



Former CU cornerback Jalil Brown showed well in the Senior Bowl.

Photo Courtesy: CUBuffs.com



04/26/2011 B.G. Brooks, Contributing Editor

Brooks: Draft Day Nerves Won't Eat Away At Brown

(Second Of Four Stories On The Buffs And The 2011 NFL Draft)

BOULDER - Regardless of his status, no prospective NFL draftee is immune to draft day anxiety. Nonetheless, former Colorado cornerback Jalil Brown believes he has a recipe to make the uneasy hours pass more comfortably if not more swiftly.

Said Brown: "I'm just going to hang out with my family . . . and all we're going to do is cook, eat and anticipate."

Call it therapeutic grazing, but the last part of his recipe will be the most difficult to stomach.

Draft projections can go awry, but several of the teams Brown spoke with or worked out for indicated he would be a second- or third-round pick. That would mean his call comes on Friday, the second day of the NFL's annual talent haul. Round 1 is on Thursday, Rounds 4-7 on Saturday.

Brown, who started all 12 games for the Buffs last season at left cornerback, said he and his family will go into the day "praying for the best and hoping to go as soon as possible."

As the months following his senior season and preceding the draft have passed, Brown reflected on where football has taken him, where it might lead. The looks back have been satisfying and exciting, the looks ahead even more so.

"This has been a childhood dream of mine," he said. "I can look back over my life and see the strides, the checkpoints in where I've been and how far I've come. But now it's almost like I can reach out and touch my goal. I'm enjoying it and my family is enjoying it."

Many of Brown's earliest memories and expectations were built on a future telephone call and a subsequent opportunity from an NFL team. "I've been waiting to see where I'd be for the next several years, waiting to see where I'd live my life," he said.

Brown, who finished his CU career with 167 tackles (89th all-time), six interceptions (28th) and 21 pass deflections (12th), was invited to play in the 2011 Senior Bowl and worked out for and visited several NFL organizations.

In ranking the 2011 draft's Top 100 players, *Denver Post* NFL writer Jeff Legwold - a former *Rocky Mountain News* staffer whose NFL knowledge is comparable with anyone on the national level - rated Brown at No. 98. Wrote Legwold: "Brown showed well at the Senior Bowl and kept that momentum."

Throughout his CU career, Brown was one of the Buffs' most consistent special teams performers, recording the sixth-most special teams points (65) in school history. At corner, his top games in his final season included eight tackles (seven solo), an interception and a third-down stop in CU's 29-27 win against Georgia, and seven tackles (six solo), a pair of third-down stops, a pressure and a pass deflection in the 34-14 victory against Iowa State.

With fellow senior Jimmy Smith manning CU's right corner last season, many Buffs opponents preferred to target Brown's side. So he wound up covering many teams' top receivers.

Returning to his hometown of Phoenix when the Buffs' 2010 season ended, he has been working out under the direction of former Bowling Green cornerback-turned-trainer Will Sullivan, whose clientele at Brown's position includes Pro Bowl participant Darrelle Revis (Jets corner) and several Arizona Cardinals DBs.

"I got a lot of hands-on work with him and really improved my technique," said Brown, whose pre-draft goal was "to keep my DB skills up to par and get better in a lot of things. I didn't want to take too much time off, and working with (Sullivan) was a tremendous help.

"I think I've gotten better overall in knowing what to do and how to do it. Physically, I think I'm pretty much up to par, but I'm working on the mental part of it to make an impact on the next level."

The 6-01/2 Brown's weight lifting achievements (he had three of the four top lifts at this position) won him last spring's Iron Buffalo Award among the DBs. He said he has maintained that strength as well as his weight (204-207 pounds) during a beneficial four-month period of non-stop football.

Said Brown: "It's been all football, no school, and I think players make the most progress during that time because you reach the point where you know it's going to be your job, your future. So your work is very concentrated."

Perhaps his biggest surprise of the pre-draft routine was the thoroughness of interested NFL teams in potential draftees. Brown might have come away believing the CIA has nothing on the NFL.

"It seems like they know everything there is to know about you," he said. "They pull out a piece of paper that's a page long and it includes things like character, skills, questions about your whole life - stuff from high school even. It all kind of takes you aback when you talk with them. Almost everything you've done, everything you've said, it comes to their knowledge . . . they're telling you things that maybe your close friends don't even know.

"It's nerve-wracking, but you realize it's part of it. They're investing thousands, maybe millions of dollars in you. If it was me investing that kind of money, I'd like to know everything, too."

(Wednesday: Jimmy Smith Projected As First-Round Selection)

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nfl draft

CU's Solder leads local group of NFL draft hopefuls

By Jeff Legwold
The Denver Post

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If all goes well Thursday, it will be quite some time before an unsuspecting fly-fisherman sees the biggest game warden on record walk through the tall grass at the water's edge.

That's because Colorado offensive tackle Nate Solder, all 6-foot-8, 319 pounds of him, could be the Buffs' highest draft pick in more than two decades.

"If football doesn't work out or I wasn't playing, I would always hope I end up outside, studying animals and plants, a game warden or something like that," Solder said. "It's all about protecting the animals, sustainability, those types of things. It's neat to be out there as a game warden, in nature."

However, if Solder is protecting anything in the next few years, it's most likely going

to be a high-priced quarterback. Solder will almost certainly be the highest draft pick with local ties in this NFL draft.

Several other players with local ties also are likely to get a shot. With the current labor woes, however, players who are not drafted will have to wait for a collective bargaining agreement to be able to sign as undrafted free agents. The

sixth and seventh rounds could hold a little more drama than in past years for those hoping for a chance.

"All you can do is show everything you can when you get the opportunity," said former CU wide receiver Scotty McKnight, a possible late-round pick. "And you hope it's enough."

McKnight, despite finishing his career with more receptions than any other player in CU history, was not invited to any postseason all-star games or the scouting combine. But he turned in an impressive on-campus workout in Boulder in front of a big crowd of scouts who had come to see Solder and cornerback Jimmy Smith. McKnight did not drop a pass in the positional workouts and ran well.

"The feedback I've gotten was that I showed I could run, that I'm an athlete," McKnight said.

Smith, meanwhile, has a chance to be a first-round pick, with the Ravens and

Seahawks showing the most interest.



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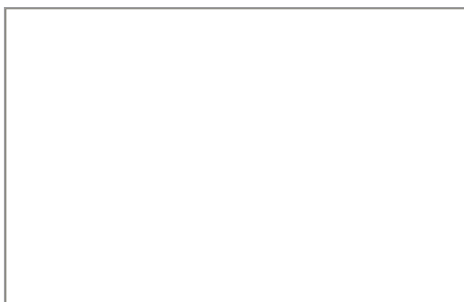
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Pride of Colorado

NFL reporter Jeff Legwold analyzes some of the players with local ties who are on the league's radar for this week's draft:

Nate Solder, OT, Colorado: Likely to be CU's first top-20 pick since Chris Naeole in 1997.

Jimmy Smith, CB, Colorado: First-round talent,

Nebraska defensive end Pierre Allen, a Thomas Jefferson High School graduate, said he expects to be taken anywhere from the third through the fifth round as an outside linebacker.

Allen started 39 games for Nebraska and had 36 tackles for loss in his career.

"My strength is my motor, my work ethic," Allen said. "I'm willing to do whatever. I'm a fierce run-stopper."

Colorado School of Mines defensive end Marc Schiechl, a Bear Creek High School graduate who concluded his career as the all-time sack leader in Division II, figures to be a linebacker as he moves toward the NFL. He has shown power and speed in his workouts, and many teams see him as a possible seventh-round pick.

The Colts and Broncos are among the teams that have worked out Schiechl in recent weeks.

"I've just tried to convey the idea I'll do whatever they need me to do," Schiechl said. "You work hard, you put in the time and you hope for the best. I've shown what I can do, and now you wait."

Jeff Legwold: 303-954-2359 or



Colorado Mines sack artist Marc Schiechl is projected as a linebacker in the NFL. (Helen H. Richardson, Denver Post file)

but off-field issues a concern for some teams.

Jalil Brown, CB, Colorado: Likely has elevated

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himself into the draft's second day with strong workouts.

Scotty McKnight, WR, Colorado: School's all-time leading receiver is undersized but had huge pro day.

Scott Albritton, long snapper, Colorado State: Has drawn interest from special- teams coaches but is coming off anterior cruciate ligament injury.

Ricky Brewer, LB, Colorado State: Mullen grad is undersized at 222 pounds and was suspended in 2009.

Guy Miller, DT, Colorado State: Was 302 pounds at his pro day. Could be a priority free agent.

Zac Puga, FB, Colorado State: Good hands and a willing blocker. Could get a look when free agents can sign.

Pierre Allen, DE/OLB, Nebraska: Thomas Jefferson graduate likely a second-day pick, possibly a fourth-rounder.

Dain Taylor, DE/OLB, Drake: Mountain Vista grad had 24 tackles for loss in 2010, 13 1/2 sacks.

Marc Schiechl, LB, Colorado School of Mines: Bear Creek grad is Division II's all-time sack leader with 46.

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April 26, 2011



RAVENS: Jimmy Smith is a high-risk, high-reward cornerback

Posted: Tuesday, April 26, 2011 12:00 am | Updated: 7:31 am, Tue Apr 26, 2011.

By Aaron Wilson, Times Staff Writer |

OWINGS MILLS - Like a volatile stock fund, University of Colorado cornerback Jimmy Smith simultaneously intrigues and scares potential investors.

NFL teams marvel over his imposing size and rare speed and athleticism.

And they have legitimate concerns about his character created by a history of failed drug tests and a pair of arrests for underage possession of alcohol.

The Baltimore Ravens are one of the teams investigating whether they should take a risk on Smith and draft him in the first round with the 26th overall pick.

They've hosted Smith for an official visit with general manager Ozzie Newsome, coach John Harbaugh and director of player personnel Eric DeCosta looking him in the eye at the Ravens' training complex and asking him some tough questions.

And that leaves them with some challenging questions of their own: Is Smith a flawed personality who'll repeat his mistakes in the NFL once he's a multi-millionaire? Or is he a reformed young man who has learned his lesson?

"We scrutinize everything in relation to these players," DeCosta said. "This is a detail business. When you take a shortcut, you make a mistake. We have talked to Jimmy. We've spent time with him and we've yet to finalize the board. We've yet to make any decisions about any player at all. We'll continue to do that and we'll make a decision then."

Smith is aware of the scrutiny he's facing.

Bold and swaggering, the 6-foot-2, 211-pounder insists he has superior skills to Oakland Raiders All-Pro cornerback Nnamdi Asomugha. And Smith insists he's a changed man.

"Every team had questions about my character, they want to know about the red flags, not about if I can play or not," Smith told the Carroll County Times in a telephone interview. "They tell me they like me physically. It kind of sucks that everyone wants to talk about the character issue. It's definitely all about your maturity level. I'm happy I got caught early because it made me more mature now."

"I'm happy those things happened because I learned from it and grew from it. My maturity level is so much greater now than when I first got to school. I was finally away from home and I was partying and having fun. I've learned my lessons."

Smith has drawn several comparisons to former Ravens Pro Bowl cornerback Chris McAlister.

Smith ran the 40-yard dash between 4.37 and 4.42 seconds at the NFL scouting combine where he also bench pressed 225 pounds 24 times and registered a 36-inch vertical leap and a 10-2 broad jump.

Like McAlister, Smith is a big shutdown cornerback. Like McAlister, who had arrests for driving under the influence and possession of marijuana while playing for the Ravens with both cases dropped, he's also had off-field issues.

"The Ravens said I kind of had the same body type as him," Smith said. "They said he had all the potential, but he didn't learn from his mistakes or he could have still been playing a lot longer. It was pretty straight-forward. They like me as a player. I think I made a good impression. When I asked them, they felt the same way."

McAlister is out of the league now following a brief stint with the New Orleans Saints after being cut by Baltimore.

He was a three-time Pro Bowl selection for the Ravens.

They haven't had a physically dominant cornerback since McAlister was on the roster.

"There's only one Chris McAlister," DeCosta said. "Physically, Jimmy and Chris are about the same size. So, yeah, they do look a little bit alike."

Smith also visited the Seattle Seahawks, Washington Redskins, Cleveland Browns, Raiders, New York Jets, San Diego Chargers, New Orleans Saints, Cincinnati Bengals, Detroit Lions, Minnesota Vikings and the Philadelphia Eagles.

An All-Big 12 selection and an honorable-mention All-American, Smith was only thrown at roughly 20 times in man coverage last season. He allowed one touchdown, had no interceptions and five pass deflections.

He was generally avoided by quarterbacks and finished with 183 career tackles and 16 pass deflections with three career interceptions. He only allowed 11 completions in man coverage over his junior and senior seasons.

"They're going to get the best cornerback in the draft," Smith said. "Defensively, I bring a lot to the table: size, speed, ability to play like a 5-11 corner being 6-2. They need corners my size because of how big the receivers are getting these days. I can do everything a small corner can do."

The Ravens could face competition for Smith from Philadelphia, which holds the 23rd pick and is also in need of a large cornerback.

The earliest Smith has been projected is the Lions' 13th pick.

NFL Network draft analyst Mike Mayock believes that Smith stacks up favorably as a football player with LSU cornerback Patrick Peterson and Nebraska cornerback Prince Amukamara.

"If he didn't have the off-the-field issues, he'd be a potential top 10 pick," Mayock said. "He's an athletic freak with length and speed. How far will he fall?"

"I think Philly and Baltimore are two of the teams that draft in the 20s that could both use a big corner and both have locker rooms whose infrastructure may be able to handle a kid like that and get him on the right path. Jimmy Smith has unlimited upside. This kid would be a great addition. However, he comes with a buyer-beware caution."

At least one analyst thinks that teams are warming up to the idea of adding Smith to their organization.

"There's a strong belief amongst people that I've talked to in the league that he wants to be great, he wants to have a change of scenery," ESPN draft analyst Todd McShay said. "He's saying a lot of the right things, and teams are believing it. You go back to talk to his coaches at Colorado, and they think a lot of those things are in his past. I'm getting a general consensus that yes, there are character concerns there, and, yes, it will cause him to drop a little bit, but that he's starting to mature."

The Ravens would like to get bigger in the secondary.

Baltimore cornerbacks Josh Wilson, Chris Carr, Domonique Foxworth or Lardarius Webb are all undersized.

"We'd like to get bigger at every position, faster at every position, but if you look at our corners, they're built like me," DeCosta said. "If you could have a guy that's 6-foot, 6-foot-2, it helps you down the field quite a bit."

If the Ravens are unable to land Smith or decide that he's too much trouble, they could address the position in the second round or later.

Among the candidates: Miami cornerback Brandon Harris or Virginia cornerback Ras-I Dowling. Harris has worked out for the Ravens.

"Brandon Harris is a smaller guy I think more equipped for the nickel position," Mayock said. "Ras-I Dowling has durability issues. Dowling has got an ability to start, and he's a guy you can get in the second round. His only real issue is durability. After that, I can't get two teams to agree on whose next. That's how tough a corner class it is after that."

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