

# These cuts big deal to McKenzie, Woods

By IAN R. RAPOPORT

The reality of driving 45 minutes and arriving at their destination before 9 a.m. on a Saturday wasn't enough to deter Patriots linebackers Tyrone McKenzie and Pierre Woods. Not for a meaningful cause that has, unfortunately, touched both of their lives.

McKenzie and Woods helped raise funds to benefit One Mission and Children's Hospital Boston yesterday, participating in a Kids Cancer Buzz-Off. They shaved the heads of children who raised money to support for family members or close ones who have cancer.

"My father died of stomach cancer when I was 9," said McKenzie, a second-year player from South Florida. "It was a tough time, and I wouldn't have become the person I am today (without it). But this was something that I highlighted on my schedule that I wanted to do. It's a great opportunity to try to do whatever I can to help. That's huge for the kids to cut their hair off for cancer."

The event at the Best Western in Longwood Medical Center raised more than \$30,000 for pediatric cancer patients and their families for financial and emo-

tional support.

McKenzie shaved the head of 13-year-old Eytan Lewkowski of Haverhill, while Woods had 14-year-old Nicholas Limoges of Easthampton. It was clear McKenzie fared better with the pink shears.

"Anyone need any haircuts?" McKenzie asked the crowd. "Let me know. I'll make you look nice!"

Woods merely joked, "I'm trying."

But the special teams maven had a similar reason for contributing his time. His brother died of cancer when Woods was in high school, and Woods' mother, Jacqueline Tatum, has been battling breast cancer for nearly a year.

"This has a special place in my heart," said Woods, who noted his mother is doing well. "Knowing that the kids have cancer and are fighting the battle, all they have is people's support, the doctors' support, their families support. ... To come out and support the event is huge."

McKenzie is one of the players who routinely jumps at a charity appearance, even if, as he said, "There is no spotlight." In 2010, he has a chance to earn a spotlight on the field.

A third-round draft pick,

McKenzie tore his ACL during rookie minicamp and missed all of 2009. After spending the season on injured reserve, McKenzie took part in offseason conditioning and was on the field for organized team activities.

The 6-foot-3, 243-pounder described his knee situation as behind him.

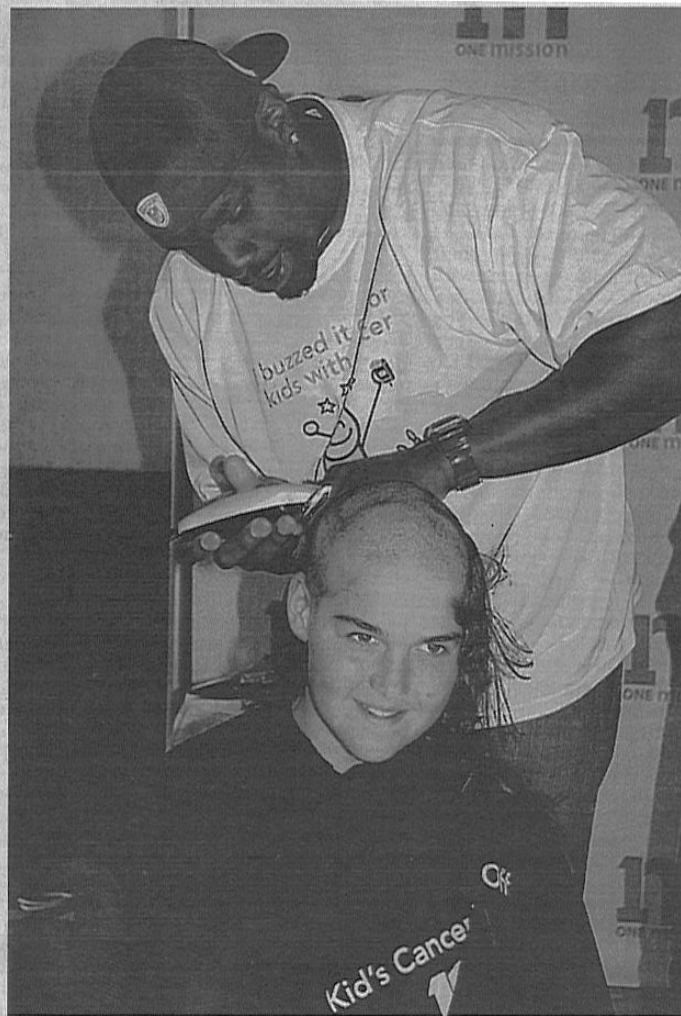
"I feel great," he said. "I feel like I did before. I'm excited to go out there and compete and be out there with my teammates."

There is plenty of competition at inside linebacker, where the battle wages to play alongside budding star Jerod Mayo. McKenzie is in the mix with last year's starter, Gary Guyton, and rookie Brandon Spikes.

"Across the board," McKenzie said, "we have guys that can play."

A run-stuffer in college, McKenzie has worked on all areas of his game during OTAs, including being the sole linebacker on passing downs. But now isn't the time to worry about his standing or his final role.

"Coaches are going to teach fast, you got to be able to comprehend what they're saying," McKenzie said. "That's what I'm trying to do. Study late at night and get after it."



COURTESY PHOTO  
**CLEAN CUT: Patriots linebacker Tyrone McKenzie shaves the head of Eytan Lewkowski, 13, of Haverhill during yesterday's Cancer Buzz-Off.**