

GEORGIA TECH ATHLETICS

Spring Practice #3: 10 Questions With Phil Smith

Yellow Jackets practiced Friday in Flowery Branch. March 27, 2009

Written/compiled by Nikki Hughes

*As a redshirt freshman, **Phil Smith** will add much needed depth to Georgia Tech's offensive line in 2009. Known for his speed and size, the Tampa native will compete for a starting job this fall. We recently caught up with **Smith** to ask him about red-shirting, transitioning to college, and the types of things he has to do each day to prepare for the season.*

Q. You redshirted last season as a true freshman; how do you think this may have helped you and what did you learn?

A. I definitely got a lot stronger working with (Strength) Coach (Eric) Ciano. He had me and (freshman DE) Antonio Wilson doing extra workouts. Redshirting also helped me get a grasp of the offense. Coming in, I didn't really understand, but the whole extra year helped me learn the system.

Q. What will you add/bring to the 2009 offensive line?

A. I feel like whether I'm starting or whether I'm in a back-up role, I can bring a spark to the offense, whether it's giving somebody a quick breather or doing anything I can to help the team.

Q. There are many other players from your (Tampa Jesuit) high school on the team. Are you close with any of them? How have they helped or influenced you?

A. Last year **Andrew (Smith)** and **A.J. (Smith)**, who have both since graduated, were very helpful to me. I'm close with **Mike (Peterson)** and **Anthony (Allen)**. It's nice to finally play with them again. Blocking Anthony again and taking on Mike when he is playing defense is just fun.

Q. What was the hardest adjustment you had to make between high school and college?

A. Time management. You have to have everything organized. You have to be on top of everything. In high school, your parents did everything for you or they set up what you had to do. Now, eye doctor appointments, etc. - details that you have to learn to handle.

Q. Who do you look up to most on the team?

A. I would say Nick Claytor. Nick really helps me out in practice. I go to him or I go to Clyde Yandell. They are both like "the next time it happens, you should do this."

Q. What have you been working on in the off-season to prepare for spring practice and the 2009 season? Is there one thing you are focusing on more than anything else?

A. I'm actually focused on two things. I'm still focusing on getting stronger and I'm focusing on learning the playbook. I'd like to know it inside and out so I don't have to go to Nick for help, and I can go out there by myself and do what I need to do.

Q. What is your least favorite part of practice? Why?

A. We do this thing called "duck walks" with Coach (Todd) Spencer...

Q. What made you choose Georgia Tech?

A. The combination of academics and athletics. When I took my visit, (former **Tampa Jesuit** player) **A.J. Smith** was my host and it seemed like this team was really close and it seemed like they really cared about each other. I really liked that aspect.

Q. What is your daily routine like?

A. Get up. Go to mandatory breakfast. Go to a few classes. I have an hour break in between. Go to practice. Eat dinner. Go to study hall. Then I go back to my room and study a little bit more.

Q. Do you have any nicknames? Can you elaborate at all on how you received them?

A. Actually I do have a nickname. They nicknamed me "Philthy". I'm not really sure why. I think it came from Coach Spencer, because he said the way I played was Philthy. I really do not know how it came about.