



DT Randy Starks

By **Alain Poupart**
Associate Editor
Posted Sep 30, 2008

Much has been made of last week's comments by GM Jeff Ireland regarding wide receiver Ernest Wilford and how he admitted to being disappointed in the work of one of the team's free agent acquisitions. Clearly, the Wilford signing hasn't panned out yet, but there has been one signing -- a much less publicized signing -- that's worked out great so far.

That would be defensive end [Randy Starks](#), who has been absolutely superb in limited action so far this season.

Starks came up with one of the biggest defensive plays of the game in the victory over New England when he picked off [Matt Cassel](#) inside the Dolphins 20-yard line at a time when the game was scoreless.

He also had a sack in the loss at Arizona, and his season totals also include two passes defensed. That's pretty good work for a guy, whose signing went a bit under the radar.

Starks entered the NFL as a third-round pick of the Tennessee Titans in 2004 and he started 36 of the 60 games he played for them before signing with the Dolphins as a free agent.

But he had no experience in a 3-4 defense before coming to Miami, and there obviously was an adjustment period.

"When you're playing in the 4-3 and you're a big guy the way Randy was in a 4-3 — when I say, 'big guy,' meaning you're one of those one-techniques or those three-techniques. Then all of a sudden you come into this defense and we put you out in space out there and tell you, 'Hey, you're a five-technique or you're a four-technique,' that takes a little bit longer. The blocks are coming at you a little bit different. It isn't this 'phone booth' block that's happening in here with the center and the guard, it's this tackle thing that's going maybe even with the tight end sometimes. Sometimes you're getting it with the guard inside. The recognition of blocks and those type of things and how to handle some two-gap situations from there, the movement things I think were probably a little bit different for Randy.

"Then all of a sudden the guy has really just come on. One thing to Randy's credit is that he's gotten in much better physical shape right now as we've got going on here. He's a guy that has a pretty high play count right now, meaning he can play a good amount of plays during the course of the game and I still think can give you a pretty good effort."

Rookie [Kendall Langford](#) and veteran [Vonnie Holliday](#) have been starting at defensive end for the Dolphins, but both Starks and fellow rookie [Phillip Merling](#) have seen considerable action in the first three games.

What the Dolphins want to accomplish is always having fresh bodies along the defensive line without having a drop-off, and Starks' performance has helped that get done.

Outside of starting guard [Justin Smiley](#), Starks has made the biggest contribution so far among the team's 10 unrestricted free agents this offseason.

Three of the 10 — Keith Davis, [Josh McCown](#) and Sean Ryan — no longer are with the team

and six are backups.

It might not be a great return for the free agent dollars spent, but no one can complain about what the Dolphins have gotten from Randy Starks so far.

website: <http://mia.scout.com/2/796226.html>