

By Scott Kindberg
The Post-Journal
April 30, 1987

Conlan Won't Watch From The Sidelines

ORCHARD PARK - One day after celebrating the biggest day of his athletic life, Shane Conlan learned Wednesday afternoon that the Buffalo Bills don't intend for him to learn by watching.

"We're going to bring him in and line him up at a starting position," Bills' coach Marv Levy told a gathering of reporters at Rich Stadium.

And that idea suits the Frewsburg native - the Bills' number one choice in Tuesday's National Football League draft - just fine.

"I'm very happy and thrilled," Conlan said shortly after getting a look at his Bills' jersey (No. 58 for those keeping score at home). "The opportunity is there. I have to produce."

Production has never been a serious problem for the All-American outside linebacker.

"Shane jumped out at me," Levy said. "The fact he played every down with great intensity. The more we found out about him as a person and with his football temperament, we were very impressed. We felt he was an outstanding athlete with excellent speed and other qualities for a person his size."

High praise, particularly for someone who would rather melt into a crowd than have his virtues trumpeted for all to hear and read.

"I just hope I can contribute to the Buffalo Bills," Conlan said. "In what way, it's up to them. I'll just give it everything I've got."

That's one of his favorite lines. He uses it almost as many times as he makes bone-jarring tackles. But don't doubt his sincerity.

"I'm thrilled just to be here," said Conlan, who made his last appearance at Rich Stadium in 1981 when the Frewsburg Bears lost to Albion 49-14 in the Section 6 Football Federation Playoffs. He made this appearance accompanied by his parents, Dan and Kay Conlan; his brother, Kevin; his sister, Kelly Berg; and her husband, Rick Berg; and their sons, Chris and Eric. "I'm honored to be a Buffalo Bill. I'm just going to go out and give 120 percent."

Conlan admitted that he needed to work on his pass rush.

"I fly in there and try and hit everyone instead of going around them," he said. "I was able to do it a little bit in college, but there's no way I can do it here."

But in the pros, he figures to be at one position rather than floating around to various spots as he did at Penn State.

"I think my role will change," he said. "At school I played a little bit of this, a little bit of that. I think I'll be more of a one-position man. I'm kind of looking forward to that because I think I can just concentrate on that area and try to be good at it."

And outside linebackers were a crying need for the Bills, who are coming off a 4-12 season.

"We were a weak defense," Levy said. "We feel we've tried to pinpoint specifically what our needs are, particularly at the very early stages of the draft."

Conlan figures to join Lucius Sanford, Darryl Talley and maybe Eugene Marve on the outside, but Levy wouldn't speculate which Bills' veteran will join Conlan on the first team.

"We're not ready to give you our whole starting lineup right now," Levy said. "That's broadening the question a little bit more than I'm ready to answer."

Conlan didn't dodge any questions or appear uncomfortable, although he did admit to being a little nervous.

"It (media attention) doesn't really bother me," he said. "I've gotten used to it. I can remember at first I was so shy...I'm better now, but I still don't like it...I don't like a big fuss about everything."

But would he like to be considered the Jim Kelly of the defense, a player that can solidify an erratic unit with propensity to wilt in the later stages of games?

"Geez, I hope," Conlan said with a smile. "But I don't know if they will or not."

"I just want to play each game better than the one before. I want to get better every game."