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Supplemental draft by NFL irks colleges

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PLATTEVILLE, Wis. Bears personnel director Bill Tobin wasn't surprised. He understood why Pitt's football team effectively closed its doors to NFL scouts after the league's announcement Wednesday of a supplemental draft for several underclassmen, including a player kicked off Pitt's team. Tobin's outrage was directed at the NFL's lawyers, for caving in to threatened lawsuits at the expense of its scouts.

"I don't know why, just because there are dishonest agents and weak players who take money from them, we have to let those players in before they're eligible," Tobin said. "I say we should take a stand now."

Neither Pitt halfback Charles Gladman nor Ohio State wide receiver Cris Carter, two of those who applied for a supplemental draft, would have been eligible to play in the NFL until next year if they hadn't been stripped of their college eligibility for breaking rules. The players, both juniors, were released from their college teams because of allegations they had accepted money from agents **Norby Walters** and **Lloyd Bloom**.

The NFL's position has been to hold supplemental drafts for such players to avoid a court challenge of the league's policy against drafting underclassmen.

Undermines colleges

Tobin draws a solid distinction between players who lose college eligibility and players, such as Brian Bosworth and Bernie Kosar, who become eligible before their classes because they graduate early. He has said accepting players who have been disciplined undermines college programs by letting players know the fastest way to the pros is to break a college rule.

Pitt felt the same way, Tobin said, "closing all practices to scouts. No film. Nothing."

"I predicted it," Tobin said. "I can see a domino effect coming. I know Ohio State's upset about this. Alabama's upset. It could get a lot worse before it gets better."

Just in recent months, Tobin said about a dozen schools had curtailed scouts' access in some way, barring them from practice or restricting them to certain weeks or days.

Ruins rapport

"There's a lot of suspicion hanging over our relationships with the colleges now," Tobin said. "I've spent my whole football life creating rapport with these people.

"I'm the one - and I mean our whole personnel department - that's charged with going in and evaluating correctly the ability of college players. I can still go in and buy tickets to games and guess. But true scouting is done on film and on the campus, talking with the coaches and trainers who know the players."

The irony in the Pitt situation is that few schools have stronger ties to an NFL team. It is coach Mike Ditka's alma mater, and quarterback Jim Harbaugh's brother and father are on Pitt's coaching staff.

Tobin also was upset with Walters' vague charge, made public from Walters' grand jury hearing, that he had bought information from scouts. "He failed to identify what scouts and what teams," Tobin said. "It may have been just guys who write about the draft. But if they're NFL scouts, they should be identified and kicked out of the NFL for life. As it is now, we're all perceived as guilty."

The Bears will have the fourth pick in the supplemental draft, but Tobin said the Bears' policy is to stay away from college rule-breakers who may become rule-breakers in the pros. He also said Carter and Gladman probably are not first-round prospects.

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