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Local Rookie Leonard Johnson Makes Bucs Roster

Leonard Johnson, CB #29

Height: 5'10"

Weight: 202

Age: 22

Hometown: Clearwater, FL

College: Iowa State

Experience: Rookie

Leonard Johnson achieved the dream of his lifetime this May when he was signed with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers as an undrafted free agent. The 22-year-old native of Clearwater, Fla. began his football career as a breakout star at Largo High, where he played as the team's quarterback. During Johnson's senior year at Largo High, he passed for 911 yards with 12 touchdowns and rushed for 958 yards with nine touchdowns.

Johnson went on to sign with Iowa State as a cornerback, starting 43 of 50 games. He started five games at cornerback as a true freshman, making 47 tackles, two interceptions and recovering three fumbles, ending his career with Iowa playing 39 games in a row.

But this gifted rookie isn't only about football—he's also very involved in the community. In August of 2011, Johnson and his mother, a sheriff's deputy, started the College Connect football camp in Johnson's childhood neighborhood of North Greenwood. The camp aims to mentor young members of the troubled community and is considered by Johnson himself to be one of his biggest accomplishments. The new cornerback has also worked with learning disabled students at Clearwater's Sandy Lane Elementary. This year, as a Buc, Johnson will be taking part in the ground breaking of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers field in his old neighborhood—a true illustration of coming full circle.

During training camp and preseason games, Coach Schiano was impressed by Johnson's performance and said that he can help the Bucs win. At training camp, he made some impressive plays—one of the best being a play in which he came out of nowhere to intercept second string quarterback Dan Orlovsky during camp. In week three of preseason games, Johnson got the start. In his first play, he teamed up with Mark Barron to prevent Patriots running back Stevan Ridley from gaining any yards. In that same game, he was also called for pass interference against wide

receiver Brandon Lloyd. Even Johnson himself has admitted that he did not make every play. He just needed the opportunity, and when that opportunity presented itself he took full advantage.

Another reason Johnson has gotten the opportunity to shine here in Tampa is due to the injured E.J. Biggers. On the first day of training camp, Biggers and Arrelious Benn collided, breaking Biggers' left foot and spraining Benn's right knee. Neither have played a day since, but both made the 53-man roster.

This aligning of the stars for Johnson by no means takes away from his true talent and hard work, which is the real reason he made the team. With Coach Schiano not sure of who the kickoff and punt returner is going to be yet, this is one spot Johnson could be utilized. He was a kickoff returner in college, returning an average 26.4 yards per carry. Schiano is big on defense, hard play, and making big plays, and Johnson plays hard and his ready to help the team succeed.