

Broncos reach back in their scouting reports to claim C.J. Smith

By Mike Klis

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The Broncos will collect a few of the rookie prospects they like in this year's draft process, but there will be many more who wind up elsewhere.

That doesn't mean they can't secure them later. An example: C.J. Smith, a cornerback the Broncos claimed off waivers from the Cleveland Browns on Friday.

The Broncos liked Smith going back to his days at North Dakota State, where he was a five-year teammate of Carson Wentz (both redshirted as freshmen in 2011). While Wentz wound up the No. 2 overall draft pick of the Philadelphia Eagles in 2016, Smith joined the Eagles an undrafted free agent.

The Broncos had interest in Smith at the time, but he correctly figured he had a better chance breaking in with Philly than Denver's No Fly Zone.

Smith played 10 games for the Eagles as a rookie, mostly on special teams, then began the 2017 season on their practice squad before Cleveland picked him up. He played in the final three games of last season with the Browns, then was traded to Seattle last month for a conditional seventh-round draft pick in 2020.

The Seahawks, though, voided the trade on the claim Smith failed their physical exam even though he is believed to be healthy. When the Browns waived Smith on Thursday, the Broncos pounced on the opportunity to pick up a player they've liked for a while.

Smith and the Broncos are confident he will pass his physical Monday when players report for the start of their offseason conditioning program. Smith is expected to compete for a spot on the Broncos' 53-man roster as a No. 4 or 5 cornerback and special teams contributor.

Broncos claim CB C.J. Smith off waivers

By Ben Swanson

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A day after the Browns waived C.J. Smith, the Broncos claimed the second-year cornerback out of North Dakota State, the team announced Friday.

Smith spent most of the 2017 season in Cleveland, signing to their practice squad on Sept. 15 before being promoted to the active roster on Dec. 16. In the Browns' final three games of the season, Smith played nine defensive snaps and 23 special-teams snaps.

Prior to his time in Cleveland, Smith was a member of the Eagles. He spent the beginning of his rookie season on the practice squad before Philadelphia promoted him to the active roster in October. He played the final nine games of the season, mostly on special teams.

At North Dakota State, Smith started 43 games and was named a 2015 All-Missouri Valley Football Conference first-team selection and 2013 All-MVFC honorable-mention selection during the Bison's five-year run of consecutive FCS national championships.

