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Mr. P. *From Page 20*

summed up in one word -- potential. Players in that category are ones who have good athletic ability but need to work on some phases of their game, which in Polk's case are speed and technique, and probably weight.

"We don't put him (Polk) in there because of his size," says Grambling Head Coach Eddie Robinson. "We put him in there because he can play."

Usually, players who have some talent but can't play on the offensive or defensive units are relegated to the special teams. But Polk isn't the kind of guy you'll see flying down the field in kamikaze fashion on kickoff and punt returns. "The exception is for blocking field goals," said Steinberg. "But no team is going to draft him just for that. We have only a limited number of spots on the roster."

Polk, who can also play on the offensive line, has a chance to make history, provided he makes an NFL roster -- if he is indeed 6-11. "Too Tall" Jones is 6-9, but the tallest player in memory was 6-10 tight end Morris Stroud, who played for the Chiefs in the early to mid-70s. "He was really 6-10, because we measured him," said Haley.

But Haley's scouts measured Polk at "only" 6-9, 316 pounds.

Sometimes height measurements can differ because of inflated listings on college rosters, varying techniques in measuring used by each NFL team and -- definitely the most unusual reason of all -- oscillating body dimensions. "Guys can fluctuate up to an inch," explained Haley.

"If you want to measure tall, get measured in the morning. But when you go out and walk around, you may be shorter by the afternoon. It's probably because of the constant pressure of walking as opposed to lying in bed at night when you're relaxed."

You probably guessed it. The Steelers did measure Polk in the afternoon.

"He would have been the tallest (player to ever play in the pros) if he's really that tall," said Haley, "but he's not that tall."

A few inches too "short" and no mention in the record books.

But Polk may have set a record at Grambling for the biggest shoe and helmet, which were both specially fitted for him.

"His shoe would just break in half if it was normal," says Collins. "His weight was so much, he needed extra support. We had to get specially-made shoes with an arch support. You'd almost have to kill a cow to make one shoe for him."

However, getting a jersey to fit wasn't a problem at all. "We've been working with big people all along," says Collins.

And Polk has been playing with some big people all along. During his junior season, Grambling's defensive line was called the "Trees of Terror." Polk lined up with 6-7, 240-pound Robert Smith (now with Arizona in the USFL), Leonard Griffin (6-7, 250) and Robert Hopkins (6-5, 240).

"A 6-2 guy standing next to Polk looks 5-5," says Collins. "People say (defensive tackle) Sherrod Finn is small, but he's 6-2. (Polk) makes everybody look small."

"He's imposing when he walks in the room," said Henry Hawkins, Grambling's sports information director. "He grabs your attention just on his size."

Polk, who plays the run better than the pass, finished '84 with 17 solo tackles and 16 assists but only one quarterback sack.

The weight-speed factor pops up again on the last statistic.

"In the pros," says San Diego Chargers wide receiver Charlie Joiner, "they have a way of making you trim down." Joiner, who starred at Grambling, is the NFL's all-time reception leader.

And, as Tennessee State Sports Information Director Kindell Stephens says, "Money has a way of making you lose weight.

"He (Polk) was the standout defensive lineman we played against," Stephens adds. "He would make Tennessee State's all-opponent defensive team."

Polk, who was also an all-Southwestern Athletic Conference choice in '83, made 14 tackles -- four for no gain -- against Jackson State that season, a sign that he does have ability and mobility. "I don't think he's reached his potential yet," says Collins.

"James is extremely agile, quick and has good lateral movement," said Robinson. "They (pro scouts) live by the stopwatch, but most of the action happens within 15 or 20 yards of the line of scrimmage. Once you pass that, you're in the secondary anyway."

For an offensive lineman, playing on the line of scrimmage is warfare in pads against Polk, who is usually double-teamed. ("One guy can't move him," said Collins.) In Polk's case, it takes more than two to tango on the football field.

But try not to let his outward appearance bother you off the field.

"He's just a nice, quiet kid with a big stick," says Collins.

Gregory D. Clay is a sports copy editor for the Wichita (Kan.) Eagle Beacon. *Staff Writer Sam Davis also contributed to this story*

INTERVIEW *From Page 21*

at the tournament?

A: No, it doesn't necessarily mean more fans for the tournament. We're only looking at 400 to 500 more seats.

Q: What were some of the incentives offered to you by Richmond?

A: The biggest thing is that they are giving a $3,000 scholarship to each school. That by itself means more than $42,000 to the conference. There were also a lot of other incentives which we took into consideration.

Q: Speaking of the basketball tournament, how do you explain the long halftimes during the tournament games?

A: Usually that only happens in the championship game. In the past, we've had to give out awards and take care of other conference business.

Q: Don't you think it hurts the play of the teams to have to come back and play a half of basketball after such a long intermission?

A: Yes. I don't think it's fair to the coaches and players. But we're going to try to eliminate that this year.

Q: Has your office given any consideration to the possibility of putting together a post-season football tournament to crown a champion in black college football?

A: Regulations prohibit that. It would constitute an eleventh game and in that case we couldn't have a CIAA championship game or send anyone to the NCAA playoffs.

Q: But, from a financial standpoint, wouldn't it make sense to bring together some of the best teams in college football in some type of bowl games?

A: We used to have that when we had the Gold Bowl between the CIAA and MEAC champions. But both conferences started to lose their champions to the playoffs. Teams would rather play for the national title than in a bowl game.

INSTANT REPLAYS *From Page 19*

ingenuity and an old-fashioned work ethic into wins, Casem said.

"He's a hard worker," Casem said. "We got a list of them like that. Take Norfolk State's Willard Bailey: Ain't a better man that God put on this earth with a whistle around his neck."

Casem also lauded Jackson State's W.C. Gorden and Grambling's Eddie Robinson.

"The secret is work," he said. "Take what you got and work with it. You got some that work just as hard but they're bitchin' about what they ain't got to work with."

A Change Of Mind

Bill Hayes, the architect, builder and insurer of Winston-Salem State's football fortunes, almost left to take a job with MEAC member Delaware State earlier this month, but then reconsidered and chose to remain at the CIAA power.

Which is very fortunate for the folks at WSSU.

It would have been hard to find a replacement for a man like Hayes, whose intensity, tirelessness, sense of organization and ability to win are well-known.

Hayes, of course, has won two CIAA Southern Division titles in a row and will win another next year.

A Mighty Big Man

Bless John Thompson's heart. Not only was he magnanimous enough to schedule black schools Tennessee State and North Carolina A&T for a pair of doubleheaders in Puerto Rico, but he was also merciful enough not to run roughshod over them to impress pollsters and the like.

While I mean to take nothing away from Tennessee State or A&T -- and I can only speculate -- I honestly believe Thompson and the Hoyas pulled their punches against the Tigers and the Aggies and attacked both opponents with something less than the Hoya paranoia you're used to seeing.

Pat Ewing could have destroyed little A&T and TSU by himself had he had a mind to, sore hand or no sore hand.

But the Hoyas seemed content to scrimmage against their opponents and give them much-needed media coverage.

P.S: No death threats, please, Aggie and Tiger fans.