



Bills' Posluszny looks forward to restarting NFL career



By Vic Carucci | NFL.com
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ORCHARD PARK, N.Y. -- Two nasty, six-inch, purple scars tell the story of the nightmare that was Paul Posluszny's rookie season in the NFL. They run vertically along the top and bottom of his left arm, extending from just below the elbow to just above the wrist.

They are reminders of an ending that came, for all intents and purposes, before there was even a beginning.

"It was the toughest thing I've ever had to go through athletically," the Buffalo Bills' middle linebacker said of breaking both bones in his left arm during the third game of the 2007 season.

Unless someone asks about it, Posluszny doesn't give his left arm a second thought anymore. As far as Posluszny is concerned, there's no difference between it and his right arm ... except for the fact that it contains two metal plates and eight screws used to surgically reattach the bones.

Although he has not been exposed to any football contact since suffering the injury early in the Bills' Sept. 23 loss to the New England Patriots, he has long been cleared to fully participate in all activity. During offseason drills, including the Bills' recent minicamp, Posluszny has shown excellent quickness and explosiveness. He also has displayed a good grasp of a defensive scheme in which he barely got to play in last year. One day he was seen blowing past the center while rushing up the middle. The next he was making a one-handed interception of a Trent Edwards pass in the red zone.

The coaches couldn't be happier watching Posluszny -- who has added muscle to his 6-foot-1, 240-pound frame -- in action.

"I knew that he was going to come back bigger, stronger, better, and we were going to be better for it," defensive coordinator Perry Fewell said. "He's so much more (knowledgeable) now than he was, it's unbelievable."

Among the Bills' biggest offseason priorities is to improve a defense that ranked second-to-last in the league and 25th against the run. They set out to get larger and stronger, and took some important steps in that direction by acquiring behemoth defensive tackle Marcus Stroud in a trade with the Jacksonville Jaguars and signing a pair of brawny free agents -- defensive tackle Spencer Johnson from the Minnesota Vikings and linebacker Kawika Mitchell from the New York Giants.

Another way the Bills are beefing up their defensive front is having a healthy Posluszny back in the lineup.

"We still have a lot of speed on defense," Posluszny said. "But now we've got some bigger guys that will really, really help us stopping the run."

Posluszny is ready to make a strong contribution, just as he was a year ago. But the thought of missing virtually his entire rookie year is still a little difficult for him to process. He had been injured before; he just had never missed a whole season.

At first, the former Penn State standout couldn't accept the idea that he wasn't able to make the enormous impact he was expected to make after the Bills traded up to select him in the second round. In Posluszny's eyes, he had let down the team, his coaches, his teammates, the fans, and everyone else connected with the Bills.

"I was just frustrated because I wanted to play so bad," he said. "I wanted to come in and start and do the best job I could at middle linebacker. They traded up for me in the draft, brought me here to play middle linebacker, play right away, and then I kind of failed them. I got hurt and wasn't able to live up to the expectations of what I was supposed to do, so that was just tough to deal with."

Posluszny was able to ease some of the frustration by immersing himself in the preparation for all of the remaining games, even though he wouldn't be playing in them. He attended every meeting, studied every game plan, and watched all of the videotape he could of the Bills' defense and their opponents.

Posluszny lived vicariously through his replacement, John DiGiorgio, who did a nice job but didn't exactly make anyone forget about Buffalo's second-round pick who remained highly visible throughout the season by appearing in local television commercials and print ads for cable TV service. "I watched John go through all the plays and just kind of experienced it through him just by watching what was going on on the field," Posluszny said. "That really helped out."

Not that he was the only member of the team who ended up watching rather than playing in '07. The Bills finished the season with more players on injured reserve -- 17 -- than any team in the league. Most of those players were from the defense.

Now they'll be getting many of those bodies back on the field.

"We had so many injuries at so many different spots, but the guys we had in there, everyone fought hard all year long and did the best we could with what we had," Posluszny said. "Now, with some of the new guys that we've got (and) guys back healthy again, we just feel with another year in the system and being more comfortable with everything, we'll be ready to go."

No one could be more ready than Posluszny.