



GT Senior Offensive Lineman A.J. Smith

Not Just Another Smith

By Rod MacKenzie

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Ever since now-former Georgia Tech Defensive Line Coach Glenn Spencer first contacted [Tampa Jesuit](#) and now-Georgia Tech graduate [A.J. Smith](#), his college football career has taken many twists and turns. The 6'7", 300-pound offensive guard reflected on those times as he nears the final game of his college career.

When Coach Glenn Spencer approached [A.J. Smith](#) about coming to Tech, he was a 225-pound defensive end. Not only was Spencer his recruiting coordinator but he was to going to be his position coach. All this changed after Smith made his commitment to Tech in December of 2003. He was soon learned about the many changes that can take place in the college coaching carousel. After committing to Tech, A.J. learned that Coach Spencer was leaving to take a position along side another former GT coach, Ted Roof, on the Duke staff.

In spite of the change, Smith honored his commitment to Tech and he was introduced to his new position coach Giff Smith. Giff had joined the Georgia Tech staff after previously being at Tulane. A.J. arrived on campus weighing 240 pounds and hoping to make a contribution at defensive end. He spent his first year as a redshirt defensive end. After the final regular season game against Georgia, the next turn in the road took place. Following the Georgia game, he was called into Coach Chan Gailey's offense and was informed that he was being moved to the offensive line where he spent the rest of his days at Tech.

A.J. has suffered many injuries and illnesses during his career but has endured to the point where he's now making a big contribution on the offensive line. The one injury that almost ended his career was a dislocated elbow suffered in practice before this season. He decided to stick it out but has never completely recovered from that injury. Following his final game against LSU in the Chick-fil-A Peach Bowl, he'll be meeting with Dr. James Andrews to decide if Tommy John surgery will be necessary.

Reflecting back on his favorite moments, his first start against Notre Dame after coming back from the elbow injury and the win over Georgia were the two things that came to mind. He mentioned that it seems like yesterday that they were getting ready for the 2004 Champs Sports Bowl. The time has flown by over his five years at Georgia Tech.

On the subject of the toughest challenges he faced, A.J. mentioned B.J. Raji and Ron Brace of Boston College and Kade Weston of Georgia as the toughest. He might have another to add to that list as he prepares for an LSU defensive that he describes as very impressive. With his injury, he'll

be limited to playing the left guard position. His opposition will most likely be Ricky Jean Francois. Ricky could be another name to add to that list.

Once the final game is over, Smith will head back to Tampa to relax and make some decisions. Those decisions will hinge on whether or not he'll need surgery. On a lighter note, A.J. had a message for his dad and fellow Hiver bear1015. His dad has taken up distance running and is preparing for another marathon. His message to his dad is this... just because you're a distance runner turning 50 on New Year's Eve doesn't mean you can smoke me in the 40 as you claim. Good luck to A.J. in whatever he decides to do now that he's a Tech grad.