

CU Buffs' Toney Clemons focuses on NFL

Wide receiver struggled until second half of senior season

By **Kyle Ringo** Camera Sports Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

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Former Colorado wide receiver Toney Clemons talked about playing in the NFL even before his college career began. Throughout much of his five seasons at Michigan and CU he didn't appear to be playing at a level high enough to achieve his dream.

But the second half of his senior season and what he does between now the draft next April might be enough to change some minds.

Clemons, who graduated last week with a degree in sociology, finished his career playing his best football. He made 43 catches for 680 yards and eight touchdowns as a senior, with the bulk of that production coming in the second half of the season. He had just 11 catches for 155 yards following an early October blowout loss at Sanford.

He points to hard work and increased opportunities for the boost in production over the second half of the season.

Clemons returned home to Pennsylvania last week and will spend Christmas with his family before traveling back across the country to Arizona where he plans to train for CU's pro day in March.

"I feel good about it," Clemons said. "I feel like I control my destiny from here on out. I know there were some things I couldn't control, but the things I could control I capitalized and maximized to the best of my ability. It will be the same in this situation. I control whether I go up and I control whether I go down."

[NFLDraftScout.com](#) didn't have Clemons listed among the its top 50 prospects at wide receiver as of late Monday, but there is plenty of time for those ranking to change. Clemons said he is hoping for an invitation to the NFL Scouting Combine in Indianapolis in February and an opportunity to play in one of the three postseason all-star games in January.

He said he has been in contact with representatives of two of those games.

"They're extremely important," Clemons said. "It doesn't matter which one you go to. You just want to go to one because that week of practice is crucial. They get to see your tendencies, your habits, your strengths and your weaknesses all week. They get to see if you're consistent in every practice throughout the week. They get to take a real in-depth look at you as a player that they don't really get throughout the year."

CU wide receivers coach Bobby Kennedy tutored Clemons since last spring and saw him mature as a player and person over the past year. Kennedy has coached numerous players to NFL careers throughout his 21 seasons at the college level. He said great competition seems to bring out the best in Clemons.

"I think the biggest thing with him is when there is good talent around him and he understands that he's got to compete at a high level every day, the best will come out in him," Kennedy said. "Whereas I think sometimes it's really easy for him to say, 'Well, I'm the best guy here or I'm one of the two best guys here.' I think sometimes guys don't understand at that level when guys are fighting for jobs and roster spots, if you've got a turf toe, you got to go. If your hamstring is a little tight, you got to go. I think that's in him to compete at that level."

Clemons has two cousins who are already in the NFL in Kansas City wide receiver Steve Breaston and Oakland Raiders quarterback Terrelle Pryor. He said he leans on them for advice and direction in how to approach the next four months as he has throughout his college career.

He said he also has picked the brains of former CU defensive backs Jimmy Smith and Jalil Brown about the process. They went through it just last spring and both were drafted. He also has asked for advice from CU coach Jon Embree and offensive coordinator Eric Bieniemy, both of whom spent five years in the NFL before returning to Boulder.

"Guys that coached at that level and played at that level are really the main guys I'm going to lean on cause they know what I'm getting ready to go in to," Clemons said.

Hiring an agent and deciding who to train with in Arizona are the next two decisions on his list. Clemons said he wants to increase the amount of weight he can bench press in the coming months, while catching hundreds of passes each day. He said he also will work intensely on studying NFL defenses so that he can impress scouts and coaches when he gets the chance.

Clemons said he is faster than most people seem to give him credit for and he is excited to prove that as well.

"That's the thing for me right now, I've got a real nice shot to do some things on the next level and continue playing this game that I love so much," Clemons said.

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