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Sunday, May 1, 2011

Vickers surprised Browns drafted a fullback

By James Walker

[Cleveland Browns](#) fullback and pending free agent [Lawrence Vickers](#) said his phone began buzzing constantly Saturday afternoon and he wasn't sure why. Soon after, Vickers was notified the Browns drafted Stanford's [Owen Marecic](#) in the fourth round, which [likely signaled the end](#) of Vickers' tenure in Cleveland.

Over the past five seasons, Vickers has developed into one of the NFL's top fullbacks. Most recently Vickers helped pave the way for Browns running back [Peyton Hillis](#) to have a career year (1,177 rushing yards, 11 touchdowns) in 2010.

But with the Browns switching to a West Coast offense under rookie head coach Pat Shurmur, they appear ready to move in another direction by drafting Marecic. Vickers, who is training in his hometown of Houston, Texas, told ESPN.com's AFC North blog that he was shocked by the news.

"Honestly, my first reaction was 'Wow,'" Vickers said in a telephone interview Sunday. "I'm amazed. I was amazed I was still a free agent and wasn't signed [by the Browns] before the deadline. I didn't understand it. But at the same time I do understand because nothing has ever come easy to me. So I was prepared for it.

"If they want me, they want me. If they don't, they don't. As a man, you have to be prepared for anything. But in the back of my mind I thought I would be in Cleveland."

With free agency on ice due to labor uncertainty, Vickers said he's still not 100 percent certain he won't return. But it's sure looking that way. According to Vickers, he was never tendered a contract before the lockout. Cleveland has been unwilling to speak on player contracts since the lockout began in March.

But using a fourth-round pick on Vickers' position speaks volumes. With the West Coast offense focusing on multiple receivers and multiple tight ends, there's not enough room for two fullbacks on Cleveland's roster.

Vickers, who was used primarily as a run blocker, scoffs at the idea that he cannot play in a West Coast offense.

"I wasn't asked to catch the ball and go out in the flats and run routes, because that wasn't how our offense was," Vickers explained. "Now people are lying and people think I can't catch. I guess I shouldn't have started knocking people out (laughs)."

Vickers' powerful blocking and blue-collar work ethic made him one of the most popular players with the Browns. Vickers said if this offseason is his farewell to Cleveland, he will always look back fondly on his time with the Browns and especially his bond with the fans.

"They love hard-working people and that's what I love about Cleveland: It's nothing but hard-working people there," Vickers said. "I am appreciative of everything I have, and that's why me and Cleveland fans vibe. You will never hear me say anything bad about them, because it's a mutual respect."



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Drake Relays: Somerville, Simpson, Harrington, Houlihan honored

Written by

FROM REGISTER NEWS SERVICES

4:07 PM, May. 2, 2011|

University of Cincinnati hurdler Terence Somerville was named the Maury White Award winner as men's college and open outstanding performer at the Drake Relays on Monday.

Iowa native and U.S. Olympian Jenny Barringer Simpson was outstanding performer in the women's college and open division.

The Robert Kramme Award winner as boys' outstanding performer is James Harrington of Cedar Falls, and the Gerry Cooley Award winner as girls' top performer is Shelby Houlihan of Sioux City East.

Somerville, a junior, ran the 110-meter hurdles in a Drake Relays record time of 13.48. That eclipsed the 1987 record of 13.49 by Texas Southern's Vernon George.

Somerville also anchored Cincinnati's winning 4x110 shuttle hurdle team that

finished in 57.48.

Barringer Simpson won the women's 1,500 meters in 4:09.56. Her time is the second-fastest U.S. women's outdoor time this year.

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