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Paterson the punter

By James Hooper | March 30, 2008 12:00am



Punting whiz ... Corey Paterson has been identified by NFL scouts. / The Sunday Telegraph

THE Newcastle Knights' boom young forward Cory Paterson has been identified by Australian NFL talent scouts as a potential punt kicking star in the lucrative world of American football. Paterson can place kick the ball 70m on the fly and make a spiral bomb come down with frost on it.

Spotted showcasing his kicking talents in a Newcastle trial against Cessnock last month, Paterson was approached by Ozpunt NFL talent scout agency to film a highlights reel for screening in the US.

Taped at EnergyAustralia Stadium a fortnight ago, the footage will be sent to the Denver Broncos and New York Jets for analysis.

"My Dad taught me when I was real young so I've kicked all my life, I like having a kick," Paterson said.

"I played a bit of AFL mucking around at school and stuff so that might have helped. But I never played competition, I always played league.

"I'd have to weigh up the options if the NFL thing goes further. I'm contracted to the Knights until the end of next season. If it comes off I'd obviously have a look at it.

"They were just watching me do some kick-offs one day and then I just got a phone call off them."

The NFL talent scout who spotted Paterson, Ozpunt's Paul Shepherd, rates the Newcastle forward as "a cut above" American football standard.

Shepherd predicted the NFL would soon become inundated with Australian punt kickers due to the wealth of talent here.

"Cory's definitely got what it takes to cut it in the NFL - he's kicking above NFL standard at the moment

but his technique just needs some work," Shepherd said.

"Australians are the flavour of the month over there right now. I don't see why of the 32 clubs that are in the States we can't have 80 per cent of the kickers being Australians over the coming years.

"We've even had some of the coaches say to us 'the way you guys kick and punt is going to change the way we coach people to kick in the NFL'."

Australian punters in the US are big business, with Dallas Cowboys superstar Mat McBriar, regarded as the best in the NFL, on \$2million a year.

Retired AFL player Darren Bennett pioneered Australian punt kickers in the NFL, establishing himself as a star for the San Diego Chargers throughout the 1990s.

Other retired AFL stars who have made it in the US market include Ben Graham, who signed a \$6million six-year contract with the New York Jets in May 2006, and Sav Rocca, brother of Collingwood star Anthony Rocca.

Born in Western Australia before moving around because his father was in the army, Paterson can place kick the ball further than any other Knights player.

Testing done by Oztag revealed his "hang time" with an NFL ball was the equal of other punt kickers in the US. But his only drop kick in an NRL match wasn't exactly out of the Nathan Cayless play book.

As Channel Nine commentator Ray Warren called it last Friday night against the Eels: "Well, he's pulled out the sand wedge instead of the seven iron."

Paterson's reply? "I should have got the driver out."

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