end and linebacker prospect coming out of high school, Solder redshirted his freshman year and played as a blocking tight end and special-teams contributor the next season.

But after packing 30 pounds onto his frame, he moved to tackle before the 2008 season and remained Colorado's starting left tackle for the duration of his time at the school.

The selection of Solder addresses a position of some need for New England: veteran Matt Light, drafted in 2001, is a free agent. Sebastian Vollmer, heading into his third season, could be flipped to left tackle after starting every game at right tackle last season.

Guard Logan Mankins, who received the team's franchise tag, remains unhappy with his contract status, a season after he held out for the first seven games. And 10-year veteran lineman Stephen Neal has retired.

Nick Kaczur missed all of last season after back surgery and his future with the team is cloudy given the combination of his health and his \$3.4 million in base salary for the coming season.

Solder only played left tackle with the Buffs, but it's hard to imagine the Patriots won't try him on the right side to see if he has that versatility.

Solder was incredibly durable in college: He missed just two of 2,542 plays and none as a senior, when the Buffs had 847 offensive snaps.

"I think that was in a game situation, one of the backups was in there just to kneel the ball," Solder said. "When they told me I missed two snaps I had to think about what happened because I didn't remember missing the snaps."

Colorado coaches graded Solder out at 94.3 (out of 100) for the season. He allowed just one sack, was credited with 142 finishes or knockdown blocks, and drew only one penalty.

He was selected as an All-American by numerous publications and websites, and was a finalist for the Outland Trophy, given to college football's top interior lineman.

According to Pro Football Weekly's Nolan Nawrocki, Solder is a "project" who needs to get stronger. But he's a hard-working and very coachable player, which will serve him well as he comes under the tutelage of Scarnecchia.

"He's an unbelievable coach," Solder said. "One of the best in the NFL, and that was completely obvious when I met with him. I look forward to the opportunity to play with him."

Solder acknowledged that he has a lot of work to do, but it won't be the first time he's undergone a big transition.

"My coaches came to me and said, 'You'd be an all right tight end, but you'd be an even better tackle,' " he recalled of his position change. "I've always wanted to be great, so that's why I moved to tackle. It's been a process. I have a lot to learn, and that's a huge reason that I'm happy that Belichick and Scarnecchia will be coaching me."

While many draft evaluators had Boston College's Anthony Castonzo rated as a better tackle than Solder, it's interesting to note that Scarnecchia ran the position drills at BC's pro day, so he got an up-close look at Castonzo.

Shalise Manza Young can be reached at [syoung@globe.com](mailto:syoung@globe.com). Follow her on Twitter @shalisemyoung.

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« [New Patriots offensive lineman Nate Solder reacts to being selected No. 17](#)  
[Patriots QB Tom Brady, on being a lead plaintiff: "We're all trying to be part of the solution."](#) »

## Patriots coach Bill Belichick defends OT Nate Solder as best player available

The Patriots selected offensive tackle [Nate Solder last night with their No. 17 overall pick](#), choosing a tackle when most assumed they had two of those for next year. No wonder starter (and free agent) [Matt Light](#) exited [Vince Wilfork's event soon after they made the pick](#).

Is it ever a bad thing to protect [Tom Brady \(whose Under Armour event you can watch live on Facebook\)](#)? Nope.

*"I think he'll be able to contribute for us and we'll work him at left tackle," Belichick said last night. "He's played left tackle and I think that will be his position in the National Football League. How good it is and all that, I mean, that's a whole other story. His position is the one he's been playing, but it's still obviously a different level of play and his techniques and there are a lot of things that he'll have to improve on. But he's a smart guy, hard-working kid, he's already graduated, he's a good worker, so hopefully he'll take the coaching that he gets from our staff and **Dante (Scarnecchia)** and be able to improve and develop at a position that he has some experience at."*



Late in his news conference last night, Belichick was asked about picking the best player available, regardless of if he already had guys at that spot. He launched into an interesting soliloquy, one that was telling.

*"Philosophically, that's pretty much where I am always: try to take the player that you feel that's the best player," Belichick said. "It's great to say 'OK, we needed this position, so now we have a card to put up there in that spot,' but if that player isn't able to really fulfill that area or that position then you're coming back here the next year looking for the same thing again. Or it's really 'We took him, but we really need better than that,' or 'It wasn't quite what we want.' But I think if you find a player that's good value for your team, **you can never have enough good football players**. So sometimes you think you have more than what you need at a certain position, but usually that stuff works itself out one way or the other. You get an injury or two, which inevitably happens in this sport, and what looks like an extra guy that you don't need, ends up being a valuable guy. I learned that at the Giants. The second or third year I was there, we had drafted **Lawrence Taylor**, we had **Brad Van Pelt**, and I know we took **Carl Banks** with the second pick in the draft, and that pick was crucified. 'What a stupid pick. Why would you take Carl Banks? What could you do with him. He's just going to sit there and watch while the other two guys play.'"*

### And... what happened?

*"Carl Banks and Lawrence Taylor were really the two bookends to that defense all through the '80s and took us to a lot of victories and two Super Bowl championships," Belichick continued. "That was another 'stupid pick' that looked like 'why would you do that?' And of course that was with no free agency too, so you only had so many picks, that's how you improved your team, unless you made a trade. But that ended up being one of the best selections while I was there. Another example of that was when we took Butch Woolfolk and then followed that up with Joe Morris. And that was another 'stupid pick' of 'why take Joe Morris when you had already taken a running back? What are you going to do — get two balls out there and give one to each guy?' Again, Joe Morris really took us to the '86 championship. I think if you believe in your system and you believe in your grades like you said, you've studied that all year, those are the players that you have a conviction on and [you're] probably better off staying with them on draft day rather than trying to regrade a guy five minutes before you pick because of some arbitrary reason. Go with what you believe in."*

That did last night...

This entry was posted on Friday, April 29th, 2011 at 10:24 am and is filed under [NFL Draft](#), [offseason](#). You can follow any responses to this entry through the [RSS 2.0](#) feed. You can skip to the end and leave a response. Pinging is currently not allowed.

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« [Patriots NT Vince Wilfork not sure if attendance will be that good in Foxboro tomorrow At No. 28, the Patriots select... no one. It's a monster trade!](#) »

## [The Patriots select OT Nate Solder from Colorado at No. 17](#)

The Patriots pulled off another shocker.

With the 17th pick, they selected Colorado OT **Nate Solder**.

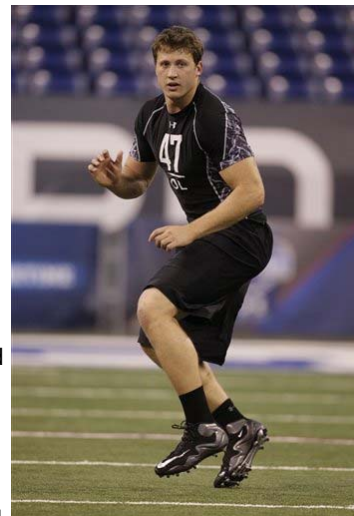
More protection for **Tom Brady**. But with so many defensive players on the board, its a surprise. A big one. But maybe it shouldn't be.

The Patriots hired ex-Colorado strength coach Moses Cabrera, and he helped scout Solder. He was the No. 2 tackle on a lot of boards, going even before Boston College's **Anthony Castonzo**. And did we mention starting left tackle (and free agent) **Matt Light** held a lockout breakfast this week, which couldn't have pleased the Krafts.

More importantly, if Solder works — and they love tall, lean, athletic, zone-blockers — they will have bookends on their offensive line for the next decade. That's something. And hey, anything that keeps Brady upright isn't all that bad.

If you want to read more about him, [colleague Karen Guregian wrote a whole story on him this week](#).

This entry was posted on Thursday, April 28th, 2011 at 9:52 pm and is filed under [NFL Draft](#), [offseason](#). You can follow any responses to this entry through the [RSS 2.0](#) feed. You can skip to the end and leave a response. Pinging is currently not allowed.



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## New England Patriots

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## Patriots Select Colorado Tackle Nate Solder With 17th Pick in First Round of NFL Draft

by [Jill Seward](#) on Thu, Apr 28, 2011 at 10:13PM

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The Patriots are expected to be one of the most active NFL teams in the 2011 draft, and they used their 17th pick in the first round to select Colorado tackle **Nate Solder**.

New England's selection comes at a bit of a surprise to fans, but Solder is a player that can definitely develop into one of the better tackles in the league in coming years. The left tackle was originally recruited as a tight end, but took to his role on the offensive line at Colorado, and was named First Team All-American in 2010.

The Buena Vista, Colo., native was also named the Big 12 Offensive Lineman of the Year in 2010 and allowed just five sacks in his three years as a starter.

Solder made the switch from tight end to tackle in the spring after his freshman season, and started every game of his sophomore, junior and senior seasons protecting the blind side for right-handed quarterbacks. He earned All-Big 12 honors in his junior and senior seasons with the Buffaloes.

Keep up with all the draft action on the [NFL Draft live blog](#).

Click here to learn more about Solder's [fit with the Patriots](#).

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### About the Author

Jill Seward is an assistant editor in NESN's new media department. Prior to joining NESN, Seward worked in the sports information department at Quinnipiac University, where she earned her master's degree in business administration. The Kittery, Maine, native also has a bachelor's degree in communications from Quinnipiac and has completed internships for the Portland Pirates in Portland, Maine, and the Arena at the Harbor Yard in Bridgeport, Conn.

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## New England Patriots

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# Pats draft tackle Nate Solder with first pick; trade away second one

09:47 AM EDT on Friday, April 29, 2011

By **PAUL KENYON**  
Journal Sports Writer

FOXBORO — For once, Bill Belichick and the Patriots did what many wanted in the first round of the NFL Draft. They made one move to fill perhaps the biggest need on their team.

The Pats, who have an offensive line in transition, selected Nate Solder, a massive 6-foot-8, 319-pounder from Colorado, with the 17th overall pick in Thursday night's first round.

Solder is regarded as a highly talented player who is far from a finished product. He began his career a Colorado as a tight end. After red-shirting one year and playing one season at end (he caught three passes for 50 yards), he was moved to offensive tackle in 2008. He immediately became a starter and has excelled for the last three years.

Solder, who is from Buena Vista, Col., was a first-team All-American this past season, Colorado's first since Stan Brock in 1979. In his three years as a starter, he took part in 2,540 or a possible 2,542 plays on offense. He allowed only five sacks in 1,400 Colorado passing plays in the last three years.

"I was hoping and praying that they'd pick me. It's such a great organization," Solder told reporters by conference call. "I'm honored they picked me."

"Nate was a player we've been on for a long time," Patriots head coach Bill Belichick said late Thursday night. "He's a good, talented guy... a hard-working kid. We'll work him at left tackle."

The Pats also did what many expected with their second first-round pick, the 28th overall. They traded it. New Orleans was the partner, giving up its second-round choice this year (56th) and first-rounder next year.

"We felt it was good value for the pick," Belichick said. "We felt we could still help our team this year, but put ourselves in position to get a good, quality player next year."

Solder had been listed in most reports as the second-highest rated offensive tackle in the draft, behind Tyron Smith of Southern Cal, who went ninth. He had been scheduled to visit Gillette Stadium before the draft, but the Pats canceled it the day before he was scheduled to leave.

"I don't know exactly what happened," he said. "There were so many question marks going through my mind in this whole process that I didn't think anything of it."

What grade do you give the Patriots for the first round of the draft?

☐ A

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Instead, the Pats sent offensive line coach Dante Scarnecchia to Colorado to work him out just this past Monday in a scenario much like two years ago when Scarnecchia personally worked out [Sebastian Vollmer](#) and New England picked him in the second round.

“He’s an unbelievable coach, one of the best in the NFL. That was completely obvious when I met him,” Solder said. “All the great things I heard about him were confirmed.”

Solder said he did not mind being switched from tight end to tackle, especially the way his coaches at Colorado presented it.

“My coaches came to me and said, ‘You’d be an all-right tight end but you could be a great tackle.’

“I have a lot to learn,” he added. “That’s a huge reason I’m happy Belichick and Scarnecchia are going to be coaching me.”

Patriots’ Football Weekly listed Solder as a possible Pats selection in its pre-draft issue with this scouting report:

“Length and athleticism make him a prototypical pass protector on the blind side; very difficult to get around when he bends his knees and is smooth in his lateral movement; resets his hands quickly after initial contact, manages to anchor after a strong initial bull rush. . . handles twists and stunts well, very willing and able run blocker; despite his height he plays with leverage at the base of attack.”

Among other accomplishments, Solder graduated with a 3.52 grade-point average as a biology major. He has received a National Football Foundation Scholarship. Solder was a finalist for the Outland Trophy as the nation’s top offensive lineman this season.

His selection is a move toward filling what is the biggest hole on the New England roster. While the offensive line has been stable over the last several seasons, it is wide open now.

Guard [Stephen Neal](#) has retired. Tackle [Matt Light](#) is about to become a free agent once the labor strife is settled. [Logan Mankins](#) has been given the franchise tag, a situation he does not like. Tackle [Nick Kaczur](#) has back problems. Center is still [Dan Koppen](#)’s spot, but he is now 31.

Solder, who is a hunter (he has shot a deer and an elk), is a product of Colorado’s highly regarded weight training program. He arrived on campus at 245 pounds and weighed in at the Scouting Combine at 319.

The only other offensive linemen the Pats have taken in the first round in the last 15 years were Mankins in 2005 and Damien Woody in 1999.

With the New Orleans deal, the Pats will have three second-round choices (33, 56 and 60) and two thirds (74 and 92) when the draft continues Saturday. They will have one pick in each of the fourth, fifth and sixth rounds on Sunday. Player: Nate Solder

College: Colorado

Position: Tackle

Height, weight: 6-foot-8, 319

Hometown: Buena Vista, Colo.

Scouting report: Solder came to Colorado as a 245-pound tight end, but he leaves as a 300-plus pound left tackle who many general managers expect to be an excellent blind-side protector for years to come. Solder is a giant at a position that is used to seeing plenty of height. He allowed only five sacks in exactly 1,400 pass plays over three seasons as a starter with the Buffaloes, and became the first offensive tackle at Colorado to earn All-America honors since Stan Brock in 1979. Solder, who graduated last May with a biology degree and has been awarded a postgraduate scholarship by the National Football Foundation, was one of the top performers at the NFL scouting combine among offensive linemen in the 40-yard dash, vertical jump, broad jump and 20-yard shuttle, reaffirming the belief that he’s one of the draft’s most athletic blockers. He has long arms that make it difficult for pass rushers to get around him, and he uses his hands well in the passing game.

— Associated Press

# The Washington Post

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## Ravens get defensive, select Colorado CB Jimmy Smith with 27th overall pick in NFL draft

**By Associated Press, Friday, April 29, 12:31 AM**

OWINGS MILLS, Md. — Years from now, the Baltimore Ravens might have a good laugh about the craziness they endured before taking Colorado cornerback Jimmy Smith in the first round of the NFL draft.

On Thursday night, however, the Ravens were in panic mode as the clock expired on their turn to make the 26th overall pick.

General manager Ozzie Newsome thought he had a trade with the Chicago Bears after getting confirmation from the league. But the Bears didn't follow through, and the Ravens were told to make their selection or drop back to 27th.

While coach John Harbaugh was on the phone with Smith, Newsome desperately tried to make his pick. Time ran out, and Kansas City was placed on the clock.

Fortunately for the Ravens, the Chiefs took wide receiver Jonathan Baldwin at No. 26, paving the way for Baltimore to get the player they wanted.

"In the end, we felt like he was the best pick for us," director of personnel Eric DeCosta said. "He makes us a lot better. He tackles well, he's got great coverage skills, he's a big kid, he matches up well against the receivers in our decisions."

Smith supposedly dropped to late in the first round because he had a positive marijuana test while at Colorado. But the 6-foot-2, 205-pounder is a strong cover corner and should improve a defense that is not deep at the position.

"I'm not disappointed. I feel like I was destined to go to the Ravens," Smith said in a conference call. "The mistakes I made were in past, a long time ago."

In meeting with the Ravens before the draft, Smith made a very positive impression.

“We brought him in, we put him through a process, even more so than we do some of the other players,” Newsome said. “We came away feeling that he would be able to come here and continue to be the type of player and person he’s been the last couple of years.”

Smith was the third cornerback taken in the first round. Patrick Peterson of LSU went to Arizona at No. 5 and Prince Amukamara of Nebraska was selected 19th by the New York Giants.

At Colorado, Smith had three interceptions over four seasons, deflected 18 passes and had 163 tackles.

“This guy is a special player,” Harbaugh said. “He’s exactly the type of corner that we’re looking for. He fits our defense. We all spent a great amount of time with him. We think he’s got a good heart, we think he’s very committed to being a great football player and we’re going to do everything we can to help him be that.”

The Ravens knew for a weeks that Smith would be a good fit, but when it came time to make the pick, Baltimore nearly blew it. After the trade fell through and the Chiefs were on the clock, the Ravens could very well have lost the chance to take their coveted corner.

“There was a potential for us to lose it, yes,” Newsome acknowledged. “But we got the player, and we’re just happy to have him.”

Newsome said more than one team approached the Ravens about a trade, but the Bears were the club that offered the best deal. But Chicago couldn’t get confirmation from the NFL, the trade never happened, and Newsome was happy to get hold of Smith.

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## With OL aging and in flux, Patriots take OT Nate Solder of Colorado with 17th pick of draft

By Associated Press, Friday, April 29, 12:45 AM

FOXBOROUGH, Mass. — It makes good sense for the New England Patriots to insure their most important asset. So they drafted another towering tackle to protect Tom Brady.

The Patriots used the 17th pick on Thursday night on Nate Solder, a first-team All-America player last year who lined up for every offensive snap for Colorado as a senior. They had taken another 6-foot-8 tackle, Sebastian Vollmer, two years ago and he started every game for them last season. And Matt Light has been the starting left tackle the past 10 seasons.

"I have all the respect in the world for those guys," Solder said. "I know this: competition makes everyone better, so that's going to be a great opportunity."

Solder missed just two snaps in his last three seasons at left tackle where he protected the quarterback's blind side. He never played the right side in college, and coach Bill Belichick said he will be a left tackle in the NFL.

"There's a lot of things he'll have to improve on. He's a smart kid, a hard worker," Belichick said. "For a big guy, he moves very well."

Solder will need that skill if he has to block defenders charging hard to knock Brady to the ground.

"I think Tom Brady is a great quarterback," Solder said. "I'm looking forward to the privilege of playing for the Patriots."

New England also needs a pass rusher but traded its second pick in the first round, the 28th overall, to the New Orleans Saints for the 56th choice this year and a first-rounder next year. The Patriots began the day with only five picks next year, one in each of the first five rounds.

The deal was hardly surprising since Belichick made seven trades during the draft in each of the past two years. They now have three choices in the second round, the 33rd, 56th and 60th, and another two in the third, the 74th and 92nd. Those rounds are scheduled for Friday night with the last four rounds set for Saturday.

"We felt that we would still help our team this year and put us in a position to get a good, quality pick next year," Belichick said of the deal.

He even might trade one of those second rounders.

"We've heard from a couple of teams that have expressed an interest in it," he said.

Solder joins an offensive line in a state of flux after remaining relatively constant for much of the past decade.

The Patriots were 14-2 last season before losing to the New York Jets 28-21 in the first round of the playoffs, but, since then, guard Stephen Neal, 34, retired after nine seasons with the team.

Light, 32, is a free agent. Guard Logan Mankins remains at odds with the team over a new contract after sitting out the first seven games last season during the dispute. The six-year veteran, 29, was designated by the team as its franchise player.

Center Dan Koppen and tackle Nick Kaczur, who spent all last season on injured reserve, are 31.

Solder, the second offensive tackle drafted, took every snap at left tackle for Colorado as a senior and gave up just one sack.

But he didn't come to Foxborough for a tryout. It wasn't until Monday that the Patriots took a good look at him in person when offensive line coach Dante Scarnecchia traveled to Colorado where Solder's parents run Peri and Ed's Mountain Hideaway, a bed and breakfast in Leadville.

The tryout, Solder said, "wasn't exhaustive. But, like I said, all the great things I learned about him were confirmed. I could tell he was an absolutely great coach and I was hoping and praying, though I didn't want to put (it) in my mind to go there. But I'm so honored to be there."

Solder started with the Buffaloes as a tight end then moved to tackle before the 2008 season. At the NFL combine in Indianapolis in February, he had just 21 repetitions bench pressing 225 pounds.

"I don't want anything given to me," he said. "I want to earn everything I get."

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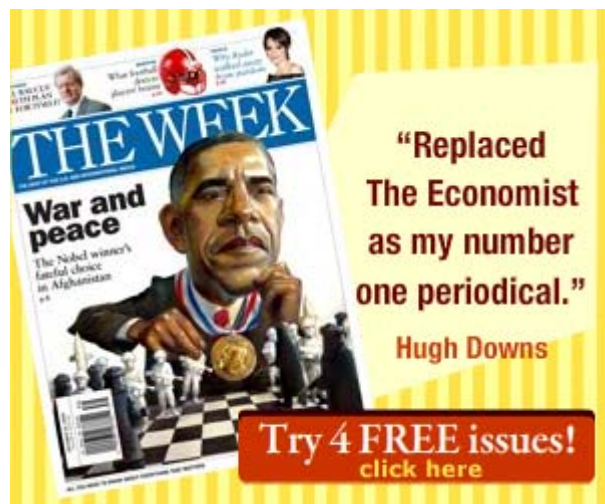
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## Patriots draft OT Nate Solder from Colorado with 17th pick of NFL draft

By Associated Press, Thursday, April 28, 10:00 PM

FOXBOROUGH, Mass. — The New England Patriots have drafted tackle Nate Solder (SOUL-der) of Colorado with the 17th pick of the NFL draft.

The Patriots need help on the offensive line. Guard Stephen Neal retired after last season, tackle Matt Light is a free agent and guard Logan Mankins remains upset with his contract status after sitting out the first seven games in a dispute over a long-term deal. He was designated their franchise player after the season.

New England needs a pass rusher, but several of the top ones already had been picked.

The Patriots also have the 28th pick in the first round.

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www.baltimoresun.com/sports/ravens/bal-ravens-draft-jimmy-smith-0428,0,7837020.story

**baltimoresun.com**

## Ravens draft Colorado cornerback Jimmy Smith

By Jamison Hensley, The Baltimore Sun

11:14 PM EDT, April 28, 2011

The Ravens took perhaps their biggest gamble ever in the first round, selecting talented yet flawed cornerback Jimmy Smith with the 27th pick in the NFL draft Thursday.

The Ravens entered the draft with the 26th pick, but they slid to No. 27 when they failed to submit their selection in time and the Kansas City Chiefs jumped ahead of them.

Smith brings much-needed size, speed and shutdown cornerback ability to the 21st-ranked pass defense. He also brings more red flags than career interceptions, the major reason why a top-15 talent slid to the bottom of the first round.

According to the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, Smith flunked three drug tests at Colorado, and he informed one team that one was for misusing codeine. He also told teams about two alcohol-related arrests and an arrest for third-degree assault in a restaurant.

In a poll this month by the Journal Sentinel, 11 of 24 NFL personnel men said they wouldn't draft Smith in the first two rounds.

"He's as athletically gifted as [Nnamdi] Asomugha," an NFC personnel director told the Journal Sentinel. "He's got all the ability in the world. He also could be a supreme punk."

Cornerback was one of the Ravens' top priorities in this draft. One starter (Chris Carr) is an unrestricted free agent, and the other (Josh Wilson) is a restricted one. Domonique Foxworth, a starter in 2009, is coming off knee surgery that sidelined him all of last season, and nickel back Lardarius Webb is a season removed from the same operation.

All four of those corners are under 6 feet tall, and none weighs more than 192 pounds. Adding size would allow the Ravens to play more press coverage and match up better against physical receivers.

At 6 feet 2, 211 pounds, Smith is strong enough to line up against 6-3 rookie receiver A.J. Green, who was taken by the Cincinnati Bengals fourth overall. And Smith has excellent speed, which would allow him to hang with Pittsburgh's Mike Wallace.

The Ravens had Smith fall to them because the three teams interested in him went elsewhere. The Detroit Lions chose defensive tackle Nick Fairley with the 13th overall pick, the Philadelphia Eagles drafted offensive lineman Danny Watkins with the 23rd pick and the Seattle Seahawks selected offensive lineman James Carpenter with the 25th pick.

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APRIL 29, 2011

## Ravens say they did their homework on Jimmy Smith

When the Ravens selected Jimmy Smith with the 27th overall pick, they exuded excitement over his talents as a player and consistently defended his character as a person.

The Ravens said they were thorough in examining Smith's issues, which range from failed drug tests to arrests for possession of alcohol as a minor.

Director of player personnel Eric DeCosta said the Ravens spent nine months looking at Smith. Over that time, DeCosta said four scouts, some coaches as well as himself went out to Colorado to see the 6-foot-2 cornerback.

"At the end of the day, we just had a comfort level with the kid, both as a person and as a player," DeCosta said. "We think we've got a great locker room, and we think he's going to be a guy that comes in and flourishes in our system."

In a pre-draft visit, Smith met with coach John Harbaugh for almost two hours. He also spent time with DeCosta, general manager Ozzie Newsome and director of college scouting Joe Hortiz.

Asked if he sees Smith as a risky pick, Newsome said, "Every pick there is some bit of a gamble in it. But we trust the people that got the opportunity to spend time with him, and there were a number of people that had that opportunity to spend some time with him. So, we trust the process, we trust the people that are in this building that are going to be interacting with him on a day-to-day basis, and we also got to know Jimmy – what his aspirations [are] and what he wants to do and what he wants to be. That kind of matched up with what we thought."

For the latest Ravens news, [follow Jamison Hensley on Twitter](#). Also, [become a fan of Baltimore Sun Sports on Facebook](#).

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