

## Sports

# Army's Campbell ordered to report for duty Football player told to give up bid to make Lions

By Justin Rodriguez

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Caleb Campbell settled into his hotel room Wednesday morning and prepared to check into Detroit Lions' training camp later in the day.

That's when Campbell's phone rang: On the other end was Lions president Matt Millen.

Millen summoned Campbell to the Lions' practice facility in Allen Park, Mich., and delivered some bad news.

Campbell won't get a chance to play in the NFL after the Department of Army announced Wednesday it's revising the controversial alternative service option.

"I mean, it's disappointing," Campbell said by phone Wednesday night. "I had a meeting scheduled in a half hour and training camp starts at 8 in the morning. I believed in my heart that I could make this team. But I've always said I have the best of both worlds and I'm excited what the future lies ahead for me as an Army officer."

Detroit selected Campbell in the seventh round of April's NFL draft, making him the first West Point player taken since quarterback Ronnie McAda 11 years ago. The alternative service option policy – created in 2005 – would have allowed Campbell to be a recruiter if he made the Lions.

"He's a soldier," Lions chief operating officer Tom Lewand told the Detroit Free Press. "He's a heck of a person, and he took it like a soldier would take it."

Lewand told the Free Press that the Lions will retain Campbell's rights as an unsigned draft pick for now. That option gives them the most flexibility, in case something changes again. The Lions must sign Campbell before next year's draft or they will lose his rights.

"The rules were one thing, and the rules were adjusted. I adjust," Lions coach Rod Marinelli said at a press conference Wednesday, according to the Free Press. "The worst thing is to hang your head and feel you got cheated."

A Department of Defense policy has superseded the Army's alternative service option.

In a letter to Millen dated Wednesday, U.S. Army Lt. Col. Jonathan P. Liba wrote that Campbell has been ordered to give up professional football for "full-time traditional military duties."

Liba wrote that Campbell may ask to be released from his active duty obligations in May 2010 and was allowed to enter the draft "in good faith."

"I was shocked when I heard the news," said former Army punter Owen Tolson, who was cut after a brief tryout with the Giants this spring but hopes, at some point, to get another NFL look. "This is really unfortunate for Caleb. I knew he would do good with the Lions, but now his hands are tied. I feel bad for him."

Tolson also was ordered to report for active military duty.

Added former Army free safety Jordan Murray, Campbell's closest friend on the team: "I wish they would have handled this a little differently. This is a decision they could have made a few months ago. Caleb will lead troops into battle and that isn't bad at all. But it's still bittersweet."

Every former West Point athlete now playing pro sports will have to serve active duty. Only after two years of service will they be allowed to apply for release from their active duty to play professionally.

Army's policy now falls in line with service academy rivals Navy and Air Force. Both academies took heated issue with Army's original policy, saying it gave West Point an unfair recruiting advantage.

Asked for his take on Army's surprising reversal, Navy spokesman Scott Strasemeier said: "It's not a Navy or Naval Academy issue. There's nothing for me to comment on."

Campbell became the face of the controversial alternative service option during a national debate over the policy at the time of the NFL draft in April, and while he received support from classmates and troops serving in Iraq and Afghanistan, there was also nationwide criticism.

"It wasn't enjoyable for him," Murray said. "Everyone gets upset over criticism. People said some unfair things, but that's what we fight for, freedom of speech. I think Caleb took most of it with a grain of salt."

Added Campbell: "I didn't listen to it. People criticize me, they criticize you, but I didn't listen to it."

Campbell, who was moved from strong safety to linebacker by Detroit while attending summer and spring minicamps, will be on a football field this fall. He will serve as a graduate assistant with Army or at the Academy's prep school in Fort Monmouth, N.J. Campbell said he and Millen, whose son, Marcus, played special teams for Army this fall, will keep in touch.

"Millen told me if I get released I will get another shot," said Campbell, who trained at West Point to be an air defense artilleryman. "I'm going to stay in great shape, I will never stop lifting. If another opportunity comes up, I'm going to be ready for it."