



*Lance Olberding, who played for the Randolph Oilers of the Eastern Football League, became the first player from the EFL to be drafted by a National Football League team.*

AL CODISH

# Olberding 7th round pick of the Bengals

By Glen Farley

ENTERPRISE STAFF WRITER

**S**UNDAY, he was an amateur decathlete.

"I played every sport imaginable," Randolph Oilers offensive tackle Lance Olberding said. "I shot some baskets, played some baseball. Then I drove around town, anything to occupy my mind."

Monday, he became a professional football player.

"I'm ecstatic," Olberding said after learning the Cincinnati Bengals had made him the first Eastern Football League player ever drafted by the National Football League.

Late yesterday morning, the Bengals made Olberding their seventh-round pick, the 172nd player chosen in the draft. Word reached Olberding at his agent Dick Bell's home in Raleigh, N.C.

"I couldn't think of a better team for me to go to," said Olberding. "I'll be working with (Bengals offensive line coach) Jim McNally, and Anthony Munoz is one of the greatest linemen who's ever lived."

He's one of the oldest linemen in the NFL, another plus for the 6-6, 311-pound Olberding. Age and injuries, not to mention a lack of ability, are all Bengal concerns in the offensive line. Munoz is a future Hall of Fame tackle, but he's 34. No Hall of Famer, starting right tackle Joe Walter struggled with the league's stronger defensive linemen.

No one is expecting Olberding, an inexperienced player from the EFL, to strap on a helmet, step in and start in the NFL this fall, but he could have a chance to develop with David Shula's team in Cincinnati. The Bengals signed only one offensive lineman in Plan B (Jon Melander from New England). Olberding was the first of only two offensive linemen they chose in the draft. The other, John Earle of Western Illinois, was taken on the 11th round.

"Jim McNally told me the way he sees it, I have the potential to get some playing time on special teams this year," said Olberding. "Personally, I'm thinking along the lines of a taxi squad-type of situation this year, where I could learn."

No one has to tutor Olberding about the reputation the Bengals

**OLBERDING/Page 21**

## OLBERDING

From Page 19

have gained around the NFL, but he believes that's changing for the better.

"I know they're supposed to be the cheapest team in the league," said Olberding, "but look what they've done this year. The fact that they drafted (Houston quarterback David) Klingler and (Tennessee wide receiver Carl) Pickens in the first round shows they have a commitment to excellence. We're going to be a good football team."

As news that he was a Bengal sunk in, the disappointment and nervous energy that had overwhelmed Olberding the previous day and night dissipated. So, too, did Olberding's hopes of playing for the Dallas Cowboys, the team he grew up following in Apple Valley, Minn.

"I knew it was stretching it a bit, but I was wishing I'd go the first day," said Olberding. "I'm more than happy with the way things worked out, though."



