

THE JAMBAR

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Defensive Backs Improve Each Day

Posted By: Alan Rodges 368 Views

With spring ball coming to an end, the Youngstown State University defense looks to make strides and become better than last season.

YSU's defense was near the bottom in the Missouri Valley Football Conference last season. Although they were one of the worst defenses, sophomore defensive back Jameel Smith expects his defense to become more productive.

"Coach [Eric] Wolford has put an emphasis on the money down [third down]," Smith said. "We have to win the money down no matter what, if it is seven on seven or one on one, we have to win it."

Smith ended last season with 60 tackles, recorded the only interception returned for a touchdown and was elected to the MVFC all-newcomer squad. Smith also had eight tackles during the 42nd Annual Red vs. White Spring Game on Friday.

Senior cornerback Julius Childs also feels the extra attention given to "the money down" this spring.

Childs finished last season with 68 tackles, two sacks and two interceptions before dislocating his elbow. Childs also had 3.5 tackles on Friday.

After Childs' injury during the North Dakota State University game, Childs understands that anything can be taken from him at any point.

"Ever since I dislocated my elbow, I have taken this game way more seriously," Childs said.

Not everything is promised and Childs knows that. He actually feels more humble from the experience. Childs feels like he needs to be a leader this year, since he's one of two seniors in the secondary.

"They look up to me, so I have to lead by example," Childs said.

Senior safety Donald D'Alesio and Childs are the two senior leaders in the secondary. Last season, D'Alesio finished second on the team in tackles with 70. He also forced and recovered two fumbles.

New defensive coordinator Jamie Bryant has helped the defense understand the game and playbook a bit more this offseason.

"He has helped us on the field, not as much screaming," Smith said.

Even though the defense did struggle last year, Smith notices changes from the beginning of spring to now.

"The speed and the tempo the defense is playing at," Smith said. "Now everyone is playing fast and flying to the ball."

Childs agrees with Smith about the progression of the defense.

"Everyone is understanding the plays more, moving fast and getting to the ball," Childs said. "We have a better understanding of the defense than last year."

While the defense looks to get better this year, they will have to prove it to the first team offense. During Friday's contest, the White team scored 48 points while the Red tallied 13.