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# Bears drop the ball on Carter

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The working definition of mixed emotions, which has to do with the fellow watching his mother-in-law drive his new Ferrari off a cliff, looks as if it may be in for some refinement. From now on, Ohio State's star wide receiver Cris Carter can represent such ambivalence all by himself.

Consider Carter's dilemma. On one hand, he has hope the NCAA may restore his college football virginity, despite his having accepted money from that notorious flesh peddler, **Norby Walters**. On the other hand, such a decision would cost him a year of his pro career and the several hundred thousand dollars that represents.

But no matter whether Carter is allowed to become a born-again Buckeye or whether he is eventually afforded an NFL draft of his very own, he will not become a Chicago Bear. Not this year, at least. Perhaps afraid of their ability to resist temptation, the Bears have asked to have their markers removed from any special draft regarding Carter.

So much for the philosophy of Just Say No.

In explaining their unwillingness to consider offering a job to Carter, one of the most promising pass-catching talents in the country, the Bears say they do not want to offend the college football community whose goodwill they depend on in assessing future prospects.

Indeed, the Bears agree with such noted educational theorists as Bo Schembechler and Earle Bruce that the NFL would be making a serious mistake by holding a draft for the rights to Carter at all. Carter broke the rules by signing with an agent, these savants argue, and should

not be allowed to benefit by signing a professional contract.

This solicitude for the good of the college game would be touching were it not so open to suspicion on a number of counts.

To begin with, the NCAA was so offended by Carter's transgression that it threw him out of college football. Then it insisted he not be allowed to play pro ball, either.

The NFL wisely resisted this argument, no doubt realizing that Carter's lawyers would have a lively time with a restraint-of-trade lawsuit that might jeopardize the entire legally shaky draft system. Thursday's 11th-hour decision by the NCAA to reconsider Carter's case shows it has finally begun to understand the judicial maze it is operating in.

That leaves us with the Bears' position on Carter, which might be easier to understand but for one small problem. The name of that problem is Ron Morris.

Morris is their No. 2 draft choice and the similarity of his situation to Carter's is almost uncanny.

Like Carter, Morris is a wide receiver noted for his ability to catch the ball in the end zone. Like Carter, Morris broke an NCAA rule by reportedly taking money from an agent while he was still at Southern Methodist. Like Carter, the agent in question was the widely reviled **Walters.**

The major difference seems to be that Morris' transgressions weren't made public until after his college eligibility was ended by the investigation that destroyed SMU's football program.

Carter, on the other hand, was found out before his senior season.

Yet when Morris, who was also involved in a recruiting scandal and was said to have received illegal payments from SMU boosters, came to the attention of the Bears, they didn't seem to mind those indiscretions a bit.

"He's got outstanding character," said player personnel director Bill Tobin.

About Carter's transgressions on the other hand, Tobin said, "It indicates he has chinks in his armor, in his personality, in his character."

What it really indicates, of course, is that the NCAA had no further use for Morris while it resented the very idea of losing Carter when he still had a year of eligibility remaining.

You know this is the case the instant you hear the hysterical and hilarious whining from college football officials.

Carl Miller, the president of the athletic directors association, speaks of the "devastating effect on our continuing effort to allow the student-athlete the benefit of the full educational experience." Oh sure, Earle Bruce was just broken up at the thought Carter might not get his degree.

The always-good-for-a-laugh Schembechler says the special draft allows college players to profit if they "rob, steal, commit murders and rape." Gee, Bo, that doesn't speak very highly of your recruiting standards, does it?

Several colleges have said they will no longer welcome professional scouts to their campuses. This is a resolve that will last about as long as it takes for some sharp recruiter to turn it to his advantage. ("Hey, kid, you don't want to go to Ohio State. They won't even let the pro scouts come in and check you out your senior year.")

As for the Bears, well, if somehow they do get a chance at Carter this year, why not grab him? As they proved in the case of Morris, all that really matters is whether or not he can catch the ball.

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