

# TANGLED WEB

## Cowboys hope to avoid another draft-day meltdown, contemplate taking risky Moss

IRVING, Texas (AP) — Will the image-tarnished Dallas Cowboys play with fire in the NFL draft and take wide receiver Randy Moss, who has had his share of off-the-field incidents?

Or will they play it safe with the eighth overall pick and get a much-needed pass rushing defensive end or an offensive lineman or a linebacker? The Cowboys are not saying. Once again, team owner Jerry Jones has gagged his coaches and himself from discussing Saturday's draft with the media, limiting the discussion on whether the Cowboys would take Moss should he still be available.

"I really won't know where I am until we're right in there at that particular time on draft day," Jones said. With his talent, he's somebody that we have to give a lot of consideration."

Moss and 14 other first-round draft picks have been interviewed at Valley Ranch by Jones, his coaches, and Calvin Hill, the team's behavior consultant.

"It's the first time in a long time we've been able to bring the top 15 picks or so to our place for close-up interviews," Jones said. "It tells you a lot about a player."

Jones would not discuss specifics about his time with Moss, who caught 26 touchdown passes at Marshall last year, other than to say, "He's even bigger (6-foot-4, 200-pounds) than I thought."

Moss did not show up wearing sunglasses as he did at the Heisman Trophy ceremonies, when he finished fourth. He also has not said much leading up to the draft, but as he left the Cowboys' training camp last week he told reporters that teams that pass on him "will regret it once they see what kind of a player I am and what kind of guy I really am."

It seems unlikely the Cowboys would risk the criticism that is sure to come if they take Moss even if he gets by New Orleans at No. 7. Moss' criminal background includes a battery con-

viction and a positive marijuana test, reasons he left Notre Dame and Florida State and ended up at Marshall.

After a disastrous 6-10 season that cost Barry Switzer his job, Jones and new coach Chan Gailey are under a lot of pressure to draft players who can produce immediately.

Since Jimmy Johnson left the team in 1994, Dallas drafts under Jones have not gone well.

Shante Carver, the defensive end who was Jones' first round pick in 1994, recently retired. His inability to rush the passer from Charles Haley's old spot was one of the reasons the secondary had only six interceptions last year.

Running back Sherman Williams, the Cowboys' first pick in 1995, has been an underproducer and may not be back with the team because free agent Chris Warren signed this week.

Kavika Pittman, another defensive end, was Dallas' first pick in 1996 and has yet to make an impact. "I still think Kavika will be a player," defensive coordinator Dave Campo said. "We just need to be patient. But we could use some more help in the line and also at linebacker."

Tight end David LaFleur, the first pick in 1997, excelled at blocking last year, but was seldom used as a receiver.

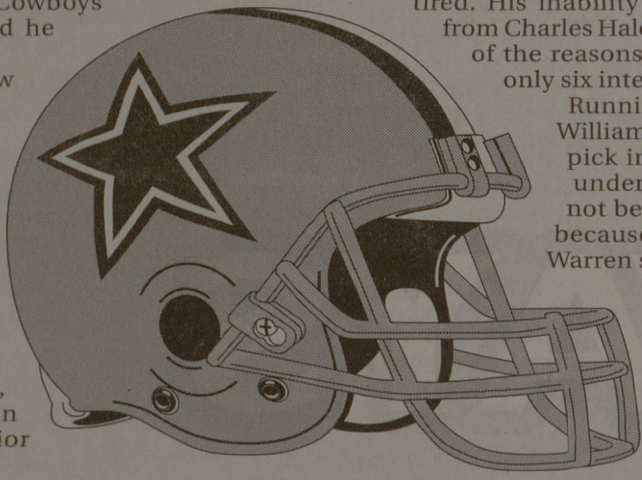
Some late round picks have been good, led by Larry Allen, a second-round pick in 1994 who is developed into an All-Pro. Linebackers Randall Godfrey (second, 1996), and Dexter Coakley (third, 1997) also have become solid starters.

But the overall quality is not there, hurting the Dallas depth, particularly in the offensive line, where Nate Newton is fading fast.

"We need help in a lot of areas," Gailey said. "But that's probably not big news."

What would be big news is if the Cowboys took a chance on the talented but troubled Moss.

Dallas is the one team in the NFL that does not need any more off-the-field troubles.



## WARD

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Ward's parents have reason to be proud, as their son has compiled a record of 6-2, with an ERA of 4.84, 49 strikeouts and only 8 walks. True to form, Ward is averaging a little better than 1 hit per inning pitched, giving up 76 hits in his 67.0 frames of work. Before Ward came to A&M, he found success on his junior college team in California, winning the state championship his freshman year.

"That was probably one of my greatest thrills so far. I pitched the first two games and got a win and a save, started the third game and I just got roped," Ward said. "We had a great team and I was the only freshman starter. I knew the team was going to make the plays and they were going to score a lot of runs, so I wasn't scared to throw strikes."

Ward left that environment, where he said only a few hundred people came to most games, and came to Olsen Field, where there were 3,291 fans the first time he took the mound. "I threw this summer in front of a couple of thousand, but nothing like having three thousand fans on your side, yelling and screaming for you," Ward said. "I can't wait for Texas this weekend, that's the one thing I've wanted to see all year."

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## SCHESCHUK

Continued from Page 7.

Johnson said Scheschuk's contributions have been felt beyond his run production.

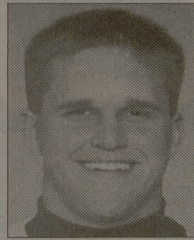
"He brings great leadership to the team," Johnson said. "He always seems to say the right thing at the right time."

Scheschuk has managed to step up at the right time for the

Aggies. If things continue on current pace, the szechuan comparisons may become valid after all.



Ward



Scheschuk

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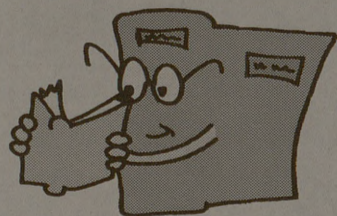


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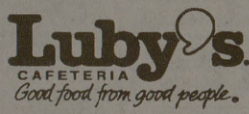
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