



FROM WALK-ON TO THE PRO BOWL

Atlanta Falcons defensive end **PATRICK KEARNEY** never thought he'd end up in the 2005 Pro Bowl, let alone the NFL. The 6-5, 275-pounder did not follow the conventional track to the NFL. He walked on to the University of Virginia football team in 1996 after being recruited for lacrosse.

"I wanted to be the backup defensive end by my redshirt junior year," says Kearney. But he showed too much talent on the football field to continue with lacrosse. After walking on to the UVA squad and shining against his recruited teammates, Kearney has been a force on the Falcons' defensive line since his rookie season in 1999, recording three seasons with more than 10 sacks and making his first Pro Bowl appearance last February.

Kearney, though, isn't the only NFL player to shine without being recruited to college. There are currently more than 20 players in the league who were not offered college scholarships and walked on to their school's team.

Walk-on players face an uphill battle and aren't always noticed for their numbers in college. Tennessee Titans wide receiver **DREW BENNETT** walked on to UCLA's squad as a quarterback and wide receiver. His numbers in college at both positions weren't gaudy, but the Titans were interested in his size (6-5) and leaping ability (Bennett won a slam dunk contest while in school).

"You give him a basketball, he will shock you," says Titans General Manager **FLOYD REESE**. "You give him a volleyball, he will shock you. So we said we'll bring him and beat him up a little and see what happens."

Bennett enjoyed a breakout season in 2004—his fourth year with Tennessee. He caught 80 passes for 1,247 yards and five touchdowns. His 233-yard performance against Kansas City on December 13 was the single-game high for NFL receivers in 2004.

Players who walked on at college—all the way to the NFL:

FROM WALK-ON TO THE NFL

Player	Team	College	Player	Team	College
Yeremiah Bell	Miami	Eastern Kentucky	Nick Hardwick	San Diego	Purdue
Drew Bennett	Tennessee	UCLA	Clinton Hart	San Diego	Central Florida CC
Jeff Chandler	Washington	Florida	Rod Hood	Philadelphia	Auburn
Sean Considine	Philadelphia	Iowa	Reggie Howard	Miami	Memphis
Wesley Duke	Denver	Mercer	Michael Jennings	NY Giants	Florida State
London Fletcher	Buffalo	John Carroll (Div. III)	Greg Lewis	Philadelphia	Illinois
Brock Forsey	Washington	Boise State	Jerrell Pippens	Chicago	Nebraska
Scott Fujita	Kansas City	California	Chester Pitts	Houston	San Diego State
Rich Gardner	Tennessee	Penn State	Mark Tauscher	Green Bay	Wisconsin
Andy Groom	Washington	Ohio State	Cory Withrow	Minnesota	Washington State



BROKEN HAND? USE THE OTHER ONE & KEEP SNAPPING & STARTING

Can't snap with your broken right hand? That was no problem for **KEVIN MAWAE** of the New York Jets last season. The Pro Bowl center learned, quickly, to snap with his left hand for several games!

"That's got to be up there with something pretty special," said Jets head coach **HERMAN EDWARDS**.

Quarterback **CHAD PENNINGTON** also was impressed.

"That's pretty amazing what he did," said Pennington. "He shows up every Sunday. It doesn't matter the situation. It's unbelievable to see a guy out there with one hand, and it's not even his dominant hand, snapping the football, blocking, running out on the edge."

Mawae has started 171 games in a row and ranks third among active players behind **BRETT FAVRE** (205) and **WILL SHIELDS** (191) for the most consecutive starts in the NFL.

"I'm just out there having fun," says Mawae. "I play with intensity, and I play nonstop. When you love the game so much, unless you're just absolutely injured, then there's nothing that can stop you from playing. I've got to be maimed and not able to walk to not be on the football field.

"Guys rely on me. Guys know that I'm here every week. You see a guy like Brett Favre, and with somebody like that, your team can count on you and you take a lot of pride in that."

Following are the players with the longest active consecutive-start streaks:

PLAYER	TEAM	POSITION	CONSECUTIVE STARTS
Brett Favre	Green Bay	Quarterback	205
Will Shields	Kansas City	Guard	191
Kevin Mawae	New York Jets	Center	171
Derrick Brooks	Tampa Bay	Linebacker	144
Jon Runyan	Philadelphia	Tackle	128

