

nfl

Nate Solder's first Super Bowl started with a safety

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Today's questions about the NFL come from Kris Hudson in Grand Prairie, Texas.

Q: What happened to New England Patriots offensive tackle Nate Solder, a former Colorado star, during the Super Bowl? Why wasn't he playing? Was he benched or did he get hurt?

A: Solder lined up as an extra tight end on the Patriots' first offensive play of Super Bowl XLVI. The first-round draft pick played that role a lot during his rookie season.

Solder's first Super Bowl play produced a safety for the New York Giants, who beat the Patriots 21-17. Tom Brady, pressured by the Giants' pass rush, threw an incomplete pass that was ruled intentional grounding. The pass was thrown from the Patriots' end zone, so the Giants were awarded a

safety.

When the Patriots got the ball back, after the Giants had built a 9-0 lead, Solder lined up at right tackle — replacing Sebastian Vollmer —

and stayed there the rest of the first half. Vollmer, a three-year starter, suffered a foot injury in late November. The Super Bowl was his first game back.

The Patriots opened the second half with Vollmer lined up at right tackle and Solder lined up as an extra tight end. After a 21-yard completion from Brady to wide receiver Chad Ochocinco, Solder left the field and Vollmer stayed at right tackle. Solder didn't play much the rest of the game.

Patriots coach Bill Belichick likes the 6-foot-8, 318-pound Solder, who has a bright future with the team's offensive line. Solder played tight end at CU before becoming a consensus All-America tackle with the Buffaloes.

"The reason I moved from tight end to tackle (at CU) was because I was kind of a jack-of-all-trades, master-of-none, and it takes a real special guy to be a good blocker and a good receiver like (Patriots tight end Rob Gronkowski), so that's where I kind of wanted to focus more on blocking," Solder said before the Super Bowl.



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"That's an adjustment for me, but it's nice having a little experience from college and coming here, where I've been playing both roles."

Solder's biggest adjustment going from college football to the pros?

"Every week (in the NFL) there's such a good pass rusher (you have to block)," he said.

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