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Ravens CB Jimmy Smith takes up boxing regimen, loses 10 pounds

Cornerback making bid for starting job, has made complete recovery from sports hernia surgery last season

By Aaron Wilson

The Baltimore Sun

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The last time that imposing cornerback Jimmy Smith shadowed a wide receiver in an actual game, his physical coverage of San Francisco 49ers wide receiver Michael Crabtree provided an edge in the final moments of the Ravens' Super Bowl victory.

Months later, Smith has been honing his game and getting into optimal shape and health after dealing with a sports hernia surgery last season that sidelined him for five games.

Through a rigorous boxing regimen with a local trainer in Timonium, the 6-foot-2 former first-round draft pick has dropped 10 pounds to get down to a lean 200 pounds.

"I feel great, I feel like I did in college," Smith said. "I actually did some boxing and trying to get my core strength. My trainers told me to work on that for my back and groin. I'm doing conditioning drills, speed bag, no heavy bag.

"A defensive back needs quick hands. The groin really hurt my game last year, playing through that all of last season and finally having surgery. Now that's better. I feel 100 percent better."

Smith finished the regular season with 31 tackles and no interceptions, but had a strong postseason where he displayed the potential the Ravens had identified in him as an All-Big 12 Conference selection at the University of Colorado.

A history of injuries has curtailed Smith's impact in his first two seasons, limiting him to five starts, 49 career tackles, two interceptions and 11 pass deflections.

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Smith dealt with a high ankle sprain that prevented him from playing in four games as a rookie and also had a bout with back spasms.

Now, he's slated to compete with veteran Corey Graham for a starting job. However it turns out, both cornerbacks figure to get a hefty workload.

"Anybody can emerge and be a starter," Smith said. "I've been wanting to starter since Day One, but God had a plan. I'm still just learning, trying to become a better player in the classroom and on the field, trying to diagnose plays and read things and be a student of the game.

"You always want to go uphill. You never want to digress. I'm trying to pick up where I left off and do even better. I feel like I've improved. Everything is a work in progress. I'm still trying to climb the mountain. I'm not where I want to be yet, but I'll be there."

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Ravens CB Smith leaner, lighter, healthy

Matt Zenitz Times Staff Writer | Posted: Friday, May 31, 2013 4:16 pm

OWINGS MILLS – Baltimore Ravens cornerback Jimmy Smith is leaner, lighter and, most importantly to him, finally healthy after dealing with a groin injury for much of last season.

Smith's role is still months away from being determined, but, for what it's worth, Smith looks to be in good shape. And as far as how he feels physically, Smith said: "I feel great. I feel like I did in college."

This will be a telling season for Smith, the Ravens' first-round pick in 2011.

Most feel he's underachieved during his first two seasons in the NFL, but he did come up with two critical plays late in the Ravens' Super Bowl win over the San Francisco 49ers. He'll now have a chance to battle Corey Graham for a starting job opposite Lardarius Webb.

And after playing last season around 210 pounds, the 6-foot-2 Smith said he's down 10 pounds and is planning to keep his weight around 200 pounds this year.

Smith acknowledged feeling quicker and faster as a result of the weight loss.

"I do," Smith said. "But more so is that I'm not injured anymore. Those groins really hurt my game last year, playing with that throughout the whole season and then getting surgery. But now that that's better, I feel 100-percent better."

Smith was first injured during Week 6 of last year but played in each of the Ravens' next two games before undergoing sports hernia surgery that sidelined him for four games and hampered him well into the playoffs.

But Smith regained his job as Baltimore's nickel back during the AFC championship and later came up with those two critical plays in the Super Bowl.

He had 34 tackles in the 11 games he played in during the regular season. He had 20 tackles, eight pass deflections and two interceptions as a rookie in 2011.

"I do feel like I've improved," Smith said. "But, like I've said, everything's a work in progress. I'm still trying to climb the mountain. I'm not where I want to be yet, but I'll be there soon."