



A Closer Look: Donald Strickland

By Christopher Smith, Chargers.com

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Veteran cornerback is a versatile option on the field and an entrepreneur off it.

SAN DIEGO – If you can't beat them, join them.

That likely is not the axiom San Diego used when it signed Donald Strickland, a veteran cornerback with eight years of NFL experience.

But it's ironic that the Chargers signed three free agents before OTAs started, one of whom played on the same New York Jets team that ended San Diego's 11-game win streak in January.

"It's just something that happened," Strickland said of the switch. He covered Vincent Jackson, Malcom Floyd and Antonio Gates during the Divisional Playoff game at Qualcomm Stadium. "Sometimes you don't control where you're put. You've just got to ride the tidal wave, so to speak."

That's more like the adage that the Chargers saw in the 5-foot-10, 185-pound defensive back. Strickland, versatile on the field and diversified off it, knows how to surf choppy waters.

He can play corner, nickel back and safety but has thrived in the slot against quick receivers. Aggressive and a good tackler for his size, Strickland has recorded 140 tackles, 16 passes defensed and two interceptions for four other teams during his career.

He will have to adjust to defensive coordinator Ron Rivera's scheme, but with a mechanical engineering degree from the University of Colorado, Strickland feels he's never had trouble learning.

"(Jets Head Coach) Rex Ryan's system was more man-to-man. Very aggressive as far as coming at the quarterback," Strickland said. "Here it seems that we're approaching that stage of defense where we want to be the aggressor and not just sit back on our heels and let the offense dictate. I see us molding into that, but there's more zone concepts. You have to read what the slot receiver is doing (instead of) manning up."

Along with former Chicago Bears starter Nathan Vasher, Strickland gives San Diego flexibility and depth in its secondary as Antoine Cason is expected to start opposite Quentin Jammer.

But if you're looking for a football-related invention that combines engineering principles, Strickland's your man. His father, Donald Sr., worked as a videographer for Channel 4 news in San Francisco for 30 years. Strickland picked up his dad's interest and began cutting his own highlight reels from Pop Warner games.

He's completed week-long business programs through the NFL at Stanford, Harvard, the University of Pennsylvania and Northwestern and spent part of last summer completing an internship at the NFL Films headquarters in Mt. Laurel, N.J.

And he's spent five years developing an interactive display frame and plans to start his own business called Visionary Moments.

"I never wanted for football to be my only outlet," Strickland said. "A lot of guys rely on football to be the driving force of their lives, not knowing that it's short term. There's so much life after football and I always wanted to position myself to have a backup plan just in case something didn't work out or in case I got hurt."

Not that he minds being in the NFL, where he'll play for the only team that's appeared in the Divisional Playoffs each of the past four seasons.

"It's definitely exciting to be on a team that has the capability of winning it all," he said. "Once you're in it for a while, the sole purpose is to get that ring. I think (with) this group of guys, we definitely have a chance."

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