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Central Washington University Athletics Press Release, James Patterson

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By Mike Wells
CWU Sports Information

In football, the cornerback has one of the toughest assignments on the team. They're isolated one-on-one with pretty much the only help being in the middle of the field. But Central Washington University cornerback Jason Patterson is up to the challenge.

"I think it's the toughest position on the field, because you don't want to get beat with the long-ball in front of everybody," Patterson said. "Knowing that you don't want to get beat makes you play harder and a better player."

To prepare for the Wildcats rigorous schedule in their first season at the NCAA Division II level, including three games against Division I-AA opponents, the redshirt sophomore from Enumclaw worked on his speed and strength in the off-season to prepare increased level of competition.

"I lifted weights to get stronger and did a lot of squats to improve my speed," Patterson said.

Patterson had his speed and strength tested early this season. In the first two games against I-AA opponents Eastern Washington and Northern Iowa, he had to defend wide receivers with Division I-A potential.

"It was good to play against those types of receivers early in the season," Patterson said. "I made mistakes in those games, and I learned from them. The good thing is I don't think we'll run across any better receivers the rest of the year."

In limited playing time last season, Patterson still ranked third on the team in passes blocked, with five. This season, he already has five and is more than halfway toward the school single-season record of nine co-held by current CWU safety John Hallead and former linebacker Andy Lwanga. Both of those players earned All-American honors in their record-setting seasons.

With the departure of starting cornerback Leland Sparks, Patterson's dedication and work ethic in the off-season earned him a starting position this year.

"He's gone from a role player last season, to taking advantage of the opportunity given to him, and became a solid cover guy for us this season," CWU head coach John Zamberlin said. "He's just going to get better and better for us as time goes along."

Patterson is seventh on the team in tackles with 15 and is the only defensive player with a touchdown. He returned a fumble 40 yards for a touchdown in the Wildcats' record-setting 52-7 victory against Carroll last Saturday. In that game, the Wildcat defense held Carroll to eight total yards of offense.

Not only is Patterson an outstanding cover guy for the Wildcats, he also returns punts and kickoffs. In this week's NCAA Division II national stats, he is ranked in both kickoff returns (22nd, 27.4) and kickoff returns (30th, 12.4). In the CFA, he ranks first and third, respectively, in the two categories.

He had a total of 178 return yards against Carroll, including 86 on two kickoffs, 52 on three punts in addition to the 40 on the fumble return. Those numbers earned him CWU's Special Teams Player-of-the-Week honors.

"Jason has been doing a nice job on returns for us," Zamberlin said.

In only his third year at CWU, Patterson and Zamberlin know there's room for improvement.

"I need to work on my cover skills in order for me to reach my full potential," Patterson said.

"It's just the little fundamental things he needs to work on," Zamberlin said. "He's been improving each game."

Once Patterson's career is finished at Central, the business administration major wouldn't mind seeing what's available for him at professional level.

"If I can't make it at the next level (National Football League), I want to do some accounting work," Patterson said.

Whether it's playing in the NFL or doing accounting, Jason Patterson plans on racking up career numbers.

By Mike Wells