

Lottery Winner Texas' Williams insures a prosperous future

Teams have to overlook Moss' history, draft possible all-time great receiver



JEFF WEBB
sports editor

The best part of the NFL season is just around the corner. Prepare for draft time.

As a life-long New Orleans Saints fan, these are usually lean times. In fact,

the Saints have good drafts about as often as guys miss a football game to go see Disney's Hercules on Ice. It simply doesn't happen.

However, I can't blame anyone who criticizes my team. In the dog-eat-dog world of the NFL, drafts will make or break a franchise. Take a look at the San Francisco 49ers. A trade garnered them UCLA receiver J.J. Stokes to be heir apparent to Jerry Rice a few years ago, and savvy picks have led to their continuing success.

Keeping these facts in mind, I direct your attention to the freakshow. That is, "The Freak" himself, Marshall University receiver Randy Moss.

How many people remember the NBA draft that saw the emergence of Hakeem Olajuwon and Michael Jordan? One other player was taken ahead of Jordan who has since disappeared from the NBA landscape. That player? Sam Bowie.

Many years from now after other receivers, like Utah's Kevin Dyson, have been squeezed out of the league, teams that don't draft Moss will be looked upon like the team that passed on His Airness.

Despite his past problems, a general manager who passes on Moss should be forced to watch game film with a Hanson CD blaring in the background for a time pretty close to infinity.

There have been too many players like Lawrence Phillips that come into the league with problems they haven't solved. Moss's problems are behind



him. He assaulted a schoolmate in high school that led to the dismissal of his scholarship at Notre Dame. Once he got a second chance at Florida State, a positive test for marijuana ruined his scholarship there. Hey, it didn't hurt Bill Clinton's chances at president to take a hit, why should it hurt a football player? Moss ended up at Marshall, an obvious third-chance school. He didn't make a mistake the third time. He led the nation in receiving like he was destined to do.

Moss is too smart to ruin his chance at millions in the NFL by making another stupid mistake. Many bad boys of the NFL waited until they were professionals to mess up. Take Michael Irvin for example. If he had made his mistakes in college, they would likely not be repeated.

Actually, the Dallas Cowboys might not want to draft Moss. That would be the equivalent of sending an overweight person to work in a chocolate factory.

Teams that want to win will draft Moss. His talent far outweighs any baggage that comes along with him. When he breaks all of Jerry Rice's records and is inducted into the NFL Hall of Fame, teams like the Saints who thought they needed an offensive lineman to shore up the right side of the line will be kicking themselves all the way to the draft lottery... again.

— Jeff Webb is a junior journalism major.

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — Texas running back Ricky Williams has insured his future after deciding to turn down millions in the NFL and return for his senior season with the Longhorns.

The nation's leading rusher last year has secured \$2.8 million in insurance against the possibility of serious injury.

In 1990, the NCAA, seeking to give college football players a reason to stay in school for their senior seasons, began offering Exceptional Student-Athlete Disability Insurance policies against injuries that could end their pro prospects.

The program covers athletes projected to be taken in the first three rounds of the NFL or NHL drafts and the first rounds of the NBA and Major League Baseball amateur drafts.

These projections are made after the underwriter consults with pro scouts. With the emergence of the Women's NBA and the American Basketball League, the NCAA is working to make policies available to women basketball players.

The policy was not the idea of Williams, but rather his mother and the Longhorns' men's athletics compliance coordinator, Leroy Sutherland.

For Williams, an education major who plans to teach grade school someday, the notion of a shrewd business decision didn't seem so pressing.

"I'm not afraid of getting hurt," Williams said. "I can just do what I can do. I really don't care if I have insurance or not. Enough insurance is my college education."

Sutherland, however, wanted to make sure that Williams took every precaution necessary to safeguard his future.

"A lot of kids like to think it will happen to the other guy," Sutherland told the *Austin American-Statesman*. "... until it happens to them."

If Williams suffers an injury that results in permanent total disability, he'll get \$1.8 million through the insurance program sponsored by the NCAA.

His advisors also have worked with Sutherland to secure an additional policy worth \$1 million. That policy would pay off if Williams is not

drafted in the first three rounds of the NFL draft.

The premiums for Williams, who has a paycheck playing pro baseball in the Philadelphia Phillies farm system, will total \$1.8 million for a maximum of 24 months, according to American Special Underwriters of Stoneham, Mass.

Athletes certified as eligible by the NCAA can get loans through Mercantile Bank of India with the athlete required to pay them when he signs a pro contract, when the benefits are paid or when the contract with neither of the aforementioned entities expires.

It pays, according to Mark Ideleson, president of ASU, if "after six months, it's not by a physician that the athlete can't play at a professional level for three consecutive years."

Former Miami defensive end Mark Medearis, who suffered a serious knee injury in 1992, and returned briefly in '94 at the college level, is one of the athletes who have needed to collect. He collected a \$500,000 policy in 1993. He tried to get back in 1994 but had to give it up.



Williams

Elsik's Lewis officially passes up college for shot at NBA career through draft

HOUSTON (AP) — Rashard Lewis, a 6-foot-10 high school standout, declared his eligibility for the NBA draft Thursday, becoming the latest prep school star to bypass college for the lure of the pros.

"This has been a very hard decision for me to make — the hardest decision of my life," the 18-year-old Elsik High School center said at a news conference. "I had a dream to go the NBA ever since I was a little kid, and it was very hard for me to step away from that."

Brushing off criticism that he may not be ready for the NBA, Lewis pointed to the successful transitions of former prep stars Kobe Bryant and Kevin Garnett.

"I'm sure people told Kobe that and people told Garnett that, so it doesn't bother me," he said. "If the whole world says that about me, then I'll shock the world."

Elsik coach Jerrel Hartfiel also discounted the critics. "He's very advanced at this age," Hartfiel said. "He has great focus on

team instead of individual stats. He's a complete player."

This past season, Lewis hit 73 percent of his field goals and 40 percent of his 3-point shots, averaging 28.2 points, 12.4 rebounds, five blocks and 4.3 steals per game.

In his four years at Elsik, Lewis broke every record for all-time career stats, racking up 2,346 points, 1,480 rebounds, 436 blocks and 419 steals.

Despite his success as a center in high school, Lewis' 212-pound frame won't be able to handle that position in the NBA. He projects himself as a small forward or power forward.

Last week Korleone Young, a 6-8 power forward at Hargrave Military Academy (Va.), declared himself eligible for the draft.

Garnett began the recent trend of high school stars jumping to the NBA when he was taken fifth by Minnesota in 1995. The next year, Bryant went 13th and Jermaine O'Neal was 17th. Last year, Tracy McGrady was taken at No. 9.

AGGIE SPORTS BRIEF

from staff and wire reports

Texas A&M diver makes U.S. squad

Texas A&M junior all-American diver Mark Naftanel qualified for the United States National Diving Team on Thursday at the 1998 Cinergy-PSI National Diving Championships in Indianapolis by virtue of finishing among the top-eight divers in the semifinals of the 10-meter platform competition.

Naftanel also earned Big 12 Conference Diver of the Year for the second time in two seasons by repeating as the conference three-meter springboard and platform diving champion, in addition to setting a new A&M and Big 12 record in the platform event with 757.70 points.

A&M Diving Coach Kevin Wright was named a U.S. National Team coach for coaching Naftanel into the finals. Wright is in his sixth year at the helm of the Aggie diving team and is the two-time defending Big 12 Conference Diving Coach of the Year.

Rolex places top 40 national

Texas A&M freshman Rafael de Mesa has been selected to the U.S. National Team, consisting of the top ranked players in the year-end USTA rankings.

De Mesa is currently ranked 36 in the latest rankings.

The A&M Men's Tennis Team dropped six places to No. 17 in the Rolex Rankings.

The University of Texas women's team is ranked ninth

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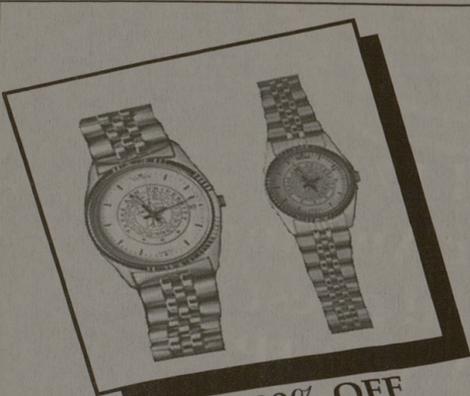


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