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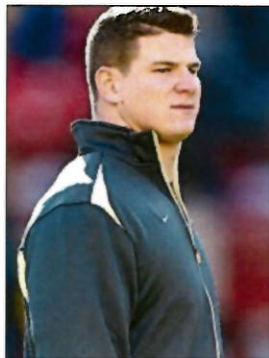
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Anderson's next hope is mini-camp invite

Tom Shanahan
GoBlackKnights.com Senior Writer

Steve Anderson did his part. The former Army linebacker serving as a 1st Lt. and platoon leader at Fort Stewart in Georgia trained in his free time with NFL intensity for the Regional Combine last month at Baltimore.



Former Army LB, Steve Anderson is looking for that next shot.

The Regional Combine and Super Regional process is only in its third year since the latest Collective Bargaining Agreement was signed between the NFL and the NFL Players Association. The purpose is to provide free agent prospects an evaluation period similar to the long-standing National Scouting Combine for top draft pick prospects held annually in February in Indianapolis.

One former Army player who was at the Super Regional in Detroit was wide receiver/tight end Ali Villanueva. This is a second chance for him since he wasn't around two years ago for the first year of the combine process. The 6-foot-10, 285-pounder was otherwise preoccupied on the front lines in Afghanistan. Villanueva did earn an invitation to a workout at a Chicago Bears mini-camp, but he was only a month-and-a-half removed from Afghanistan when he reported. Needless to say, with that timeline of preparation he was unable to earn a free agent contract.

Anderson's position now is where Villanueva was two years ago -- hoping his agent can land an invitation to a mini-camp without the Super Regional. Anderson is confident he can make an impression similar Josh McNary managed last year if provided an on-field opportunity.

McNary, another former Army linebacker, was invited last year to the Super Regional and subsequently several teams invited him for workouts. But the Indianapolis Colts signed him to a contract and he emerged as a valuable backup by the end of the playoff season.

"Our goal is to get into a mini-camp and show what I bring to the table," Anderson said. "I'm 5-10, 235 pounds, so I have to get on the field and show my agility. I need to have my game speed and my game instincts evaluated in a mini-camp. I need to be able to show what I can do."

Bergman's role at his point is to make contacts with NFL teams and send off video from games such as Anderson's performance in Army's win over SMU in the 2010 Bell Helicopter Armed Forces Bowl. He wants teams to combine his Baltimore regional results with the perspective of his college career as a two-year captain and honorable mention All-America.

"The one thing the NFL knows about Army, Navy and Air Force players is we have work ethic, discipline and passion for the game," Anderson said. "Academy athletes aren't the biggest and fastest, but the thing that separates us is we know our job is to be on a team."

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But Anderson didn't earn an invitation to the Super Regional Combine last Saturday in Detroit, so now Anderson's agent, Scott Bergman, must put his role to land a mini-camp invitation into overdrive.

"It's a long shot for Steve," Bergman said, "But I still believe there is a shot for him to get on an NFL team."

Bergman's task is to find a team that will overlook his lack of height as a 235-pounder on a 5-foot-10 frame. Following the Super Regional, teams are now focused on the NFL draft May 8-10. Then they turn their attention to stocking rosters for mini-camps with free agent hopefuls such as Anderson.

"I'm very disappointed for Steve," said Bergman, who is based in Washington, D.C. "I thought Steve stood out, but he didn't get picked (for the Super Regional). I felt the selection on who went to the Super Regional was too subjective. A lot of agents had the same complaints about the system."

"Our goal is to get into a mini-camp and show what I bring to the table."

- Former Army LB, Steve Anderson

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