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## Cool on Corner, Jets' Barrett Picks Off Questions

By JOHN ELIGON

David Barrett stood at his locker last week at [the Jets'](#) training facility in Hempstead, N.Y., and the same question came his way about four times in 15 minutes.

What do he and his teammates in the Jets' secondary have to do today to stop quarterback [Peyton Manning](#) and the [Indianapolis Colts'](#) high-powered offense?

Every time the question was repeated, Barrett looked to the ground and laughed as he leaned on his locker, buttressed by his bulky, outstretched arm. Barrett had no concrete answer, but he was polite with each response, saying the Jets would do whatever it took to get the job done.

Barrett's mellow reaction to what could have become a bothersome line of questioning was fitting. Those close to him say he is a laid-back presence who knows how to laugh as he quietly goes about his business.

That attitude has come in handy for Barrett under the first-year coach Eric Mangini, who does not guarantee starting jobs. Mangini keeps the competition for starting spots open during practice each week.

Barrett, a cornerback on the right side, has been a firsthand witness to Mangini's ways. He came off the bench in the Jets' first two games but started in last Sunday's victory over the [Buffalo Bills](#).

Will Barrett be trotting onto the field today when the Jets' defense enters for the first time?

Barrett said he usually did not find out until game day. And he seems to accept that.

"It actually keeps us refreshed, keeps us ready and keeps us focused on what we got to do out there on the field," Barrett said.

Despite his consistency throughout his career, Barrett will have to continue to prove himself week in and week out this season.

Mangini said, "Each week, what we're looking for is the group that is going to give us the best chance to win and what role they play on the defense, how they fit into the defensive plan."

Barrett's reserved demeanor is emblematic of his career, one in which he has mostly flown under the radar despite playing bigger than his 5-foot-10, 195-pound frame.

The Arizona Cardinals selected Barrett, a former Arkansas Razorback, in the fourth round of the 2000 draft. He spent his first four seasons with the Cardinals. Unable to come to terms on an extension after the

2003 season, Barrett left for New York. He is in the third year of a six-year deal with the Jets and is paid roughly \$3.5 million a year.

Barrett has often played in the shadow of other cornerbacks. In Arizona, he was overlooked for Duane Starks. Last season, Ty Law was the Jets' prized player in the secondary.

None of this has stopped Barrett, who has 15 career interceptions, from contributing. For three and a half seasons, from 2002 through the middle of 2005, Barrett started every game in which he played.

That streak ended last season, when Barrett was poked in the eye during a game against the [San Diego Chargers](#), leading to a burst blood vessel.

Doctors told him that an aggravation of the injury could make him blind in that eye. So he sat out three games and slowly worked his way back into the lineup. Justin Miller took Barrett's starting spot for the rest of the season. Miller also started the first two games this season.

Barrett said he was back to 100 percent and had not allowed the injury to affect the way he approached the game. He has made that apparent with his play.

Two of his five interceptions last season came after the injury. This season, Barrett is tied with Andre Dyson for the team lead with two interceptions.

Jets wide receiver [Laveranues Coles](#) calls Barrett the "little linebacker" because of his short and stout build. Coles said that build made Barrett deceptively strong.

Barrett's agent, Drew Pittman, said in a telephone interview: "David has always made plays. He's always played bigger than his height. He's a very strong guy, and he's good at knocking receivers off their routes."

Barrett may play rough on the field, but this past summer, he showed a softer side. He was asked to volunteer on an episode of ABC's "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition," in which a team rebuilds a house in a week.

Along with a teammate, tackle Adrian Jones, Barrett went to a home in Bergenfield, N.J., expecting to do some heavy lifting. Instead, the show's producers asked the football players to help them fold hundreds of origami flowers.

"The concept of a football player doing origami is right out of a comedy sketch," said Diane Korman, the show's senior producer. "David was willing to step up to the challenge and do origami, something he's never done before, and he did it with a smile on his face."

Barrett hopes his performance against the Colts will also result in smiles on the Jets' sideline.