Hokie Freshman Has Taken Shot at the NFL

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Sports Writer

At the age of 16, Chris Cosh did something most football players won't do in their lifetime.

Come within one cut of making an NFL team.

A year later and having graduated from high school, Cosh now finds himself a member of the Virginia Tech football team. A four year starter and all state selection at Bishop McNamara in Hillcrest, Maryland, the 5-11, 220 pound linebacker attended the free agent camp for the Washington Redskins on a whim. But he was pleasantly surprised.

"I did it between my junior and senior year of high school," Cosh explained. "I went out there just to get timed in the forty. But they kept putting me through all the drills and kept making cuts and I was still there when it got down to just three guys left. They went with one of the three and it wasn't me, but I was glad to get as far as I had."

Cosh couldn't have played with the NFL team anyway due to child labor laws which would prevent him from being with the team more than so many hours a week. But the experience gained was invaluable.

"The people at the camp showed me how much I need to work on things," said Cosh. "My speed was fine, but I have to work a lot on my agility. They gave me a program to work with and I've been on it all summer."

One person who helped him through the program was another former Redskin, Manny Sistrunk, now with the Philadelphia Eagles. "I've been working hard on these things, and working out with Manny has helped a lot."

The combination of his success in four years of high school ball and his experience with the Redskins made the 220 pounder a highly sought after commodity for this coming football season. National champion Pitt, ACC champ Maryland, Villanova, North Carolina and South Carolina were all hotly pursuing Cosh in addition to Tech. But distance turned out to be the key factor.

"Maryland was too close to home," said Cosh. "But I still wanted to play in a place where my parents could still come down and watch me play. Tech's only a four and a half hour drive from home, so maybe parents can still come see me."

The distance and the coaching staffs were the contributing factors in Cosh signing a grant in aid with the Hokies.

"The coaches down here are younger and more personable," explained Cosh. "At Maryland they just seem to look down at you. Here they're really ready to help you."

Despite his time with the Redskins, Cosh doesn't seem to feel that if he works hard, the Redskins will be waiting for him at graduation. "I doubt they even know who I am," he smiled. "I had to use my brother's ID to get the tryout, so as far as they're concerned, Steve Cosh was the guy who had a good camp, not me."

Although not cocky, Cosh does possess a certain degree of confidence needed to lead a defense. He exemplified that in only the first day he was in Blacksburg.

"When I first came here the number they had for me was 55," said Cosh. "I asked if anyone had 67 because that was the number I wore in all four years of high school. Right when the manager was about to give it to me, Coach Sharpe walked in and I thought to myself, 'oh no! I'm not going to get it now. When the manager asked Sharpe about it, he told me I could have it if I produced and stopped Woodard (Texas A&M running back). I told him that he wouldn't ever get the jersey back."

Cosh will be playing behind another good linebacker, Rick Razzano, although he might be moved to the weak side. Cosh won't be complaining about playing time, as long as he can learn the things he needs to.

TECH LINEMAN CHRIS COSH

Cosh Once Almost Made the Washington Redskins