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nfl

Awaiting the NFL draft, CU's Jalil Brown is glad he focused on playing defense

By Jeff Legwold
The Denver Post

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INDIANAPOLIS — As a senior at South Mountain High School in Phoenix, Jalil Brown rushed for 1,910 yards and scored 29 touchdowns.

He was selected to some all-area teams that season on offense and defense. But he believed he would find his place in college football, and perhaps in the NFL, on offense. He would do it taking handoffs, running the ball, scoring touchdowns and winning games.

"I kind of thought that's what would happen," said Brown, who played cornerback at Colorado. "I thought I was pretty good with the ball in my hands."

Brown just completed his four-day trek through

the NFL scouting combine as a cornerback with a professional future. He has spent the past few weeks pushing his name up the NFL draft charts.

He had a good week of Senior Bowl practices in Mobile, Ala., in January and followed that with some quality work at the scouting combine, which concluded Tuesday.

Brown credits Greg Brown, CU's defensive coordinator and secondary coach, for seeing at least a little bit of the future. Greg Brown, a 15-year veteran of NFL coaching staffs, is now in his third stint as a CU assistant coach.

"It was the (defensive backs) coach who recruited me out of high school. He kind of talked me into playing the position of cornerback, so that's something I'm thankful for," Jalil Brown said. "He told me that he liked my size and speed. I looked at his résumé. He coached in the league 15 years, coached two Thorpe Award winners in Deon Figures and Chris Hudson. I figured you don't get much better than this when it comes to coaching.

"So I figured, 'Let's give this a try.' He told me I could always go back to running back, and luckily it worked out great."

That defensive backs coach was Greg Brown.

Jalil Brown said he quickly embraced the idea of playing defense, of matching up with wide receivers and doing what he could to keep the ball away from them.

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"I just like

the idea of going one-on-one against a receiver

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rather than having the ball in my hands," he said.

Most secondary coaches in the NFL think the 6-foot, 204-pound Brown could rise into the middle rounds of the April 28-30 draft. They like his composure, maturity and size — and the work he has done since his final season in Boulder ended. They like how he has tried to prevent all of those touchdowns he once dreamed of scoring.

"I hope so," Brown said. "It's something you start to think about, getting to the NFL, and now it's right in front of me."

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nfl combine

CU's Smith showcases his speed at NFL combine

By Jeff Legwold
The Denver Post

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INDIANAPOLIS — In a city that made its name with speed, all that was missing for former Colorado cornerback Jimmy Smith was a checkered flag.

Smith turned in one of the fastest 40-yard dashes at this year's NFL scouting combine Tuesday in the final on-field workouts of the week-long affair at Lucas Oil Stadium. Smith had a time of 4.46 seconds on the combine's electronic clock Tuesday afternoon, with some teams hand-timing him at 4.38.

That put the 6-foot-2 1/4, 211-pounder among the fastest defensive backs in what was considered a fast group overall. It also puts Smith in line to be a possible first-round pick in April's draft if he can alleviate some of the concerns teams have about his past behavior off

the

field.

"I've been confident about what I could run all along," Smith said. "That's what you do here. You show them what you're about, what you can do. I think I'm a shutdown corner and I have great speed."

Jalil Brown, who played opposite of Smith in the Buffs' defense, also worked out. Several scouts said Brown continued to help his cause with a good showing in position drills as well as 4.49 and 4.50 showings (hand-timed) in the 40.

Brown followed up in Indianapolis after a quality week at the Senior Bowl in January.

"You just want to keep making progress, keep showing them what you can do," Brown said. "It's been a lot of work and effort to get to this point. It was good to be here, in front of the actual coaches — not just the scouts, but the people actually making the decisions."

Smith said he had run a hand-timed 4.37 40 in his training leading up to the combine and believed he could duplicate that Tuesday.

In team visits in coming weeks, Smith must deal with off-the-field questions from scouts and personnel executives. Most of those questions stem from a failed drug test in 2007 and two arrests for being a minor in possession of alcohol during his time in Boulder. In interviews with team officials in Indianapolis, Smith was

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considered brash.

"I've made young mistakes," Smith said. "I'll continue to answer any question they have about me. I've been honest. I haven't avoided anything. They've asked and I've answered. That's all I can do. I believe I can help the team that takes me, and I'll show that."

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