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Nate Solder Has Proven to Be Valuable Asset Early in Patriots Career

by [Jeff Howe](#) on Thu, Oct 20, 2011 at 12:32PM

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FOXBORO, Mass. -- Rookie tackle **Nate Solder** has proven to be a valuable asset for the Patriots much quicker than initially anticipated.

When he was drafted with the 17th pick in April, he figured to be a luxury who could sit and learn for a year while the Patriots figured out what they'd do with left tackle **Matt Light**. And there seemed to be no way that Solder -- a left tackle in college who wouldn't play anywhere else according to **Bill Belichick**'s post-draft news conference -- would supplant up-and-coming tackle **Sebastian Vollmer** on the right side.

Naturally, these things managed to work themselves out. Vollmer has been hampered by a back injury for about two months, and Solder has started at right tackle in five of the Patriots' six games. Solder played on a rotational basis in three-tackle sets when Vollmer started in Week 2 against the Chargers.

Solder has played well, despite the fact that his 6-foot-8, sleek frame is better suited for left tackle. Aside from some struggles against the Cowboys' powerful outside linebackers -- and really, it's tough to blame Solder, or anyone, for that -- Solder has performed at an above average level.

He once appeared to be a luxury as a third tackle, but he has since become a valued contributor to a very good New England offensive line.

"I didn't really know what to expect," Solder said Wednesday regarding his initial thoughts about life in the NFL. "You don't ever know until you kind of go through it. That's kind of the point where I'm at right now, just going through it."

Solder said it's been a fun ride, and he's also understood the business side of the lifestyle -- not in a contractual sense, but from the Patriots' expectations to perform in a winning culture. He was also excited about his first bye week as a professional athlete, which included an opportunity to take five days off to rest up for the remainder of his rookie year.

"Getting ready to finish off the season strong," Solder said, "and do whatever it takes this week to finish off the season."

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