



Can't fault Patriots' pick of Solder New tackle Solder 'has it all'

By Karen Guregian | Wednesday, May 4, 2011 | <http://www.bostonherald.com> | **N.E. Patriots**

As a draft prospect, Nate Solder seemed almost too good to be true. On the field, he looked like a future Pro Bowl left tackle. Off the field, he came across better than most Boy Scouts.

Teams did their best to find a flaw, something to make Solder seem less perfect. But the **Patriots** [\[team stats\]](#) first-round draft pick rated a 10 on the stud meter no matter which way you sliced him.

"They'd all come in my office and shut the door. They were just trying to find fault with the guy," former University of Colorado offensive line coach Denver Johnson said yesterday regarding the scouts who were dispatched to Boulder. "It almost got comical. I'd say, 'Guys, why can't you just believe what you see?' This guy is the real deal. That's what he is. He has diverse interests. He's very unselfish. He's an immensely gifted individual athletically. Sometimes, it's just so rare to find those kind of gifts in a guy that doesn't have severe character flaws. When you do find a guy like that, it's almost like, you can't believe one or the other. But the fact is, (Solder) has it all."

Let's start with the football part of the equation. After all, Solder is **Tom Brady** [\[stats\]](#)'s next blind-side protector. It's important to know why the Pats took him with the 17th overall pick and why fans should be happy they grabbed him instead of other noted prospects such as **Boston College**'s Anthony Castonzo.

So beyond the obvious size element, what makes the 6-foot-8, 319-pound Solder, who was converted from tight end to tackle, such an appealing prospect?

"He's long, he's tall, he's lean, he can run and he can change directions, which is good for an offensive lineman," said Johnson, who is now coaching the offensive line at Tulsa. "He has an athletic quality about him, I think some people refer to it as quickness. I have a little different word that I use. I refer to it as suddenness. He can be very sudden in his movements. He can really come out of a stance, run or pass. He's just got real suddenness about him."

Johnson believes the fact that Solder has only started to grasp how to play the position adds to his overall appeal.

"As a player, the thing y'all should be excited about, it's all in front of him. He's barely scratched the surface of what he's going to be," Johnson said. "He came out of a small mountain town. He was recruited, played tight end. We converted him to an offensive tackle. I think about the last half of this past season, he really started to become an offensive lineman. So I think he's still very much at the front end of his development. I think he's got tremendous development left in front of him. I know if I was a pro coach and could take one guy, this would be the guy I'd want to take."

While some experts question whether Solder will be able to handle the power and speed of elite pass rushers in the NFL, Johnson doesn't seem to have any doubts.

"Finding guys who have the ability to play over there, if that's the prime spot, if that's the premium spot, finding guys to play over there who have that athleticism is fairly rare, and Nate truly has uncommon ability," Johnson said. "They took him as a left tackle prospect. That's certainly what I'd try to make out of him."

How about toughness? Can a nice kid like Solder handle NFL-style trenches?

"I don't have any questions about his toughness," Johnson said. "He fools you a little bit because he's such a well-mannered young man. But he's highly competitive. I think he'll rise to whatever level he needs."

Solder said as much when he was in Foxboro over the weekend. He'll do whatever it takes to win a battle and win the football game.

"I'm just such a competitive guy in everything that I do, there's not one guy I don't want to do everything better than him, at every single level," he said. "And that plays out in a lot of ways, you know. If I've got to smash him into the ground to shut up his mouth then that's the way I'll do it."



Photo by John Wilcox

That doesn't sound like the guy who went to Guatemala and volunteered at an orphanage and helped feed children, or to Italy to help rebuild a town ravaged by an earthquake. It also doesn't sound like a guy who paints and sculpts as a hobby. But all of those elements make up the Patriots' first-round draft choice.

"He's just the greatest kid on earth. He is truly a special young man," Johnson said of Solder. "He's highly intelligent. He's humble, very unassuming, with very diverse interests. He's the kind of guy you hope your daughter brings home to meet you some day."

Solder spoke about the trips when he was in Foxboro last week.

"I was just trying to make the most of my spring break, or Christmas break," he said. "In Guatemala, I got to help out kids and it was an amazing experience. I did another one in Italy rebuilding homes. It was great.

As a youngster, Solder was into sports, but not the kind where you intentionally plow into other bodies. Solder, who grew up deep in the Rocky Mountains of Colorado, loved to ski and raced giant slalom events. In the summer, he played baseball.

He didn't play Pop Warner football. Instead, he fished and hunted. When he figured football might lead to a college scholarship, that's when he got serious about the pigskin.

Solder, who graduated with a degree in biology, had the grades to go to Dartmouth to play basketball, but he wasn't enamored with the level of competition. Colorado and Big 12 football were more like it.

"It just made sense for him not to go (to Dartmouth) for a lot of different reasons," said his mother, Peri Solder, who is from Washington, D.C., and went to Franklin Pierce College in New Hampshire.

Some of Nate's artwork, namely one of his wood sculptures, sits in the family's 40-acre ranch in Buena Vista, Colo. How would Peri Solder describe her son, a man whose primary job will now be protecting Brady?

"I wouldn't say he's shy," she said. "Just reserved and humble."

Article URL: <http://www.bostonherald.com/sports/football/patriots/view.bg?articleid=1335357>

Related Articles:

Kin, pals stand by Ryan Mallett

</sports/football/patriots/view.bg?articleid=1335583>

The Making of Mallett: A look at a high school quarterback beyond his years...

/blogs/sports/rap_sheet/view.bg?articleid=1335462

The Making of Mallett: The time that monster arm almost got Ryan Mallett into trouble...

/blogs/sports/rap_sheet/view.bg?articleid=1335184



[Contact us](#) | [Print advertising](#) | [Online advertising](#) | [Herald history](#) | [Send a news tip](#) | [Electronic edition](#) | [Br](#)

[**Save on Boston Herald Home Delivery**](#)

[**Jobs with Herald Media**](#)

For back copy information and more information on other collectible copies please call 617-426-3000 Ext. 7714. [Cli](#)



www.baltimoresun.com/sports/baltimore-sports-blog/bal-sportsblitz-smith-confident503,0,7546153.story

baltimoresun.com

Jimmy Smith is really confident, wants Lardarius Webb's number

By Matt Vensel

4:45 PM EDT, May 3, 2011

Ravens cornerback Jimmy Smith recently chatted with Mark Kriegel of FOX Sports, who asked the 2011 first-round pick about the draft process, how he stacked up against his peers, what Ray Lewis said to him over the weekend and which number he plans on wearing in Baltimore.

One thing we've learned about the Ravens' newest cornerback is that he has plenty of confidence. Smith [thinks he is the best cornerback in this class](#), ahead of Patrick Peterson, who went fifth overall to the Cardinals, and Prince Amukamara, who went 19th to the Giants.

"No disrespect to Patrick Peterson and Prince Amukamara, but I just think I have better cover skills," said Smith, the 27th pick in the draft. "They get tested a lot, and that's for a reason. The other team sees something in their game that they want to attack, and me playing in the same league as Prince, we played the same teams and they didn't attack me the same. So why does that happen?"

Smith thought the Eagles would draft him at No. 23 because they spent a lot of time researching him, but he wasn't surprised he dropped to the Ravens. "Not even a little bit because of all of the concerns and the red flags that the media put out about me," he said. "Everyone got this bad misconception about me." Smith added that the Cardinals "ambushed" him with questions about his past during a pre-draft interview.

(It couldn't have been worse [than what Dez Bryant got from the Dolphins](#) last year.)

"I just want to prove everybody wrong, all of the naysayers," Smith said. "The only thing I can really do is make sure I'm always staying out of trouble and doing things the right way so nobody can say anything."

But Smith was happy to get selected by the Ravens. "I think I fit in perfectly over there," he said. And he was welcomed to the team by Ray Lewis, who called him on Saturday. "He just welcomed me and set me straight on how the team is going to be ran," he said. "He is the boss, as far as on the defense."

Smith said the Ravens gave him a jersey number (No. 22), but don't sprint to the neighborhood screen-printing shop just yet. He wants No. 21, which is currently worn by fellow cornerback Lardarius Webb. Smith told Kriegel he would give up \$50,000 for it before scaling back his offer to \$10,000. "That's a lot of money."

I can't see Webb giving up his number for that, so Smith better up the ante or pick a different number.

Copyright © 2011, [The Baltimore Sun](#)

advertisement

