Written by Roberto Yanes
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# THIS PUP HAS A MEAN BITE

The Miami Dolphins have entered training camp and after seven days of hard hitting practices, one name is on every Dol-fan's mind, Nolan Carroll. Carroll is the rookie cornerback from Maryland that the Dolphins selected in the 5th round of this year's draft. He measured in at 5'11", 204 pounds at the Combine, and was a wide receiver before converting to cornerback. At his pro day he reportedly ran a sub 4.4. Aside from playing corner back, he was a team captain, played special teams and returned kicks. The word on him when he was selected by Miami was that he was athletic, had good speed, but was very raw.

A lot of pundits considered Carroll to be a project when he first came to the Dolphins, but his success in camp during the last couple of days has everyone going from project to key contributor. It first began on WSVN 7's Sunday's Sports Xtra during the "Ask Drew" segment when Sports Agent Drew Rosenhaus was asked who he believed was the Dolphins most impressive player, aside from the obvious names. Drew replied by saying that even though he is not his agent, it is rookie corner back Nolan Carroll who has impressed the most. Since that day, not one day has gone by that we don't hear some positive feedback from Carroll in camp reports.

Armando Salguero of the Miami Herald said it best when in his blog he wrote, "I should alert you that Nolan Carroll is coming." When it has not been a pass break up, it has been an interception for a pick six. Carroll has also demonstrated blazing speed and burst at camp. He has been seeing time in dime packages when the Dolphins' defense has lined up to defend four WR sets. He is being used on special teams and also as a kick returner. The rookie who was supposed to be nothing more than a project is proving that versatility, intelligence and athletic ability can immediately make you a difference maker in the NFL.

It is not only reporters and fans who are talking about Carroll. Other players on the team are starting to take notice of Carroll's play as well. Barry Jackson of the Miami Herald reported that Karlos Dansby and Yeremiah Bell, two of the Dolphins seasoned veterans and key contributors on the Dolphins defense, have also said that besides the obvious players, they are most impressed with Nolan Carroll. Perhaps the biggest compliment towards Carroll was said during Thursday's press conference, when Coach Sparano was asked by a reporter what he thought about Carroll. Coach Sparano replied:

*"The ball finds him and he finds the ball. I have seen toughness out of him, I have seen him come up and smack a fullback or smack a guard at times. He is physical, I like his back peddle. He needs some fundamentals things, particularly in things we have done with him on third downs." Fundamentally, he is still stuck at Maryland, a little bit, but that is understandable. I like the skill set that I am watching."*

Coach Sparano continued to say:

*“On special teams this guy should be a core guy as we get into the preseason games. We are going to get him involved as much as we can, he will be involved in kick off returns. I think this guy will have a big role on special teams during the preseason. It obviously starts to help when you are thinking about the final 53 and if he is involved in the final 53”.*

The next step for Carroll is to transition his play off the practice field and into an actual game. Carroll also needs to prove he can tackle, something pundits have said he has struggled with in the past. He is already intelligent, versatile and athletic. Carroll's willingness to play at different positions is something that will help him in his quest to make the final 53 man roster. If he can use all those gifts to his advantage, and show he can play in this league, the skies are the limit for Carroll. Bill Parcells has a famous saying that says, 'If he doesn't bite as a puppy, he won't bite'. So far into camp, it appears that rookie Nolan Carroll is a pup with a mean bite.

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