

French enjoyed trip to Army Bowl

Written by Jim Ecker

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Kennedy senior Christian French thoroughly enjoyed playing in the U.S. Army All-American Bowl in San Antonio on Jan. 8.

He stayed in a plush hotel, got to play before 37,893 fans in the Alamodome and had a chance to test his skills against some of the top high school football players in the country.

"Ate well, too," he said.

"It was definitely a great experience, something I would never take back for anything," he said Monday after basketball practice. "It's something you learn from, because you get to see players from all around the country. It's a totally different competition level."

French, 6-foot-6, 225 pounds, started at linebacker for the West team and made several tackles. He also played on special teams in a 13-10 loss to the East.

"It was fun, because you know that everybody out there was just as good as you are," he said. "You had to prove yourself, and I feel I did. When I had the opportunity to make plays, I did. It was definitely fun, because you get to match yourself against the best players in the country."

There were 100 players in the Army All-American Bowl and 14 of them used the occasion to announce their college decision on live TV. French steered away from that and is glad he announced his decision to attend Oregon at a press conference at Kennedy last month.

"I feel like I made the best decision for me here, in front of my family, so everybody could see me in person at my school," he said. "That's cool (announcing at the Army game), but I feel doing it at the school is a little bit better."

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French missed three basketball games during his trip to San Antonio, including a 62-47 loss at Dubuque Wahlert. That's the only setback for the fourth-ranked Cougars (10-1) this season and he hated missing that game.

"That was definitely tough," he said. "I wish I had been here to help the team, but Coach (Bob) Fontana was great. The team had my back, and I had their back when I returned."

French helped Kennedy beat Jefferson, 44-37, Friday night in a key Mississippi Valley Conference game. The Cougars visit top-ranked Linn-Mar (12-0) this Friday night in another big test.

French is focused on basketball again, but he'll never forget the feeling of taking the field at the Alamodome before more than 37,000 fans.

"You come out and think, 'Wow, look at all those people,'" he said. "You get a little nervous, but once the game got started I didn't feel it was any different than a high school game, but of course you're on national TV.

"I felt it was like any normal game, but with a lot better players. I wasn't too nervous. Excited more than anything."