

 **[PRINT]** ESPN.com: NFL Nation

[\[Print without images\]](#)

ESPN

Sunday, February 27, 2011

Combine'11: The intrigue of Nate Solder

By Kevin Seifert

INDIANAPOLIS -- We've spent some time discussing the [top quarterbacks here at the NFL scouting combine](#), especially those who could fit into the [Minnesota Vikings'](#) future plans. We've looked at the dramatic, if fantastical, possibility of Oregon linebacker [Casey Matthews joining his brother](#) with the [Green Bay Packers](#).

Among all the angles I encountered in Indianapolis, one of the more intriguing is Colorado offensive tackle [Nate Solder](#), who has a mammoth frame combined with high-end athleticism, a combination that could put him into play for multiple NFC North teams.

He would be a nice value pick at No. 12 for the Vikings, who might want to start a succession plan for left tackle [Bryant McKinnie](#) or challenge right tackle [Phil Loadholt](#). The [Detroit Lions](#) could target him at No. 13, [as several early mock drafts have suggested](#). And there is no doubt the [Chicago Bears](#) would benefit from a left tackle prospect of Solder's level, even if they have to trade up to do it.

A converted tight end, Solder measured 6-foot-8 1/4 and a lean 314 pounds. Despite his frame, he also recorded the top 40-yard dash time among offensive tackles (5.05) and had the best 10-yard split among all offensive linemen (1.63).

[\(As Scouts Inc. points out, the 10-yard split measures an offensive lineman's burst and explosion.\)](#)

Need more numbers? Solder was tied for the third-best vertical jump among offensive linemen (32 inches) and the third-best broad jump (9-2). His bench press results were disappointing -- he managed only 21 reps of 225 pounds -- but it's safe to say he still needs to fill out his frame.

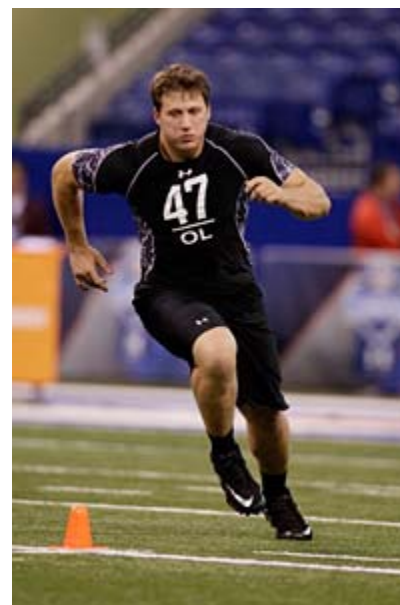
So we know Solder is an athletic specimen. But can he play? That's what I asked ESPN analyst Todd McShay during a break in the action this weekend.

"The biggest thing with him is his ability to move laterally and bend," McShay said. "He plays high too much of the time and you see him get in trouble when he does. But he's close. If he gets with a good coach, he could be a good starting left tackle for a long time in this league."

In honor of Solder's unique match with the NFC North, let's proceed with our three-question format, and add one more for good measure.

On moving from tight end after his freshman season:

Nate Solder: Some things came naturally. It takes a lot of athleticism to become a left tackle, same as a tight end. But some things didn't come natural -- knee bend, using your hands, those sort of things.



Colorado's Nate Solder recorded the top 40-yard dash time among offensive tackles (5.05).

On his height:

NS: I think the worry of being a taller guy is not being able to bend and the thing I've done to counteract that is to show I can bend, work on staying bent. Now, the advantages are you've got a lot bigger wingspan and it's a lot harder to run around you.

On if he ever wanted to play basketball:

NS: I was a decent basketball player, I had much more potential at football, and that's kind of the way I was offered. And no it wasn't hard to give up, because I had an outlet in football and I love it now.'

On his 2010 game against Cal, when defensive end [Cameron Jordan](#) beat him for a sack and two tackles behind the line of scrimmage.

NS: Well, that was a breakdown in technique from me. You learn not to take anyone for granted and that guy played a heck of a game, and you've got to give it to him and no matter who you go against, you can't break down in your technique. That was just a fundamental error on my part.
