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ULM Media Days: James Truxillo Interview

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ULM senior James Truxillo always found joy around the football field. But sidelined with a season-ending knee injury two games into the 2009 campaign, the 6-2, 209-pound safety had those feelings muted as he was reduced from playmaker to spectator.

“The tough part about it was watching my team play without me,” Truxillo said this week while representing ULM during Sun Belt Conference Media

Days. “I didn’t have any problem with the rehabilitation process. I did it twice a day for six months.

“After sitting out last season, I’m just so excited about this season. I’m ready to play.” Truxillo’s return is big for ULM. The Warhawks absorbed a major blow in Week Two last year at Arkansas when Truxillo suffered a torn anterior cruciate ligament.

A product of Jesuit High School, Truxillo was a team captain and bone-rattling member of the defense. He was anticipating further improvement over a sophomore year that saw him finish third on the team with 68 tackles, with two interceptions.

Truxillo’s absence played a significant role in the defense’s struggles. ULM coach Charlie Weatherbie has said that the Warhawks would have won two or three more games with him in the lineup.

As it was, ULM walked a fine line between winning and losing a number of games last year, with a team-wide rash of injuries contributing to the 4-8 finish.

Asked to describe what he brings back to the field, Truxillo said, “I think they’ll have a sure tackler on defense, somebody that you know knows what they’re doing and they’re going to know their assignment. You know it’s somebody who’s going to play their butts off the whole game, and a competitor.”

Beyond his comeback, Truxillo is also motivated by ULM’s philosophical changes away from the 4-2-5 base defense. First-year defensive coordinator Troy Reffett is implementing a 3-3-5 scheme designed to bring the heat.

“Coach Reffett put that in this spring and it fits our team better than it did last year,” said Truxillo, who’ll man the ‘Hawk’ position. “This year, we don’t have as much depth at the d-line position. We’ll be able to fit our personnel better. We’ve got plenty of depth at linebacker, and plenty of depth at the safety and corner positions. We’re happy. It’s more of a pin-your-ears-back and get-after-it defense.”

Asked how he fits into the scheme, Truxillo said, “There are certain defenses where I’ll be down in the box supporting the run, and certain defenses where I’m back deep as a free player. We’ve got plenty of depth at the safety position and we’re pretty confident going into this season.”

Truxillo was held out of contact in spring practice but has been an active off-season program participant. “I lead by example,” Truxillo said, explaining his role. “Having everybody ready to go all out and not just going through the motions, getting everybody to work hard at practice and weights, and staying on top of everybody.”