

SPORTS



◀ ▶
previous next

October 26, 2001

page 28 of 31

Home
News
Opinions
Focus
Entertainment
Sports
Table of Contents
PDF Newspaper

Archives
About Us
Staff
Colophon
Advertising Info
Subscription Info
Links

Search

Tech's most exciting player? It might be 5'7" Kelley Rhino

Rhino, who averages 10.5 yards-per-punt return, reminds many of the Falcons' small and speedy Tim Dwight

By [David Rottmann](#)

Contributing Writer
ATLANTA
October 26, 2001

Tough. It's the word that instantly comes to mind when talking about Kelley Rhino, the Georgia Tech punt return specialist. Rhino looks tough-and plays tougher. This hard-nosed style of play has made Rhino a fan favorite.

America loves the underdog. And Rhino fits that description. What he lacks in size, speed, and flash, he makes up for in pure heart.

Rhino's toughness, pedigree, and intelligence on the field, has made him one of the most exciting punt-returners in the ACC. Rhino is currently averaging 10.5 yards-per-return this season. Rhino, who held off several Jackets for punt return duties including star wide receiver Kelly Campbell



By Daniel Uhlig / STUDENT PUBLICATIONS

Punt Returner and backup cornerback Kelley Rhino looks for yardage against Syracuse in the Kickoff Classic. Rhino, a Marist High graduate, has become a fan favorite because he rarely calls for fair catches and is usually in on several tackles a game on special teams.

and upstart wideout Jonathan Smith, has done a good job for a first-year punt returner.

Kelley Rhino is an Atlanta area native. Born in Marietta, Rhino moved to Sandy Springs when he was eight. Rhino played high school football at Marist School in Smyrna.

Rhino's toughness on the field comes from the years of competition with his older brother.

"He never let up when we were playing," said Rhino. "He always used to beat me up out there."

Rhino has a very impressive pedigree at Tech as well. His grandfather Chappell Rhino lettered in football from 1950 through 1952. His father Randy Rhino is Tech's only three-time first-team All-America as a defensive back from 1972 to 1974. His uncle Danny Rhino followed up by lettering in 1974 and starting as cornerback in 1975 and 1976.

Rhino's All-American father coached him throughout his life. That constant coaching has resulted in Rhino becoming a smarter player. Randy Rhino to this day coaches Rhino to help him to be a better player.

Rhino's hard-nosed and exciting style of play has made him a fan favorite, especially with the students. Chants of "Rhino, Rhino" ring throughout Bobby Dodd stadium each time he is back to return a punt.

"I really get a thrill when people are just chanting my name," said Rhino. "It's a great feeling."

Rhino, as to why the fans have taken such a liking to him, added, "I am an overachiever like Doug Flutie and Tim Dwight. People cheer for those players. I know I do."

Rhino cites his ambition as the reason Tech fans have taken such a liking to him.

"Balancing school with football is tough. Football is

pretty much a full-time job." Said Rhino. "But it's all worth it."

With all his success, Rhino has not forgotten how he got to Georgia Tech. Rhino credits his faith as the main factor in him getting the opportunity to play football at Bobby Dodd.

"My strength comes from the 'Big Man Upstairs'," said Rhino. "I know that I would not be here right now without my faith."

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