

Esks sign former Gators speedster

Kick-return specialist won two NCAA BCS championships

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The Edmonton Eskimos have signed former University of Florida speedster Brandon James to replace kick-return specialist Tristan Jackson, who was dealt to the Saskatchewan Roughriders last Friday.

The 23-year-old James was an integral part of the Gators team that won the 2007 and '09 NCAA Bowl Championship Series national titles.

During his four years in "The Swamp" from 2006-09, James was named to the all-Southeastern Conference freshman team, an all-SEC player in '08 and '09, and the SEC special teams player of the year in '09.

An owner of four SEC and 11 school return records, James ran back four punts and one kickoff for touchdowns at Florida and compiled 4,089 return yards.

Eskimos general manager Eric Tillman said in a news release that special teams are an important part of CFL games and that James can make a difference.

"With his speed and elusiveness, we believe Brandon has a chance to be an explosive talent," Tillman said.

"He was dominant in an elite conference as his record-breaking career reflects and on our bigger field, where returning punts, kickoffs and missed field goals are all a major part of winning in the Canadian Football League. We're hoping Brandon will generate an abundance of excitement and big plays."

The five-foot-seven James went undrafted by the NFL, but signed as a free agent with the Indianapolis Colts on April 30, 2010. He played three games with the Colts, and racked up 179 total return yards against the San Diego Chargers on Nov. 28.

On Thursday, the Eskimos also announced they would will host a one-day coaching clinic this Saturday for more than 100 Edmonton and area minor, high school and junior football coaches.

The clinic will focus on topics such as preparation, drills, schemes, positional alignments, fundamental principles and concepts and personal assessment, and will be held at the club's new facilities at Commonwealth Stadium.

"We have a great coaching staff and state-of-the-art facilities at our disposal and we really want to build stronger ties with the football community in and around Edmonton," Eskimos head coach Kavis Reed said in a media release.

"This is a wonderful opportunity for us to continue to build our strong relationship while doing our part in the further development of football in Alberta."

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