

Speedy true freshman Kyson Brown breaking into ASU lineup as factor on special teams



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For most football players, competing on special teams isn't an end goal. It's a starting point, the easiest way to get on the field early. Arizona State true freshman Kyson Brown welcomes the challenge.

Brown is a running back but with a couple of veteran transfers ahead of him in the pecking order in [Cameron Skattebo](#) and [DeCarlos Brooks](#), the 6-foot-2, 205-pounder knows right now his opportunities out of the backfield will be limited or non-existent. Instead, is getting his feet wet on the kick coverage unit, which is fine with him. He had two tackles on two returns in Thursday's 24-21 win over Southern Utah at Mountain America Stadium.

"I like to go down and hit people," he said. "That's my chance to fly to the ball and show them what I got."



RB Kyson Brown (14) catches a pass during practice at ASU's Kajikawa practice fields in Tempe on Sept. 6, 2023.
Mark Henle/The Republic

Fly is a good word for it. Brown is one of the fastest players on the squad, having run a 100-yard time of 10.7 seconds in an area track meet in the spring for his high school team. As one of many athletes on the team hailing from the Dallas-Fort Worth area Brown actually ran against a couple of his current teammates in wide receiver Korbin Hendrix and defensive back Keith Abney, also true freshmen.

"You want a guy that's fast, Korbin Hendrix is fast," he laughed.

While Brown admits Hendrix might have him in the speed department, he owns bragging rights on the football field. His Lancaster High School team defeated the North McKinney team on which Hendrix played 74-7 with Brown scoring on a 99-yard touchdown play. Asked if he reminds his teammate of that, he didn't hesitate.

"Every day. I'm like 74-7 bro," Brown said.

All kidding aside, Brown said having teammates with whom he is familiar was one of the many reasons he chose ASU. He also played Little League with Abney.

Brown was one of the first commitments for the 2023 class when he made his declaration in October after an official visit. There were a lot of things that factored into the decision and those extended beyond the football field. First was his relationship with running backs coach Shaun Aguano, who was named interim head coach three games into last season when the program parted ways with predecessor Herm Edwards.

"That's what it came down to. I had built a great relationship with coach Aguano," Brown said. "Throughout my recruitment, he kept it real. He was honest, 100% so I felt I owed it to him to keep my relationship with him. Everything was genuine. With the coaching change, he reassured me he was going to still be here so I was tagging along."

Aguano said he felt that bond too.

"He knew that if I was going to be here he was going to come so we had a great relationship with him and his parents and he trusted it," Aguano said. "He's a kid that's not for the hype. He wants to get his degree, just an incredible kid. Learns every day, gets better every day."



RB Kyson Brown (14) runs a drill practice at ASU's Kajikawa practice fields in Tempe on Sept. 6, 2023. *Mark Henle/The Republic*

Brown also considered academics. He carried a 4.50 grade point average in high school, the equivalent of a 3.90 on a weighted college scale. He is majoring in architectural engineering and is in the Barrett honors program.

"I'm diving into the books. It's challenging but I'm up for the challenge. It played a major role," he said. "That's why I say it was a perfect marriage because when I was doing my research on the

schools I wanted to go to, apart from football, just for my major ASU popped up as a top 10 school."

Brown goes by the nickname "Sip," because he hails from Tupelo, Mississippi. That's where he lived until moving to Texas after his sophomore year of high school. He had to sit out his junior year after the transfer. As a senior he averaged 9.5 yards per carry, finishing with 707 yards and 11 touchdowns on 74 carries while adding 14 receptions for 168 yards and two touchdowns.

Sitting out his junior year didn't exactly help elevate his stock when it came to recruiting. The most notable FBS offers came from Purdue, Missouri and Houston but the balance of his options were lower-profile schools.

But the move to Texas proved beneficial in a lot of ways.

"I like the environment of Texas, the competition. So I wanted to challenge myself. My dad was already in Texas so it made a lot of sense anyway," he said. "I liked school better out there too. It was just a good combination of everything. More people, more diversity. I just liked it better."

Now Brown is making the transition to Tempe and admits he is still adapting. The haboob that struck just before halftime on Thursday was also a new experience.

"That was just crazy. I couldn't see across the field. It was like something out of a movie," he laughed.

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Aguano is happy Brown chose his school. Among the others in the running back room are junior George Hart and sophomores Tevin White and [Javen Jacobs](#). The coach says Skattebo has taken on the role of "older brother" and has been the stabilizing voice. While Brown is waiting his turn, Aguano says his potential has been duly noted.

"He's got the ability to be a star player. Now it becomes mental, making sure he doesn't make mistakes. The thing he needs to work on is the identification of pressure and he's a very bright kid. He'll pick it up it's just him seeing it at full speed. He has a chance to be very special, chance to be someone that can play a lot," Aguano said.