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## FSU's Rolle, an aspiring neurosurgeon, is a Rhodes candidate

Associated Press

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. -- For Myron Rolle, the student part of being a student-athlete comes first.

Even on game day.

The Florida State safety will be a late arrival to the Seminoles' crucial game at No. 25 Maryland on Saturday night because earlier in the day he'll be interviewing in Alabama to become a Rhodes scholar.

After a month of bad publicity for Florida State football because of player suspensions, and with the school also waiting to hear from the NCAA about penalties for an academic cheating scandal, the positive attention Rolle has brought the Seminoles couldn't come at a better time.

"In the midst of the troubles that have gone on here at Florida State academically, there are still student-athletes doing the right thing," Rolle said. "Possibly we can move that perception from being a school that's just focused on partying and athletics."

The 22-year-old aspiring neurosurgeon could become the school's second athlete, and third student, in three years to win a Rhodes scholarship and the opportunity to study for two years at the University of Oxford in England. NCAA shot put champion Garrett Johnson of Tampa was one of 32 Americans to earn the scholarship three years ago.



Myron Rolle hopes to become Florida State's second athlete, and third student, in three years to win a Rhodes scholarship.

It'll be quite a busy Saturday for Rolle. He's scheduled to finish his day in Birmingham, Ala., at roughly 6 p.m. (ET) before boarding a private plane to catch up with his teammates in College Park, Md., that starts at 7:45 p.m.

In a muddled Atlantic Coast Conference race, it's a huge game. Maryland (7-3, 4-2) can win the Atlantic Division by winning its remaining games. The Seminoles (7-3, 4-3) need two victories and some help to take the division title and earn a spot in the conference championship game on Dec. 6 in Tampa.

So being without Rolle, one of Florida State's best defensive players, is no small thing for coach Bobby Bowden. Still, the 79-year-old coach didn't hesitate to give Rolle his blessing.

"It's a no-brainer," Bowden said. "I know academics comes first."

Bowden has never coached a Rhodes scholar during a career spanning six decades.

"I really don't know of anything higher than to have a player who is a recipient of a Rhodes scholarship," Bowden said Wednesday.

Whether he wins the scholarship, Rolle, a junior, has also talked about possibly entering the NFL draft early.

He could face a unique choice -- the NFL or Oxford.

Bowden said Rolle's game could use more schooling.

"He definitely needs to make more big plays," the coach said.

Rolle has started 36 straight games at safety since arriving at Florida State from New Jersey as one of the nation's most celebrated recruits.

He's been a dependable tackler, but he has only one interception in his career, and none the past two seasons.

In the class room, however, Rolle is has few weaknesses.

He's working on a master's degree in public administration after graduating earlier this year with a degree in exercise science and a 3.75 grade point average.

Rolle arrived at Florida State with quarterback [Christian Ponder](#) on the same day in January 2006 to begin class work a semester early. Both graduated in August, with Ponder earning a 3.71 in the university's business college.

"We were always comparing GPA's," Ponder said. "We've always been pretty competitive about it."

Although he'd like a crack at pro football, Rolle's long-term goal is to earn a medical degree and he's spent time on stem cell research at Florida State.

He's dreamed about the Rhodes possibility since Johnson, a friend and mentor to Rolle, was selected just a few months before Rolle arrived on campus.

He wrote a 1,000-word personal statement that he revised "about 17 or 18 times" and provided letters of recommendation from professors at Florida State and people in the community who have known him.

Perhaps no individual has worked much closer than defensive coordinator Mickey Andrews.

When Andrews got a call last week that Rolle had a C-plus on a graduate course, he couldn't believe what he'd heard.

"I couldn't wait to approach him on it," Andrews said. "I don't think he's ever had a C."

But Rolle told the coach not to worry.

"I'll never make a C in that course," Rolle told him.

"How many times do you get a guy like?" Andrews asked. "A guy you don't ever have to discipline."

Whatever happens, Saturday is a day that Rolle won't forget.

"Win or lose, it'll be a great day for him," said Johnson, who is now back at Florida State where he's resumed training throwing the shot put. "It's an exhilarating experience. The culmination of a lot of hard work."

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