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## Rookie **Steve Smith** making big play at Giants training camp

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With the focus of the first week of training camp being on holdout defensive end Michael Strahan, it's been hard for anyone on the New York Giants to steal a headline.

Second-round draft pick **Steve Smith** might be the exception. The rookie from Southern California has put together a reel of highlight catches this past week that has convinced many that he is going to make a big contribution this season.

"He is amazing," backup quarterback Jared Lorenzen said. "His potential is just amazing, to come out there and play and to know what he already knows and we're still in the first week of camp is just incredible."

Incredible would also be a great way to describe the catch that Smith made on an Eli Manning pass along the right sideline on Thursday during the evening practice.

From the moment the ball left Manning's hand and traveled 20 yards downfield, it appeared headed right for starting cornerback R.W. McQuarters for a certain interception.

"I got my hands on the ball and he came over my back and tipped the ball," McQuarters said Friday in recalling the play. "The ball somehow stayed in the air, and he had great concentration and brought it in. That was a good catch."

Smith got a little twinkle in his eye when the play was mentioned, but he knew enough not to overreact.

"That's just fun, it's part of the game," Smith said. "It's my hunger for the ball. I'm limited and because Amani (Toomer) didn't practice in the second practice, I was just trying to make the most of my time out there."

A couple of plays later, Smith beat McQuarters again on what coach Tom Coughlin described as a last-play-of-the-game opportunity from the 14-yard line. In a real game, it would have been a game-winning touchdown.

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It some ways, Smith's early success is not surprising. He was a big-time producer at Southern California, catching 190 passes for 3,019 yards and 22 touchdowns. That's pretty good playing on a team with Dwayne Jarrett at the other receiver.

"I didn't feel in his shadow," Smith said. "I made a lot of big plays, too. He was our big red-zone threat, so that's why he got a lot of praise. The coaches did a good job of distributing the ball and we were winning, so you can't complain."

Manning isn't complaining either. He has been impressed with Smith's route running, knowledge of the offense and willingness to fight for the ball.

"He finds ways to make plays and adjusts to the ball well in the air," Manning said. "He made plays yesterday where he had some unbelievable catches. He really reacts to the ball and he is a lot faster than what he looks."

When it comes to second-round picks, that is not surprising for the Giants. They have found some of their best players in the second round in recent years Strahan, Toomer, all-time leading rusher Tiki Barber, Pro Bowl defensive end Osi Umenyiora and guard Chris Snee.

Smith also is smart enough to learn from those around him. He has spent a lot of time in training camp at the University at Albany watching Toomer to see how he uses his hands to get off the line of scrimmage and how he uses leverage to get open.

With Toomer and Plaxico Burress returning as the starting receivers and second-year pro Sinorice Moss back, Smith knows he is going to have to fight for playing time.

"With the plays I am making and against the starting guys, I am trying to show the coaches that I can be out there making plays along with our other corps of receivers," Smith said. "Hopefully, I'll be able to fit in the end with everybody."

If the first week of training camp is any indication, Smith will have a big role this year.

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