

Patriots Nate Solder faces potential challenge

Former Buff will block for Brady from right side

Associated Press
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:09/10/2011 12:09:22 AM MDT

FOXBOROUGH, Mass. -- It's never easy being a rookie in the NFL. It's even tougher when in your first NFL game, you're playing out of position and being charged with making sure Tom Brady stays upright.

Tackle Nate Solder, a first-round draft pick out of Colorado, has been impressive in training camp and preseason for the Patriots. Now, with starting right tackle Sebastian Vollmer missing practice again Friday and expected to be sidelined for Monday night's game against the Miami Dolphins, Solder figures to move from his usual left tackle position to the right side.

He says he is ready for the challenge, although "I don't know exactly what's been going on with that (Vollmer's injury), but I'm going to play wherever they need me to play."

Solder mostly has played left tackle. It's not always an easy thing to switch sides.

"There's different techniques," New England coach Bill Belichick said Friday. "Playing from inside-out and keeping your weight on your inside foot in pass protection or reach blocking, working with different people -- the right guard instead of the left guard. Tight ends are tight ends; they flip sides, but working with different guys next to you in games and blocking combinations, things like that."

Belichick said Solder has looked good when the Patriots lined him up on the right side.

"Nate's a pretty versatile guy. He's very flexible," Belichick said. "Athletically, he has good footwork and he seems pretty comfortable wherever we put him."

To Solder, football is football -- to a degree.

"A lot of things carry over from college, but I'm learning so much each day," he said.

Close Window

Send To Printer

[PRINT](#) ESPN.com: Patriots[\[Print without images\]](#)

Friday, September 9, 2011

Solder: 'Absolutely ready to go'

By Mike Reiss

FOXBOROUGH, Mass. -- One of the big storylines for the Patriots in their season opener against the Dolphins is at right tackle, where second-team All-Pro Sebastian Vollmer has missed the last two weeks of practice with a back injury.

If Vollmer isn't ready, it almost certainly thrusts rookie Nate Solder into the starting lineup, whether he's ready or not. The first-round draft choice from Colorado has received a crash course throughout the preseason.

"I'm absolutely ready to go," said Solder, who is the only other pure tackle on the depth chart. "Whatever situation I'm put in, it's because the coaches have confidence in me to be in there. ... It's just a building process for me. I'm just one cog of this wheel."

Earlier Friday, coach Bill Belichick gave Solder (6-8, 319) positive reviews from his work at right tackle. Flipping sides can challenge some tackles -- Matt Light is one example who couldn't make the move from left to right -- but Solder hasn't experienced major issues, according to Belichick.

Solder, who could be matched up against Dolphins pass-rusher Cameron Wake (14 sacks in 2010) on Monday night, was asked how he would compare his time at Colorado to the last five weeks in the NFL.

"Everyone says it's bigger and faster, and I think that's true, but it's a mental thing as well, the amount of information that you need to know is much more," he said.

On a light note, Solder laughed about his hair, which received a tough cut as part of a rookie tradition. He later shaved it off.

"I can't be more ready for it to grow back," he said, smiling.



Nate Solder could be looking at his first NFL start on Monday.



Nate Solder ready for battle Rookie tackle may face baptism by fire

By Ian R. Rapoport | Saturday, September 10, 2011 | <http://www.bostonherald.com> | **N.E. Patriots**

FOXBORO — Nate Solder doesn't enter his first NFL game with a complete resume.

The **Patriots** [[team stats](#)] rookie offensive tackle hasn't played a single professional snap heading into Monday night's game against the Dolphins. Technique is a work in progress, considering the first-round pick didn't have the benefit of any offseason workouts.

And at just 319 pounds on his 6-foot-8 lanky body, Solder could gain some strength.

But if the Colorado product is pushed into duty with the entire nation watching, if starting right tackle Sebastian Vollmer's back injury doesn't allow him to suit up, Solder does possess two traits that may take him a long way against nasty Miami pass-rushers like Cameron Wake and Koa Misi.

He's got skills, which was evident during his extended playing time in the preseason at left and right tackle, flashing some nifty footwork. And Solder's got more than enough faith in himself.

"I'm absolutely ready to go," Solder said yesterday. "Whatever situation I'm put in, it's because the coaches have confidence for me to be in there, and I'm happy to be there. I'm ready to go."

The Patriots may not have a choice. Vollmer missed his third consecutive practice yesterday. The Pats have just three offensive tackles on their roster, which may be a sign they believe Vollmer could return Monday. It may also mean that Vollmer's injury is taking longer to heal than they originally thought. They did work out two tackles yesterday.

Solder didn't speculate on his participation in Miami. He said he hasn't looked around at practice and wondered, nor has he inquired about the severity of Vollmer's injury.

"I don't know what's going to happen," Solder said. "We're going to play whoever's there. I don't know who's that's going to be. If it's me, I'll play my butt off."

Coach **Bill Belichick** was cautious about describing Vollmer's status or his chances of playing opposite **Matt Light** [[stats](#)]. He said Vollmer's status will be listed on the injury report today.

"As we have information, we'll give it to you," Belichick said.

Yet perhaps Light summed it up best.

"We're going to find out Monday night," Light said. "Either way, it ain't going to be easy to block 'em no matter who they are."

He's right. The Dolphins will bring pressure off the edge, making the job of protecting quarterback **Tom Brady** [[stats](#)] supremely important. It always is. Solder has improved steadily in camp, drawing gushing praise from Belichick along the way.

Sure, he's had some issues. He allowed a sack to Buccaneers end Tim Crowder, for instance, who simply tossed Solder aside. It's one reason he needs to add weight and experience.

"It's just a building process for me," Solder said. "I'm just one cog in part of this wheel. A lot of things carry over from college, but I'm learning so much every day."

For Solder, the task is slightly more complicated now.

A left tackle in college and early in Patriots camp, Solder described trying his hand at right tackle last week as "the bizarro world. Everything's opposite. But you pick it up kind of quick."

There are inherent differences in right and left tackle, besides the fact that one protects Brady's blind side and the other doesn't. With right side being most offenses' power sides, right tackles often face more powerful ends, as opposed to those based in quickness.



Photo by John Wilcox

There are technical differences, too. One keeps his weight on the inside foot in pass protection and leads with his inside hand, so that must be reversed. The blocking combinations are altered, as is the side for a reach block. Working with different players can be challenging.

Even Solder conceded, "People think it's not a big deal, but sometimes it is difficult to do that."

This could be his job Monday night. If that's the case, Belichick sounds as confident as his player.

"Nate is a pretty versatile guy," Belichick said. "Seems very flexible — athletically, his footwork and so forth. He seems to be very comfortable wherever we put him."

Article URL: <http://www.bostonherald.com/sports/football/patriots/view.bg?articleid=1364695>

Related Articles:

Checklist for Pats-Dolphins game

</sports/football/patriots/view.bg?articleid=1365216>

Solder on duty

</sports/football/patriots/view.bg?articleid=1365171>

Defensive facelift finally gets a look

</sports/football/patriots/view.bg?articleid=1365169>



[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 and collectible issue information please call 617-426-3000 Ext. 7714. [Click here for Celtics, F](#)



© Copyright by the Boston Herald and Herald Media.
No portion of BostonHerald.com or its content may be reproduced without the owner's written per


[ESPN.com: BlogsColumns](#)
[\[Print without images\]](#)


Friday, September 9, 2011

Ready or not, Solder's in spotlight

By Mike Reiss
 ESPNBoston.com

FOXBOROUGH, Mass. -- If things went according to the New England Patriots' plan, first-round draft choice [Nate Solder](#) would have time to ease into the mix and build more strength. They didn't want to throw him right into the fire.

But it looks like that's what is going to happen.

Solder has a good chance of being in the starting lineup at right tackle when the Patriots visit the Dolphins on ESPN's Monday Night Football (7 p.m.), and his presence immediately would become one of the game's top storylines. All eyes will be on the Dolphins' edge pressure, led by [Cameron Wake](#) (14 sacks in 2010), second-year linebacker [Koa Misi](#), and longtime Patriots nemesis [Jason Taylor](#), and how Solder handles his first regular-season NFL assignment.

The Patriots drafted Solder 17th overall to be their left tackle of the future, but the idea was to have a pass-the-torch situation with veteran [Matt Light](#) for at least one year. That's why the club awarded Light a two-year, \$12 million free-agent contract including an up-front \$6 million signing bonus.

That part of the plan is still on course, with Light expected to start at left tackle Monday. It's been the unexpected turn of events at right tackle, where second-team All-Pro [Sebastian Vollmer](#) has missed the last two weeks with a back injury, that has thrust Solder into the spotlight while potentially putting the Patriots in a dangerous spot should Light or Solder go down with injury. There are no other pure offensive tackles on the roster.

The 6-foot-8, 319-pound Solder didn't want to tip anything off Friday, choosing his words carefully when asked about replacing Vollmer.

"I don't know exactly what's going to go on with that," he said. "I'm going to play wherever [I'm needed]."

Over the last two weeks, that has been on the right side, and the early returns have been positive. Unlike Light, who struggled early in his career when flipping sides, Solder is apparently a quick study.

"I think Nate is a pretty versatile guy," coach Bill Belichick said. "[He] seems very flexible, athletically, his footwork and so forth. He seems to be very comfortable wherever we put him."

By changing sides, Solder has to execute different techniques, with Belichick using one example of putting weight on the inside foot in pass protection or reach blocking. At left tackle, that would be the right foot. At right tackle, it's the left foot. Solder, who played solely left tackle at Colorado, explained it's the same thing with hand techniques.

As part of their standard planning, the Patriots worked the likeable Solder at both spots in training camp, mainly because coaches projected him as the third tackle on game day. So if there was an injury at either spot during a game, they wanted Solder ready.

The call now looks like it's coming sooner than expected, and Solder declared himself ready.

More on the Patriots



"I'm absolutely ready to go. Whatever situation I'm put in, it's because the coaches have the confidence for me to be in there, and I'm happy to be there," said Nate Solder.



Mike Reiss and Chris Forsberg have the Patriots blanketed for ESPNBoston.com. Check in for constantly updated coverage. [Blog](#)

- [Send a question for Mike's mailbag](#)

"I'm absolutely ready to go," he said. "Whatever situation I'm put in, it's because the coaches have the confidence for me to be in there, and I'm happy to be there. ... Miami has a lot of good guys, a lot of good defensive linemen. It's a challenge for us."

In a reflection of how quickly depth can be thinned, offensive tackle was one of the Patriots' last worries just a few weeks ago. Things looked solid with Light, Vollmer, Solder and developmental tackle [Steve Maneri](#).

But the Patriots waived Maneri last Monday to add to other areas of the roster, and the Chiefs claimed him. On the surface, the Patriots' move seemed curious given Vollmer's injury, and it has created a situation where the Patriots would probably have to call on guard [Logan Mankins](#) to move to tackle in the event of an injury Monday.

Mankins played tackle at Fresno State, and almost was called upon to do so again in the Patriots' 2005 playoff loss to the Broncos when starting right tackle [Tom Ashworth](#) couldn't go through warmups because of an illness. The Patriots surely hope it won't come to that Monday night.

If Vollmer is indeed out, the Patriots need Solder to shine earlier than anticipated. Solder didn't have the benefit of any offseason workouts because of the lockout, and he's had a lot thrown at him since reporting seven days into training camp. He's handled it well.

Now he's in position for an even bigger test on the Monday night stage.

Mike Reiss covers the Patriots for ESPNBoston.com.
