

# The Star-Ledger

**Jets rookie has corner covered**

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**BY MATT BEARDMORE**

For the Star-Ledger

With a 2-7 record, a weekly merry-go-round at the quarterback position, and an injury report that reads like a "Who's Who of Jets Football," there hasn't been much to smile about for the Jets this season.

But rookie Justin Miller could only grin yesterday after practice when asked if he watched Clemson defeat 17th-ranked Florida State, 35-14, last Saturday.

"It feels real nice," said Miller, who set an NCAA record last season for the Tigers with 282 return yards, including two touchdowns, as Clemson dropped a 41-22 decision to the Seminoles.

The Jets, desperate for a victory, meet the 7-2 Broncos tomorrow in Denver. Miller, 21, gets the nod at cornerback for the second consecutive week, replacing David Barrett, who suffered a scratched eye against San Diego in Week 9.

"If I'm backing up or starting, I prepare each week the same," Miller said.

In his first career start last week against Carolina, a game the Jets lost, 30-3, Miller was credited with six tackles. According to Jets coach Herman Edwards, Miller "did a pretty good job in coverage."

"He had a good week again," Edwards said following the team's practice yesterday. "We had a plan to try and take 89 (Carolina wide receiver Steve Smith) away, and I think the whole secondary did a good job in that aspect."

With veteran cornerback Ty Law (team-leading five INTs) hounding Smith, the Jets' defense limited the Panthers' fifth-year wide receiver to three catches and 34 yards. Miller also lined up against Smith, the league leader with 937 yards receiving.

"That was my main thing, just go out there and play like I know how I'm capable of playing," said Miller, who had 13 interceptions in three seasons at Clemson, including eight in 2002.

And the Jets' secondary won't get a break tomorrow as another talented Smith, Rod, awaits the Jets' first trip to Invesco Field. Through nine games, the 35-year-old wide receiver has 47 receptions for 609 yards and four TDs -- well on his way to his eighth 1,000-yard season.

With Denver's resurgent quarterback Jake Plummer (13 TDs, three INTs) fresh off an efficient 16-of-22, 205-yard performance in the Broncos' 31-17 win against Oakland, another stiff challenge awaits.

"Each week, no matter what team you face, somebody always has a great quarterback and a good receiving corps," Miller said.

Although he's making only his second career start on defense, Miller already has made an impact for the Jets' special teams. His 35 kickoff returns for 914 yards rank him seventh in the AFC with a 26.1 return average.

"I have a great return team," said Miller, whose 30.7 career kickoff-return average at Clemson is best in ACC history and fourth highest in NCAA history. "They go out there and block and put it out on the line for me."

Miller returned seven kicks for 133 yards (19.0 avg.) last week against the Panthers, with a long of 28 yards. But his fourth-quarter fumble following a Stephen Davis touchdown run -- one of six Jets turnovers -- set up a John Kasay field goal that put Carolina up, 20-3.

"We were actually plus-two (turnover ratio) going into the game," said Edwards, whose team is winless (0-5) away from the Meadowlands this season. "Then all of a sudden we got one, and I said, 'Well, we're still plus-one,' but 13 plays later we're minus-four."

"Our problem is ... there's not a lot of room for error. You play on a thin line."