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# Jaguars' Clemons thankful for second chances

By Bill Beckner Jr.

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Rookie wide receiver Toney Clemons didn't get much of a chance to prove himself in game situations for the [Steelers](#).

He rarely was targeted in the preseason — he had one catch — and was designated to the practice squad, where he seemed pre-packaged with an expiration date.

But the NFL's wheel of opportunity gave the Valley High School graduate another spin.

Suddenly, the Jacksonville Jaguars could afford Clemons the chance he never got with his hometown team.

On Tuesday, Clemons signed with the Jaguars, who plucked him from the Steelers' practice squad and added him to their 53-man roster.

"I don't see it as a new start I see it as picking up where I left off from (Pittsburgh) and building on it," Clemons said. "I get a chance to refine my game and start a playing career off right in the NFL."

Clemons, a seventh-round draft pick by the Steelers, is third on the depth chart at wideout.

The Jaguars' top receivers are rookie Justin Blackmon and second-year player Cecil Shorts III.

Blackmon (groin) and Shorts (hamstring) were held out of practice Thursday but will play this week.

Jacksonville (2-9) plays at Buffalo (4-7) on Sunday.

Clemons has been glued to his new playbook.

The 24-year-old, who spent two years at Michigan, took a year off, per NCAA transfer rules and played two years at Colorado. He made a decent living on the Steelers' practice squad. He treated his situation like a 9-to-5 job, reporting to the South Side facility each day to mimic opposing wideouts for the first-team defense.

It was a "plight" that Clemons graciously accepted — and won't forget.

"They taught me a lot about myself as a player and helped me develop and learn from some of the best athletes in the sport," Clemons said. "I'm forever grateful for the time I spent in the organization, and I will never take the start they gave me for granted."

"The experience was one of a kind."

Now, in an oddly similar situation to his college scenario, Clemons has caught on with another team that waited for him.

Colorado offered Clemons a scholarship when he was coming out of Valley in 2006. But Clemons chose Michigan, where he never seemed comfortable.

Displeased with the direction of the program and his usage, he left Ann Arbor and transferred to Colorado, where he caught 86 passes for 1,162 yards and 11 touchdowns in two seasons. Most of his production came in his senior year.

Clemons believed Jacksonville had him on its draft board and considered the team a strong contender to take him. He had a private meeting with the Jaguars prior to the April draft.

The Steelers, instead, selected Clemons, creating a local-boy-makes-good story that fizzled some when

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Clemons didn't make the roster.

But Jacksonville, like Colorado, kept the offer on the table. And a legit chance to make an impact in a game is back.

"There's no better feeling than competing on a high level," Clemons said. "As a competitor, that's what you dream of doing."

Clemons saw playing time in the preseason but had only one catch for 14 yards against the Indianapolis Colts.

Clemons, who will wear No. 17 like he did in college, has the rare distinction of being the only player to start a game in the Big Ten, Big 12 and Pac-12 conferences.

Bill Beckner Jr. is a staff writer for Trib Total Media. He can be reached at 724-224-2696 or [bbeckner@tribweb.com](mailto:bbeckner@tribweb.com).

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