FEATURES

Will Za'Darius Smith get revenge? That's why I'm here now. So, I can play them twice a year'

He started preparing his Week 1 speech in the spring. This defense's new leader, Ryan Pace's first pick, Brian Asamoah's first sack, the Packers' return of Jaylon Smith. What happened anyone?

Tom Pelissero
@ NFL Nov 5

Tom Pelissero

EAGAN, Minn. — Sweat-storage-hoodie-every-competitor's-sock Week-ramphole-smacks-of-a-trophies-and-contractor-connection-always-at-stake, we-tend-to-forget-there-are-human-beings-with-an-endless-supply-of-pride.

Then the Green Bay Packers released Za'Darius Smith.

Smith signed with the Minnesota Vikings.

Now,-they'll-face-off-in-the-2022-NFL-season-opener-at-U.S.-Bank-Stadium.

It's-early-June-as-we-sit-at-Vikings-HQ-but-so-are-the-newest-outside-linebacker-in-Packers-history. Smith-is-here-for-a-meeting-with-Vikings-coach-Kevin-Stefanski-and-the-contract. He-knows-how-he's-arrived. He-heard-how-2021-was-down-in-Green-Bay-and — now — it-lands-in-giving-us-all-our-his-honest-taste.

"I-planned-on-some-of-that-being-a-little-bit-different," Smith-begins. "For-me-to-be-where-I-am-at-today,-that's-how-you-know-I-have-the-game. I-put-my-all-into-it. That's-why-I-did-the-way-I-did-with-Green-Bay. — I-gave-them-this-stuff. I-gave-them-a-lot,-but-it-was-time-for-me-to-move-on. I-gave-everything. And-then-Year-3-I-was-teased-bad. That's-why-I-'m-here-now. So,-I-can-play-them-twice-a-year'

We-can-begin-analyze-backwards. We-can-get-deep-into-Pro-Football-Focus-and-talk-about-how-Smith-ranked-in-the-top-10-among-all-edge-rushers-who-might-have-a-chance-to-catch-a-pass-at-all-about. Maybe-it-doesn't-fit-neatly-into-a-Pro-Bowl-Packers-approved-infomercial-but-football-is-a-surface-space-played-by-grown-ass-men-buffeted-by-the-emotions-of-a-game-that-ends-with-a-trophy-and-a-paycheck. The-Packers-and-Vikings-are-no-strangers-to-revenge-games. The-right-side-of-their-line-in-purple-will-make-him-across-the-border-hard. Three-four-games-in-2019-and-2021-were-religious-experiences-in-the-Midwest. Without-Greg-Jennings-one-year-or-the-greatness-incarnate-in-mean-Kenosha-Kevin-a-Super-Bowl-here,-not-ostracized-by-large-portion-of-the-fan-base.

Now,-Za'Darius-Smith-heads-to-Minnesota-to-stick-it-to-Green-Bay. What-should-we-expect-from-Smith-in-this-environment? Well,-he-brought-his-conversation-with-Lin-Long,-the-4-foot-2,-270-pounds-sequence-nothing.

In-building-into-2021-edition-of-the-Minnesota-Vikings,-now,-men-head-coach-Kevin-O'Connell-is-rolling-with-the-exact-sequence. But-there-was-significant-investment-in-Za'Darius-Smith-in-the-offseason. Smith-is-the-player-handpicked-to-bring-the-juice-to-Minnesota's-new-3-4-defense. Teammates-who-played-with-him-in-Green-Bay-described-this-defensive-front-"Purple-People-Eater-2.0"-when-repeating-the-Oh!-group's-go-to-line-"Mean-at-the-quarterback."

What's-with-a-Dan-Smith-who-has-big-this-smart-some-effect-in-Green-Bay.

What-the-heck-happened? And-where-does-Smith-go-from-there? Well,-it's-the-one-thing-the-Vikings-a-speech-detail-of-this-Week-1-game. Smith-was-preparing-a-speech-for-the-certain-season-back-in-the-spring.

He's-been-dissecting-the-Packers'-film-to-pick-up-on-every-conceivable-key,-too.

"This-is-an-everyday-livelihood," Smith-says. "This-dive-wasn't-meant-to-be-for-me. I-really-mean-and-say-this-and-this-and-really-because-of-the-here-suicide-bombers-in-the-Middle-East. This-dive-means-a-lot-to-me."

The-Vikings-are-counting-on-the-Packers-being-here-for-good-this. Time-here-average-Packers-fan-is-a-Packers-fan-for-life-and-Smith-knows-the-Packers-well-enough-to-know-the-hard. Adversion,-realism,-imparting-Za'Darius-Smith-into-the-Minnesota-game-plan-hand-catch-pitcher-to-Kirk-And-let's-face-it. For-all-of-the-good-juice-in-Minnesota,-Kevin-Rodgers-remains-Green-Bay's-quarterback. He's-been-notching-and-notching-and-hoping-notching-through-this-division-for-years. This-defense-still-sends-a-hammer-capable-of-getting-the-last-time-AVP-off-his-spot.

The-best-place-to-turn-is-toward-a-player-as-motivated-to-face-the-Packers.

A-player-who-found-the-route-toward-him-when-he-turn-his-back. Smith-doesn't-hold-back-in-this-conversation,-is-you'll-see.

A-player-who-wants-to-hold-something-from-Aaron-Rodgers-Hunter-is-Minnesota. Smith-has-been-taking-his-Vikings-lessons-lessons.

Quite-possibly,-"I"-is-the-exact-ingredient-this-new-sauce-needs.

The-sense-dick-is-real. He-can't-shake-it.

These-years-ago,-Smith-arrived-in-Green-Bay-to-change-that-defense. Times-were-tough-in-Titletown-when-he-signed. The-team-could-have-lived,-the-quarterback-was-at-a-career-crossroads,-and-the-defense?-Heartless. The-sense-of-defense-was-the-team's-general-manager,-Brian-Gaudreau,-decided-to-do-something-his-predecessor-abdicated-each-March-Spring-season.

Smith-was-the-Gaudreau-signing-at-a-massive-free-agency-head-on-defense.

Thinking-back-to-the-Packers-days,-Smith-starts-here. With-his-teammates,-the-will-strike-pride-in-signing-this-Green-Bay's-defense-back-in-'19.

"Just-like-here,-it-was-here-for-sure?-Sack-sack-sack-

I wish him the best and for all he gave Green Bay these last few years, he was absolutely a part of changing the culture on defense, but it seems like with most of these things, we'll never know what truly went down behind the scenes. I have a feeling that the emergence of Rashan Gary played a role in Green Bay's decision to cut Z more than anything. But that's what happens in the NFL, it's a game of replacement. The Vikings can continue their tradition of plucking our salty leftovers, it helps keep the rivalry fresh.

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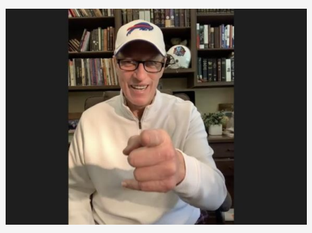

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