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An Interview With:

LOFA TATUPU

Q. What were you doing chasing wide receivers 30 yards down the field last week?

LOFA TATUPU: It was cover two, which calls for me to go deep in the middle. And as luck would have it, they sent a receiver. They saw me dropping deep and sent one up the seam and I went over top of the player as best I could.

Q. You've been through some good games at USC. Talk about the atmosphere and how your preparation might be the same or maybe it's different for college and pro games like this.

LOFA TATUPU: Yeah, USC, they prepared me for games of this magnitude. Without a doubt, it's one of the biggest games, but you have to treat it just like another game, otherwise you get outside yourself and mistakes get made. We're looking to come out with the same intensity and being at home in front of the 12th Man, just loving it.

Q. Talk about what it's been like to make the transition from college to the NFL so quickly with all responsibilities that go along with being a middle linebacker.

LOFA TATUPU: I just try to take it in stride. My teammates have been instrumental in the success of all the rookies, not just myself and I kind of lean on them as to how to approach the game, how to study the game, and just how to go about work, essentially. This is work for us. You can't tell because we're having fun, but it's still work.

Q. How are the calls different for you and how much more responsibility do you have as opposed to what you had at USC?

LOFA TATUPU: At USC, we pretty much lined up and played ball. The coach didn't put too much on me as far as making the calls, and now

here the terminology is so much more different, as opposed to having things coded so everybody knows what to do. You have to almost instruct people what to do. It calls for a lot, but you just have to do the best you can and make it work.

Q. What are the differences? Last week you guys played a team that likes to control the ball. What are the different challenges that Carolina presents?

LOFA TATUPU: They have a passing game and they can run the ball. They're not going to go away from the run. The head coach loves to run the ball and that opens up the pass. And in some situations you have **Steve Smith** opening up the run game for them just by causing so much attention. Then just taking the ball on the reverse and running, as well. We've got our hands full and we know that. But we're working hard and hope to come out on top.

Q. A lot of times this year we've seen with the Panthers, when teams move a safety back and do an over/under coverage thing on him, a lot of times he's open for those slants and stuff which would end up being in your area of the field. Do you see that on tape much and how do you defend against it?

LOFA TATUPU: He hurts you with the deep ball, but when it goes down to those shoulder and the immediate routes, he has no problem. Like I said, we have our work cut out for us. And we have to just play the coverage as best we can. They've got a lot of guys out there that are going to hurt you too. You have to play the best you can.

Q. What you've seen on films of Nick Goings so far, what's your impressions of him? Are they a different team running the ball than with Goings rather than DeShaun Foster?

LOFA TATUPU: No, they stick with the same runs. They have a complex running game and they tend to get a lot of people out of position with their tight ends and H Back and just a complex scheme.

Goings is a terrific back. He does it all. He can catch the ball in the backfield, but he's very patient with his reads. But once he sees the hole

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he hits it 100 miles per hour. I don't see too much difference between them. **DeShaun Foster** is an excellent back, but they're not missing anything with **Goings**.