

Underwood at peace in Dallas

IRVING, Texas (AP) — Sprawled across a navy blue sofa, Dimitrius Underwood does not have a care in the world.

He is sound asleep in the middle of the Dallas Cowboys locker room. A morning practice is done and now it's the lunch hour.

A nap is his favorite way to prepare for the upcoming defensive meeting and second practice of the day.

The serene scene does not seem to fit. All the public really knows about this 23-year-old lineman is that he did not make it with two NFL teams and once slashed his own throat with steak knives.

Yet, here he is, three days into his first minicamp with his third team and ... nothing.

He participated in every drill of every session. He was the left defensive end on the first team for two days, then joined the second team when an injured starter returned.

If you did not know he was No. 91, you would not have known he was there.

No news is definitely good news for Underwood. It's a sign he might finally be headed in the right direction.

About five minutes before the meeting, former Michigan State teammate Flozell Adams wakes Underwood by gently rubbing his head. Under-

wood walks to his locker and agrees to speak to several reporters who have been waiting for him.

"Things are going good, man, going good," Underwood said as he squeezed a foot into a shoe.

Good enough to talk about all he's

"I know how he's approaching this both on and off the field and I think it's got a good chance to work."

— Jerry Jones
Cowboys owner

been through and why things might be different this time?

"Nah," he said, slipping on the other shoe. "I just want to talk about football."

There is not much football to talk about, though. Underwood hasn't played in a game that counted since 1997, his junior year as a Spartan.

An ankle injury forced him to miss

his senior season, but he had shown enough that the Minnesota Vikings took him 29th overall in last year's draft. Then they gave him a \$5.3 million, five-year contract and a \$1.75 million bonus.

Underwood bolted from training camp the next day and wasn't heard from for several days. When he resurfaced, he said his heart was not into football; he would rather do ministry work. So the Vikings tore up his contract, got the bonus back and released him.

Underwood changed his mind again when the Miami Dolphins called.

He signed for \$395,000 and no bonus and was offered the chance to sit out all season. Instead, he began practicing on a Tuesday and was thrown into an exhibition game that Friday. In the third quarter, he dislocated his left shoulder.

The bizarre case turned frightening a few weeks later when Underwood was found bleeding from his neck on a street in Lansing, Mich. Police later discovered he had used two steak knives to cut his throat while visiting his girlfriend and their young twins.

Underwood went into protective care for two months, then committed himself to a mental health center only to flee hours later. The Dolphins gave up on him the next week.

Cowboys sign Titans' LB Wortham

DALLAS (AP) — The Dallas Cowboys Thursday beamed up their defense with a third home-grown



WORTHAM

linebacker after signing former Tennessee Titans free agent Barron Wortham.

Cowboys spokesman Doug Hood confirmed the signing but said the organization will not release details of the contract.

Wortham, a Titans' starter and six-year veteran, was in Dallas for a

visit and physical Monday. The Cowboys waived cornerback James Brayboy on Tuesday to make room for Wortham, the team's Web site said.

The Cowboys Wednesday signed free agent Joe Bowden, also from North Texas and a teammate of Wortham's on the Titans.

Bowden, an eight-year NFL veteran, played all three linebacker positions with Tennessee and started the past three seasons. He started every game at strong-side linebacker last season, and had 81 tackles, 3 1/2 sacks, three fumble recoveries, three forced fumbles and an interception.

Bowden was the Titans' leading

tackler in 1998 with 145.

Both were starters in the Super Bowl against St. Louis.

The Cowboys previously bolstered their linebacking corps, trading defensive back Kevin Mathis for middle linebacker Chris Bordano and signing Dexter Coakley to a one year, \$1.27 million contract.

Signing Wortham would give Dallas three North Texas-born Cowboys. Bowden went to high school in the Dallas suburb of Mesquite, Bordano went to Southern Methodist University in Dallas and Wortham went to high school in the Fort Worth suburb of Everman.

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ROOMMATES

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Newsday Crossword

YOU BET by A.J. Santora Edited by Stanley Newman

ACROSS
1 Naughty kids
6 Sch. subject
9 WWII craft
12 Scribe
13 Son of Venus
14 Social finish
15 '70s game show
17 Sympathy partner
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20 Agenda listing
21 Ancient Persians
22 Money holders
24 Mai
26 Together
27 Innocent one
30 Forest creatures
33 White's partner
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37 Train components
39 Sean Lennon's mom
40 African cattle pen
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9 Bonanza role
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12 Explosive sound
13 "For... know..."
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23 Conductor
25 Altar words
27 Derek of Harvard
28 Breeze, essentially
29 Pershing sobriquet
31 Drew out
32 Coll. course

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Answer to previous puzzle

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TERM OPA YALE
PUP ESSO REW
WORLD SERIES
RNA NYET ALL
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