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Posted on Wed, Aug. 08, 2012

## In second year, Jalil Brown turns corner for Chiefs

By RANDY COVITZ  
The Kansas City Star

A year ago, Chiefs cornerback Jalil Brown wouldn't have been ready for this.

Because the lockout kept teams from holding offseason programs or minicamps, Brown, like most of last year's rookies, was not prepared for the demands of an NFL training camp, much less seeing substantial playing time at the start of the preseason.

But one year later, Brown is playing with confidence and moxie. A foot injury to Brandon Flowers early in camp elevated Brown to the starting left cornerback position.

When Flowers lined up at left corner during the Tuesday morning walk-through, Brown slid over to right cornerback in place of Stanford Routt, a free-agent acquisition. But Flowers was back on the sidelines on Wednesday, so it appears Brown will start at left corner on Friday night in the preseason opener against Arizona.

"Jalil has some flexibility," head coach Romeo Crennel said. "He's made some plays in practice. We'll probably roll him in just a little bit more so we can get a better look at him. I would have to say that what he's done deserves more look.

"He's more confident because I think he understands the system. He understands what it takes to play the game. Last year, he didn't really know what it took to play the game. I saw improvement toward the end of the year, particularly on special teams. That's where his improvement showed up ... his effort, his toughness, as well."

Brown, the Chiefs' fourth-round pick from Colorado in 2011, discovered it took more than raw athletic ability to play cornerback in the NFL.

"Last year, I didn't realize it at the time, but without having the OTAs and minicamps, that definitely set me back a ton," Brown said. "I didn't realize how much I was at a disadvantage.

"I had to learn how to be a professional going through the year, and going through OTAs, I learned what it takes to go in the training room and get ready and how to spend extra time in the film room."

Brown, who is from Phoenix, is especially looking forward to Friday night's game against his hometown Cardinals. He matched up against Cardinals superstar receiver Larry Fitzgerald in the teams' joint practice on Tuesday and could be defending Fitzgerald on Friday, depending on how much the Arizona starters play.

"When you go against a receiver of that caliber, you learn what you have to do to compete with him," Brown said of Fitzgerald. "I'll be ready to go. I know now the coaches have me playing both sides. They throw me in left or right, whichever will help the team, I'll do it."

Fitzgerald took notice of Brown during Tuesday's practice and was surprised to hear he had so little experience at the NFL level.

"He's in his second year?" Fitzgerald said. "He's physical, he has good ball skills ... he broke up a couple balls on me. He's an impressive athlete."

Brown, 6-1, 204, honed his coverage skills at Colorado, facing the likes of Missouri's Jeremy Maclin and Denario Alexander, Oklahoma State's Dez Bryant and Justin Blackmon, and Texas' Jordan Shipley, among others.

But at Colorado, he was the other corner. Most attention was focused on the Buffaloes' Jimmy Smith, who was taken in the first round by Baltimore. That worked to Brown's advantage.

"We came in the same year, so we were competing since day one and working our way up to our senior year," said Brown, who made 28 starts in his college career and intercepted six passes, including a team-high three in 2010.

"It helped me to play with a little chip on my shoulder, because when we were playing, I was trying to be the best out there, and he was doing the same, so to see him get some recognition made me want to try harder, and that, in turn, helped me perform better and get some looks."

Brown appeared in 14 games as a rookie with the Chiefs last year and ranked second on the team with eight special-teams tackles, plus he recovered a fumble on a kickoff return against the Jets.

“Early on, there’s no telling when you’re going to get out there on offense or defense as a rookie, so your first mark is to get out there on special teams, and that’s exactly what I was trying to do,” Brown said. “Fortunately for me, at the end of the season, I started to figure out things a little bit and started to come along. Special teams helped me perform better and get some confidence.”

Brown also was a quick study behind Flowers and Brandon Carr, the Chiefs’ starter at right cornerback who signed with Dallas as an unrestricted free agent this year.

“It was great to play behind them,” Brown said. “There were little small things I watched and learned from them, talked with them ... little tips they gave me, how to align, how to stay square, how to play different receivers different ways.

“You can’t go out there with the same technique against every guy because every technique has a weakness, so you have to have multiple (skills) to use against them.”

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# Edmonton Eskimos' Hugh Charles savouring reward for being patient

BY MURRAY MCCORMICK, LEADER-POST    AUGUST 9, 2012



Edmonton Eskimos RB Hugh Charles.

**Photograph by:** Greg Southam

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EDMONTON — Hugh Charles's patience has been tested and rewarded.

Charles bided his time through three-plus CFL seasons as a backup to running back Wes Cates with the Saskatchewan Roughriders before getting an opportunity in 2012 with the Edmonton Eskimos.

"I didn't get a chance to show what I could do in Saskatchewan because Wes was the guy," Charles said Thursday in advance of Friday's game against the Roughriders at Commonwealth Stadium. "I was a backup and backups don't get a lot of opportunities."

Charles had to wait for an opportunity to become Edmonton's primary tailback after being traded to the Eskimos on Oct. 12 for a conditional pick in the 2014 CFL draft. Upon arriving in Edmonton, he was again a backup — time to Jerome Messam, who rushed for 1,057 yards in 2011 and was named the CFL's most outstanding Canadian. Messam parlayed that success into a contract with the NFL's Miami Dolphins, creating a vacancy in Edmonton that Charles has filled admirably.

"Hugh is the poster boy for patience," said Eskimos head coach Kavis Reed. "He's such a team-oriented individual. He's having an outstanding season to date and you would never know that he's that guy. He's so unassuming and he'll do whatever is asked of him."

The 25-year-old Charles has proven that he's capable of being more than a backup. He leads the Eskimos in rushing (70 carries for 330 yards) and receiving (13 receptions for 266 yards). He also leads the Eskimos in touchdowns, with three.

Many members of the Eskimos knew what Charles was capable of accomplishing based on their shared experience with the Riders, with whom he dressed for 20 games between 2008 and 2011. Reed spent the 2009 season as the Riders' special teams co-ordinator and worked with Charles as a returner. Jamie Barresi was the Riders' running backs coach in 2008 and quarterbacks coach in 2009. Barresi, who is now Edmonton's running game co-ordinator and running backs coach, recognized Charles's potential while with the Riders.

"I always felt that he was a good player," Barresi said. "He had to play a role and he was playing behind Wes Cates. I always felt if there was a time when he was the No. 1 guy that he could do pretty well, but that's how it usually goes in this league. There is an established player ahead of them and they have to wait their turn. You know how good Wes was and how well he performed. Hugh had a great guy to learn from."

The familiarity with Charles extends to Edmonton's Steven Jyles, who spent the 2008 and 2009 seasons as a backup quarterback with the Riders. Jyles also expected Charles to step up when the opportunity presented itself.

"He was explosive in Saskatchewan as he is here," Jyles said. "He's a great athlete and we knew that in Saskatchewan. It's all about timing. It wasn't Hugh's time with the Riders because Wes was there. Now he's here and he has helped the team immensely."

Charles's talents aren't limited rushing and catching the football. He introduced his trademark backflip after scoring a touchdown with the Roughriders. In Saskatchewan, he had six rushing touchdowns and three receiving touchdowns and he punctuated each one with the backflip. Charles has had three opportunities to show off his gymnastics ability with the Eskimos, where he has two rushing touchdowns and a 76-yard reception for a major.

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