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## Jimmy Smith feels no pressure to overtake Cary Williams as starter

Second-year cornerback intent on improving on field  
worried about his candidacy to be a starting cornerback

August 21, 2012 | By Edward Lee

Jimmy Smith is fully aware of the expectation that in his second full season he will emerge as a starting cornerback.

And perhaps because of that sentiment, Smith shrugged off that expectation.

"I'm making strides," he said with a smile after Tuesday's practice. "I'm gearing towards that."

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There may be some within the organization who are not as patient with the 2011 NFL draft to take Smith, the prevailing thought was that the 6th round pick would be in the starting lineup.

But a high left ankle sprain while covering the opening kickoff in the preseason derailed that prospect, and although he recorded two interceptions in the preseason, cornerback behind Webb and Cary Williams.

Injury has been a factor this preseason, too, as Smith has battled the injury long enough to take him away from the practice field at times. Smith is wondering about his recent spate of ailments.

"It feels like I've run into a stroke of bad luck," he said. "But it's not me out there unless I'm ready to play. It's nagging little things, but

That wasn't the case Friday night when the Detroit Lions visited Miami. The largest wide receiver he has ever lined up against, Smith was faced with a fade route and snatching a pass from Matthew Stafford out of the end zone in a 27-12 loss.

Smith, who turned back to Stafford about a half-second before John Elway himself.

"I never saw the ball, but you can't play him like that because of his size. That big. So playing on top of him was a bad idea. And when I look back, it was good positioning, but for me, that's not OK. I have to make it look like I should've made that play. Looking back on it, I just feel like it

Smith is expected to see plenty of playing time Thursday night when he is concerned about making a statement about his candidacy to be a

"I think we have three very good corners that can compete with any other team in the media hype right now. We're more focused on the two games when we have our main concern, not who's starting on Day 1 because we're going

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Wednesday, August 22, 2012

## Passionate Scarnecchia backs Solder

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By Mike Reiss

TAMPA – Left tackle Nate Solder has had some early struggles during training camp and two preseason games, but position coach Dante Scarnecchia isn't pushing the panic button. Not even close.

He's seen a situation like this before.

"I think all young tackles struggle on plays and protections in this league," Scarnecchia said Wednesday in a rare media interview with reporters. "Just do a little thinking. Who did Matt Light replace?"

When the answer was given by a reporter – Patriots Hall of Famer Bruce Armstrong – Scarnecchia became more passionate about the topic.

"Did any of you think that it was going to be [easy]? Did you think he had any problems with it to start with? Well, hell ya. They all [have] problems," Scarnecchia said of the Light-to-Armstrong transition in 2001. "It was as painful as it could ever be [with Light]. Just like anything, he got better and became a really good player, 'one that you can't replace.'"

While Scarnecchia said that he wished the retired Light was with the team, he's happy with the options the team has on the roster, specifically Solder.

"I think Nate Solder is a better player today than he was all of last year, so you figure that out. Next question," said Scarnecchia, providing the type of protection for his young tackle that he asks his players to for quarterback Tom Brady.

Scarnecchia also put his support behind second-year right tackle Marcus Cannon, who has also struggled in training camp and preseason games.

"I think he's coming along [well]. I think he has some things to learn, like all young tackles have to do," he said. "I'm pleased with the effort he's putting forth and the way he's developing, and we keep chugging away. He has started for us, and if he starts this year, 'good, let's go.' I think he's a good player.

"Personally, I'm really pleased with the way [Solder and Cannon] are developing. Is it the finished product? No. We have a couple more weeks to get it as good as it can be, and then we're going to play games."

Overall, Scarnecchia sees promising signs for the line.

"There is no cliff I'm throwing myself off right now. I'm telling you the truth," he said. "That glass is half full and filling up. That's just how I see it."

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## Scarnecchia defends Pats O-Line

By Karen Guregian | Wednesday, August 22, 2012 | <http://www.bostonherald.com> | [N.E. Patriots](#)

TAMPA — Offensive line coach Dante Scarnecchia went to bat for his beleaguered offensive line today. He defended both Nate Solder and Marcus Cannon, who have struggled both during training camp and in the two preseason games played thus far.

Scarnecchia, however, wasn't about to pile on. Instead, he chose to take a positive tact with those players, and the state of the line in general, when he met with the media today, following the joint practice sessions with the Buccaneers.

"There's no cliff I'm throwing myself off right now. I'm telling you the truth," Scarnecchia said. "I look at it, believe it or not, that glass is half full and filling up. That's just how I see it. With every position, all I ask is their best. They're giving it to us. We will improve."

Here's a few other highlights from the session with the [Patriots \[team stats\]](#) resident offensive line guru:

**On Solder:** "I think Nate Solder is a better player today than he was all of last year. You figure that out. Next question."

**On Solder and Cannon struggling:** "All young tackles struggle on plays and protections in this league. Just do a little thinking. Who did [Matt Light \[stats\]](#) replace? Bruce Armstrong. Did you think he had any problems to start? Well, hell yeah. It is what it is."

**On the line in general:** "I think every day is a learning process for everyone. I personally am pleased with the effort they've put forth since the beginning of training camp. And how they are developing. We're clearly better today than we were four weeks ago when we started this whole process. Everyone's better. Now, what does that mean? Only time's going to tell. I think we're getting everything out of training camp that we wanted to get out of these guys at the start of this camp."

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