

STHS grad expected to start Sunday for Jets

By Mike Vorkunov, Star-Ledger

Aaron Maybin remembers the conversation he had with Garrett McIntyre before the 2011 season began and neither knew their fate – when McIntyre considered this his last chance at the NFL. Both linebackers were with the Jets, having been recycled through the league and hoping to latch on. Maybin had been the No. 11 overall pick just two years earlier so he had tasted glory once, but McIntyre had to pull himself up from the depths.

To understand McIntyre's path is to know his failures. His lowest moment came the first time he was cut by an NFL team – the Seattle Seahawks let him go in 2006 after bringing him in as an undrafted free agent out of Fresno State. One body blow was followed by others in a span of months.

The South Tahoe High School grad was released twice more that summer, starting a sojourn that took him from the Arena Football League with San Jose to the Canadian Football League with Hamilton.

Maybin remembered his teammate's situation this week, in the glow of McIntyre's game last Sunday in Pittsburgh. Starting at outside linebacker for the injured Bryan Thomas, as he likely will again on Sunday against Miami with Thomas listed as doubtful on the injury report, McIntyre sacked Ben Roethlisberger twice.

It was not a surprising performance inside the Jets locker room. McIntyre and Maybin have become close – Maybin credits him with telling him the plays and what to do on the field for his first two months with the Jets – and it was more a reinforcement of how far McIntyre has come.

“The more that you have to fight for, the more you understand and you really appreciate,” Maybin said. “One thing that I know will never be the case with Garrett is him taking a thing for granted, whether that’s a play, whether that’s an opportunity. He is somebody that is always going to make the most of everything he gets because he knows what it’s like to not to be able to live your dream everyday.”

After McIntyre was cut by three teams six years ago, it set him off on a circuitous route. Already a former walk-on who starred at Fresno State, he moved to the Arena Football League, in which he played for the San Jose SaberCats for two years. After knee surgery and the demise of the AFL, he wondered if he should keep playing as a long, painful rehabilitation ensued and then a move to the Canadian Football League followed as he joined the Hamilton Tiger-Cats. In the offseasons, he worked in construction for his father, Bob, in South Lake Tahoe, then became a personal trainer.

“There’s times, like when I was playing Arena Football and the league got shut down, I was like, what do I do?” said McIntyre, who has been with the Jets since 2011. “Do I still want to play? Is it worth beating my brains up every week for okay pay. You’re not going to get rich doing it, but you can make some decent money in those leagues. You can make a decent living but not NFL money. By about Week 15 your body is killing you and you’re like, I’m doing the same thing these guys are doing down here for about one-16th of the pay. There’s times where you question yourself.”

McIntyre will be a key as the Jets look to stop Dolphins running back Reggie Bush on Sunday. Bush ran for 172 yards last week and gave the Jets fits last season – when they had trouble stopping perimeter runs and speedy rushers. Bush had 71 yards on 10 carries against them last season, including a 36-yard run.

“It’s a defensive team effort, it can’t just be one guy or a

couple of guys,” McIntyre said. “You have to swarm him constantly, put some helmets on him, make him feel a little bit. For my position we have to set edges, we can’t let him get around that corner.”

Even if McIntyre plays well again, his tireless attitude won’t let him feel satiated. His father said that when he watches Garrett on TV, no matter where the play goes, he always sees him end up around the ball when it ends. That same pursuit won’t let him feel comfortable.

“I don’t,” McIntyre said. “I can’t. I’m not the type of guy that’s ever comfortable.”