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Media Contact: Dave Popkin – (201) 939-8601

J'VONNE PARKER'S NFL JOURNEY GOES THROUGH JAG PT

J'vonne Parker's journey to a career in the National Football League has taken a detour, and JAG Physical Therapy in West Orange, New Jersey, is helping him to get back on the right path.

Parker, a resident of Newark who played for the city's West Side High School and for Rutgers University, was trying to make the team with the Denver Broncos last summer when he was injured in the squad's first stadium practice, a week before the first preseason game.



The 27-year-old Parker, a 6-foot-5, 330-pound defensive lineman, had a completely torn anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) and had one strand left on his medial cruciate ligament. He also had some cartilage damage.

"I was making an inside move and, when I planted, one of the linemen got thrown into my knee," he recalled. "It's not uncommon."

After he had surgery in Denver, the team said he could return home for physical therapy.

"If I was going to be home, I needed to find a place to get professional physical therapy," he said.

The first PT center he went to did not have the proper equipment, while the second felt to him like a nursing home. After a Google search and some personal recommendations, he arrived at JAG and began treatment under the supervision of JAG's founder and president, John Gallucci Jr.

"JAG was the place I felt I was best-served," he said, praising the readiness and professionalism of the staff and the upbeat atmosphere. "I think this is the best

PT spot in Jersey. You have regular people in here, as well as athletes, and they can cater to both of them. That impresses me.”

“Everybody’s treated the same here, whether you’re an athlete or just trying to get back to work,” Gallucci said. “It’s being able to understand the different ages and different goals.”

Gallucci and his staff are used to treating professional athletes and are well aware that the window of opportunity to make it in the NFL for someone in Parker’s position is four to seven years.

“He’s living his dream, and he doesn’t want his dream to be ended by this injury,” Gallucci said.

After following the treatment protocols for his diagnosis, the physical therapy program was individualized for Parker.

“When you get to the functional stage, you want to take into consideration the sport, the position, the motions they need to be doing,” Gallucci said. “For an NFL lineman, it’s the explosiveness, the quickness on his feet, and the spin moves.”

Three months into his therapy at JAG, Parker’s typical two-hour session consists of 10 minutes of heat, time on a stationary bike – he’s now up to 30 minutes after starting at 10 -- 30 minutes on an elliptical machine, some massage, leg presses on another machine, step-ups, balancing drills and some running.

“I’m right on schedule,” Parker said. “The doctor said I was ahead of schedule. I’m just trying to get me knee back to at least 90 percent so I can get back to camp and see what I can do.”

His goal is to be ready for the Broncos’ training camp in June. As an undrafted free agent, he knows it will be a dogfight to make the team.

“Now there are guys who have a leg up on me,” he said. “Last year they had high expectations for me and I got hurt. I’m trying to get a contract, not for millions, just a little contract.

“They say defensive linemen get better with age. Let’s hope they’re right.”

A comprehensive orthopedic physical therapy provider with centers in West Orange and Warren, New Jersey, and soon in Hackensack, JAG Physical Therapy is New Jersey’s leader in rehabilitating foot, ankle, knee, hip, shoulder, elbow, back and related injuries, offering caring and experienced physical therapists and athletic trainers, and state-of-the-art rehabilitation equipment that can help you “get back in the game.”

JAG provides care for workers' compensation cases, Medicare patients and general orthopedic and soft tissue injuries.

For more information, go online at jagpt.com or call (973) 669-0078.

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