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Bears ignore clouded past of No. 2 pick

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The theory of relativity applies to controversy as well. Jim McMahon's headband, William Perry's waistline and Mike Ditka's temper seem like child's play next to the history of one of the Bears' latest acquisitions.

Second-round draft pick Ron Morris, a wide receiver from Southern Methodist, has survived a recruiting scandal, the NCAA death penalty and threats of bodily harm.

But the Bears are undaunted.

They say Morris' tenacity, ability to go deep and pride in blocking overshadow any deficiencies.

Morris' character was first questioned when he was a high school senior and allegedly accepted groceries, a small amount of money and a sweatsuit from Texas Tech, which was recruiting him. Morris reportedly told the NCAA as much when the agency was investigating Texas Tech.

Once at Southern Methodist, Morris again reportedly accepted illegal inducements. The Dallas Morning News listed Morris as one of 13 Mustangs getting paid by boosters. The scandal resulted in the NCAA banning football at SMU next season.

When Morris searched for an agent, he got involved with **Norby Walters** and reportedly

accepted Walters' cash.

Morris said yesterday he complied with the FBI in an investigation of Walters. The Long Island newspaper Newsday reported Morris allowed the FBI to tape a conversation in which he told Walters he would not sign with him.

Walters allegedly retorted by threatening to break Morris' hands. Morris denied allowing the FBI to tape the conversation.

"Me and Norby talked over the phone," Morris said. "The rumors about breaking my hands were all hearsay. I never said it. Me and Norby have nothing in common."

Instead of signing with Walters, Morris signed with Steve Endicott, a former SMU coach who works for Sherwood Blount. Blount is the SMU booster who was banned for life by the NCAA for allegedly continuing to make payments to players after he was caught by the NCAA once.

"I'm glad I didn't get caught up in all the rumors back there," Morris said. "My sophomore and junior seasons I got caught up in it by talking to the media. But I got married last May and got away from it."

Bears personnel boss Bill Tobin says Morris' character is not one of his deficiencies.

"He's got outstanding character," said Tobin, who likens Morris' abilities to Dennis McKinnon's.

Like McKinnon, Morris has had knee problems. He recently underwent arthroscopic surgery to repair damage suffered in the third game of last season. Morris says he is 90 percent recovered and will be ready to go by training camp.

Like McKinnon, Morris likes to block almost as much as catch.

"I'm a great blocker," the 6-foot, 190 pound Morris said. "I can block just about anybody. If it's designed, I'll block a linebacker or a defensive back."

Morris said he figured he would have been selected by the New York Giants, who called him every day when the draft was near.

But with the way the Bears have embraced controversy, he should not have been surprised.

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