

TOUB MIXING IN RIGHT INGREDIENTS

BY **GENE CHAMBERLAIN**
STAFF WRITER
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LAKE FOREST — Since the Bears signed special teams ace and defensive back Dante Wesley in free agency, linebacker/special teams captain Brendon Ayanbadejo has noticed a change come over special teams coach Dave Toub.

Toub has become a bit like a mad scientist.

"This year, his eyes are always lit up and he's always scheming," Ayanbadejo said.

The Bears have loaded up with players on special teams since Lovie Smith became head coach, and they believe the personnel are in place to dominate this aspect of the game.

"He's got all the players and he can do what he wants to do now," Ayanbadejo said. "He just seems so much more excited. He was excited last year, but was always more worried, a bit cautious.

"This year, there's scheme, upon scheme, upon scheme. He's saying 'this is going to work against this team, this will work against that team.' He's got all the ideas lined up so I can't wait for him to implement them and for us to go out there and execute them."

Signing former Seahawk Alex Bannister was big, although he missed preseason with a hamstring pull.

"Bannister, he's another level," Toub said. "He's a Pro Bowl special teamer."

Wesley was another key signing.

"He was unblockable when we played Carolina in the playoffs," Toub said.

Ayanbadejo has watched Wesley on coverage teams and his summation: "He is pretty much unblockable."

Ayanbadejo thinks special teams players are born more than they're made.

"You're just a certain breed," he said. "You have to have the ability and then the desire to get down there and make something happen.

"I feel that I'm the same way. If you look on the film, you rarely see me getting blocked, you rarely see Dante getting blocked, you rarely see (linebacker) Leon Joe getting blocked."

Wesley calls his special teams skills more a combination of genetics mixed with training.



"Mainly man, it's aggressiveness that I had been taught at Carolina," he said. "I had been behind some of the great special teams guys down there. It was Karl Hankton and Jarrod Cooper who first got me going on this. I was just watching the way they do things. It's really attitude. You have to be willing to get out there and sacrifice yourself because it's like one special teams play can be equal to almost four defensive plays.

"It's almost like a renegade mentality that you have to have, being willing to go out there and lay it all out on the line. Hankton and Cooper, those guys were relentless. They were feared special teams guys. I always watched them, how they played and how they prepared for games, the things they do."

Wesley played behind Cooper and soaked up every move he made before Cooper went to Oakland. He had to learn that way.

"I never really did it in college," he said. "I never knew too much about it. They woke me up to it when I was down there in Carolina.

"We emphasized special teams in Carolina and tried to be the best at it. I see the same thing here."

The Bears weren't bad before adding to their arsenal. They finished second in average kickoff yards allowed (19.9) to Atlanta.

Bears Notebook

Bears Special Teams