

Patriots may not draft Moss due to 'character issue'

Randy Moss caught 95 passes for 1,820 yards and made 25 touchdowns last season

By Howard Ulman
The Associated Press

FOXBORO, Mass. — The board hanging in the New England Patriots draft headquarters lists hundreds of top college players. But there is one glaring omission.

That's because they don't think Randy Moss is nearly as good a person as he is a wide receiver.

"We've had discussions, and Randy Moss is not on our draft board," Bobby Grier, the Patriots vice president for player personnel, said Monday. "Quite a few players are off our board because of the character issue."

The Patriots' primary need in the draft is a running back to replace Curtis Martin, who signed with the New York Jets. And un-

less they trade to improve on their first pick, the 18th, Moss probably wouldn't be available anyway.

Adding a wide receiver, though, is one of their priorities, and Moss might be the best to come out of college this year.

He has a rare combination — size, speed, good hands and timing — that made him an outstanding receiver the past two seasons at Marshall. He's had a less desirable combination of off-field problems.

Notre Dame revoked his scholarship before he went there after he was charged with attacking a student at his high school. He went to Florida State, where he redshirted his freshman season, but was kicked off the team for violating probation by smoking marijuana.

He then moved to Marshall, where he had 29 touchdowns in leading the team to the 1996 Divi-

sion I-AA national title. And last season, the school's first in Division I-A, he caught 96 passes for 25 touchdowns and 1,820 yards.

"I like to draft guys who are character guys, who are productive guys and who can make plays," Grier said.



The Patriots already stumbled once with a draft choice who had a troubled past. They took Nebraska defensive lineman Christian Peter in the fifth round in 1996, then relinquished their rights to him three days later.

He has pleaded no contest to third-degree assault of a former Miss Nebraska and to disturbing the peace in an incident in which

he was charged with grabbing a woman by the neck. He played last season for the New York Giants.

And this might not be the best time for the Patriots to draft a player whose character they question. On May 4, running back and kick returner Dave Meggett faces a court date in Toronto on charges of sexual assault and robbery Feb. 27.

Patriots head coach Pete Carroll continued his policy Monday of not commenting on Meggett's future with the team.

Drafting Moss might infuriate Patriots owner Robert Kraft, who, with input from his wife, reportedly made the decision to relinquish the team's rights to Peter.

Grier said there might be less tolerance in New England to drafting players with off-field problems than there is elsewhere.

"We feel it's very important in

this community," he said. "The guy's an awesome talent. The difference is in communities. I think there are some teams who would take a chance."

At a recent workout for prospects at Marshall, Moss reportedly behaved very well.

Chicago Bears coach Dave Wannstedt, who has the fifth pick, said Moss might be one of the first five players taken. New Orleans coach Mike Ditka said he'd consider Moss when the Saints make the seventh choice of the draft if the receiver is available.

But Grier made it clear that, when it comes to some players whose character the team is uncomfortable with, the Patriots don't simply reduce the grade they receive on the team's draft board.

"We don't move them down," Grier said. "We move them off."

Golf: Crane shoots a 68 to lead men

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ever told us before a tournament, I think this was the most meaningful and most thought-provoking," Nosler said.

Even a lightning delay that included hail at Stanford Golf Course could not stop the Ducks from posting the tournament's only single-round score in the 280s.

"I sure didn't do any high-powered coaching while they were sleeping last night," Nosler said. "We went from a pretty bad position to the best round of the tournament overnight. I don't think it was because all of the sudden we started working harder. Maybe their minds were set a little bit more. I don't know. I wish I had the answers."

Ben Crane, who is ranked No. 56 in the MasterCard Collegiate Golf Rankings, shot a 68 to lead Oregon in the final round and claim third place individually with a 215 combined total. Following his second-round 75,

Crane was tied for 17th heading into the final 18 holes.

His final round was tied for the lowest of the day and left him just one stroke short of co-winners Rich Barcelo of Nevada and Herbert Forster of Pacific, who finished with combined totals of 214.

Chris Cone shot a final-round 74 to finish with a 223 total that tied him for 25th place. Ryan Lavoie recovered from a second-round 79 to record a 74 Monday and give Oregon three players in the top 45 by tying for 38th.

"I'd take him to battle with me any time," Nosler said. "He didn't have a great tournament because of the bad round he had yesterday, but Lavoie got a whole bunch over today and then birdied three of his last four coming in."

Oregon plays at the Thunderbird Invitational in Tempe, Ariz., beginning Saturday in its last regular season tournament before the Pacific-10 Conference Championships, which begin April 27 in Orinda, Calif.

UO: Glusac returns for second match of season

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successful showing in the state of Washington. Although beaten by both the Cougars and Huskies, the Oregon women took six of the 18 matches contested.

The Ducks return to Eugene for a nonconference match against Portland on Sunday before traveling to the Pac-10 Championships on April 23-26.

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