

SARALAND

'Tenacious defender'

Doug Sullivan is key leader of the Spartan defense: 'I like being counted on'

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When pointing out the leader of the Saraland defense, the name that pops up most often might be a surprise.

While this particular player is being closely watched by colleges and he is expected to continue his career at the next level, he might not be the player one expects to hold the title of defensive leader for a Spartans team that has several players in which they look to for leadership and playmaking.

But if you ask Spartans' head coach Jeff Kelly who that player would be, he doesn't hesitate when providing his answer.

It's Doug Sullivan, a 5-foot-11, 190-pound senior free safety and outside linebacker.

"He may be the leader of our football team," Kelly said, adding a new dimension to Sullivan's role with the team. "He's the guy who commands the weight room and he's the guy who is sort of the sparkplug of our defense. He played in the secondary for us last year at safety and he was

a good player for us. He's going to play there and also some inside backer for us as well.

"He's just a tenacious defender and loves football as much as anybody I've ever had and that's a great tribute. He's a smart kid; great grades, great ACT score. He's going to play ball in college and he's going to have opportunities."

Kelly said Sullivan is in his element, in his comfort zone, when he is on the field and with his teammates, practicing, lifting weights or whatever the occasion may be.

"He's just a kid, he doesn't ever want to see practice end. He loves it," Kelly said. "He's just one of those kind of guys. We're really proud of him and

he's just been a big part of getting our defense lined up and making calls and those type of things."

No task is too big or too small for Sullivan as long as it helps push his team another step toward improvement and winning games.

"I like doing whatever I can to help our defense be the best that we can be," he said. "Whatever the coaches ask me to do then I am going to do it to the best of my ability to give us our best chance to win.

"I like being counted on. Of course, that comes with pressure. You have to go out and do everything right every day. You've got to come in every day with your hard hat on and ready to go to work. You can't slip up because you know that everybody is watching what you do. You have to do the right things. It is a little pressure, but I don't mind it all. I like it really."

Sullivan also likes being part of a secondary that is expected to be the highlight of the Spartans' defense. He said all one has to do is look around at the talent in the defensive backfield and recognize Saraland has solid players at those positions.

"Pressure either makes you fold or it makes you grown and I feel like we've got a lot of talent in the secondary this year," he said. "Cordale (Flott,

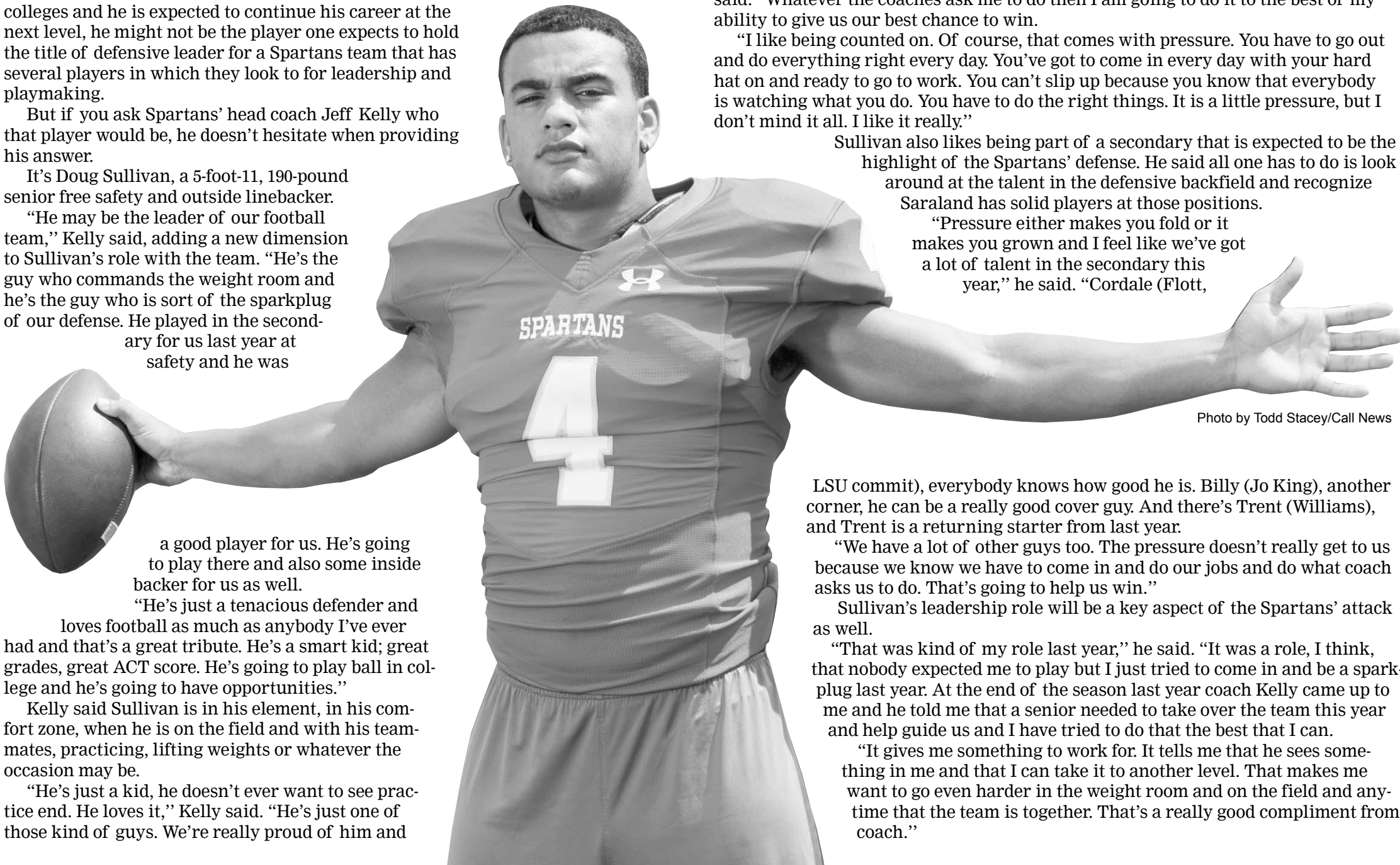


Photo by Todd Stacey/Call News

LSU commit), everybody knows how good he is. Billy (Jo King), another corner, he can be a really good cover guy. And there's Trent (Williams), and Trent is a returning starter from last year.

"We have a lot of other guys too. The pressure doesn't really get to us because we know we have to come in and do our jobs and do what coach asks us to do. That's going to help us win."

Sullivan's leadership role will be a key aspect of the Spartans' attack as well.

"That was kind of my role last year," he said. "It was a role, I think, that nobody expected me to play but I just tried to come in and be a sparkplug last year. At the end of the season last year coach Kelly came up to me and he told me that a senior needed to take over the team this year and help guide us and I have tried to do that the best that I can.

"It gives me something to work for. It tells me that he sees something in me and that I can take it to another level. That makes me want to go even harder in the weight room and on the field and anytime that the team is together. That's a really good compliment from coach."



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