



Northwest Missouri State standout Archibong "Xavier" Omon joins 37 other running backs today at the NFL combine in Indianapolis. (Darren Whitley/Northwest Missouri State University)

# NFL combine anxieties

## Prospects prep for the big league

By Kyle Stack  
Special to amNewYork

Rushing for more than 7,000 yards and scoring 98 touchdowns in four years at Northwest Missouri State isn't enough to guarantee NFL draft prospect Archibong "Xavier" Omon a job after college. Just a job interview, with millions of dollars on the line. That's the pressure heaped upon the shoulders of college football players training for the annual NFL combine, which began yesterday at the RCA Dome in Indianapolis. Omon arrives today as one of the 37 running backs invited. "You're thinking about your future in the NFL and if you'll test out well, especially me,

coming from a small school," said the 23-year-old Omon, who has spent the last six weeks training at Test Sports Clubs in Martinsville, N.J. Like other sports performance facilities nationwide, Test aims to prepare college players physically and psychologically for the Combine and Pro Days, which occur on hundreds of college campuses throughout next month. NFL teams use these events to evaluate prospects before the NFL draft on April 26 and 27. Test's "Methodology" program emphasizes improved player movement patterns, said Kevin Dunn, Test's chief operating officer. "What we try to do is identify the areas where there is compensation in their movement pattern, which tell us the future on any potential injuries," said Dunn. Players appreciate the personalized attention, he said. "These guys are used to being in big schools; they're with 100 guys trying to get through a weight room," Dunn said. "It's very hard to get personalized attention at a big program." Players like Omon often must re-learn how their bodies

work, Dunn said. "They have great hips and they are very strong and powerful guys, but they have done the movements based on what feels natural to them — and that may not be the most efficient way," he said. Omon collected five Division II All-America honors and became the first player in NCAA history to rush for 1,500-plus yards in four seasons. He said he's felt the impact of the Test training. "They've done a lot, cleaning up my running form, making me relaxed," Omon said. Mel Tjeerdsma, Omon's college coach at Northwest, plays in Mid-America Intercollegiate Athletics Association, said his accomplished former player has several skills to

sharpen. "Blocking, play-action, catching the ball out of the backfield, improving his speed," Tjeerdsma said by phone from his Maryville, Mo. office. "Those are all things he is going to have to do if he's going to be successful at the next level." NFL teams crave athletic ability in draft prospects, no matter the position. According to Test's founder and chief executive officer, Brian Martin, the program shaves two-tenths of a second off players' 40-yard dash times on average, while adding three to four inches to vertical leaps and seven inches to broad jumps. "We're not only doing the speed, nutrition, power and psychological stuff, [but] we're also real focused on the football side of it," Martin said. "We never lose sight of the fact that they're football players, not track athletes."

**Do or die for invitees**

- What: 2008 NFL Scouting Combine
- When: Feb. 20-26
- Where: Indianapolis
- Who: Up to 335 athletes

**They've done the movements based on what feels natural to them — and that may not be the most efficient way.**  
Test Sports Clubs COO Kevin Dunn

## IRL, CART nearing merger

By Mike Harris  
The Associated Press

The possible unification of America's two open-wheel racing series was in the hands of the lawyers yesterday working out the final details of a deal that could re-energize the struggling sport. Rather than a merger, the proposed deal, which could be announced as soon as tomorrow, would see some teams from the Champ Car World Series blended into the Indy Racing League's IndyCar Series. That would signal immediate gains in car count and races. "It is still not done, but still

moving," IRL spokesman Fred Nation said yesterday. "The lawyers are still lawyering and we are still trading drafts and whittling away at the issues. We're optimistic the issues can be resolved." Meanwhile, Champ Car spokesman David Higdon said series co-owner Kevin Kalkhoven, a key person in the negotiations was still in England on family business and would not return to the U.S. until sometime late today. Since the IRL began competing with what was then

the established CART series in 1996, the two have gone head to head for drivers, teams, fans, sponsors and TV ratings, generally losing out on all counts. Things have only gotten worse for both sides in the face of the current U.S. economic woes. Before the proposed agreement, Champ Car was set to begin its season April 29 at Long Beach, Calif., with no more than 17 cars, while the IndyCar Series was in danger of starting its season March 29 at Homestead, Fla., with as few as 16.

**The lawyers are still lawyering.**  
Fred Nation, IRL spokesman

## Goodell hopeful for Spygate deal

NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell said he hopes the NFL is close to an agreement that will allow former New England Patriots employee Matt Walsh to tell the league about the tapes he is said to have made of the St. Louis Rams' walk-through before the 2002 Su-

per Bowl. "The lawyers are still talking and we're anxious to speak to him. We're anxious to get an agreement to get him to come forth." Goodell told the Associated Press yesterday before the start of the NFL combine. "We hope to be able to talk to him shortly."



Goodell

Walsh, now a golf pro in Maui, did video work for the Patriots when they won the first of their three Super Bowls after the 2001 season. Three weeks ago, the Boston Herald reported that Walsh claimed he had taped the practice before the Patriots' 20-17 upset of the Rams, who were two-touchdown favorites. (AP)

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