

# Richardson lives up to reputation

## Receiver backs up his arrogant talk

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Modesty has never been one of the virtues associated with Jamel Richardson. Extroverted and talkative, yet never humble, the Alouettes' veteran receiver has continually talked a good game – then gone on the field and backed it up.

So, it's quite surprising to discover the man who might be the Canadian Football League's best receiver – and who appears primed to perhaps enjoy his greatest season yet – said he's not the premier catcher. He bestows that honour on Kerry Watkins, his injured teammate.

"But I'm the most complete receiver in the CFL," Richardson said, without a trace of humility. "No one blocks as good, except maybe (teammate) S.J. Green. I can do it all for you out there."

Truthfully, who can argue?

Richardson was the Als' leading receiver last season, with 97 receptions for 1,271 yards – despite dropping nine passes over the course of the year. And then, following a productive East Division final against Toronto, Richardson caught eight balls for 109 yards against Saskatchewan, and was selected the Grey Cup game's outstanding player.

Then last Thursday, in Montreal's season-opening victory against British Columbia – and despite missing both exhibition games in June due to injury – Richardson led all receivers with nine catches for 162 yards.

That included a pair of spectacular second-quarter touchdowns covering 40 and 46 yards. On the latter, Lions defenders bounced off the 6-foot-3, 215-pounder, while attempting to tackle him, as though they were simply physically overmatched and wanted no part of him.

"It's his physical presence," marvelled quarterback Anthony Calvillo, who has had no shortage of great receivers at his disposal over the years. "When he's in man coverage, he has the ability to get open. And he's overpowering. It makes my job easier."

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JOHN MAHONEY THE GAZETTE  
Alouettes' Jamel Richardson led receivers with nine catches for 162 yards against the B.C. Lions last Thursday.

# ALS Richardson will 'do what the team asks'

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"He's open all the time. That's a weapon we've got to utilize," Calvillo added. "He's a special receiver ... good at what he does. And he's not selfish. Yes, he wants the ball, but he'll do what the team asks."

Richardson seems certain to add to his opening-week statistics Saturday afternoon, when the Als travel to Saskatchewan for a Grey Cup rematch. And the coaches seem determined to find in-

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ALS QUARTERBACK ANTHONY CALVILLO

novative ways to continue getting him the ball, realizing the jewel they have in their presence.

And, should the Roughriders attempt to double-cover Richardson, Calvillo will disperse the ball to others. This is what's commonly known as picking your poison.

"Jamel has got so many physical characteristics – size, strength, physicality and the ability to run," said offensive co-ordinator Scott Milanovich, almost marveling himself at the total package. "He loves to play and compete. He has become our spark. He lifts and energizes them with big-time plays, and deserves all he gets."

"We've got to find ways to continue getting him the ball."

It seems like ancient history since Richardson broke into the CFL with the Riders in 2003. He spent four seasons with Saskatchewan, but seemingly was overshadowed

by others. He played only four games in '06, sidelined by a fractured foot, before becoming a free agent. While reluctant to look back, even Richardson admitted he got a "raw deal."

Roy Shivers, the man who discovered Richardson playing at tiny Victor Valley college in the High Desert region of southern California, can only lament over what might have been.

"I knew he was going to be good. He had size and good hands. Great hands," Shivers told The Gazette from his Las Vegas home. "He's going to be great if he keeps his head on straight. And he's a good kid."

Shivers was the Riders' general manager in 2003, only to be fired in '06 – Richardson's final season with the team. Richardson tried out with the Dallas Cowboys the following year, and signed with the Als as a free agent the year after.

"I thought I was retired for good, or I would have gone after him," said Shivers, now B.C.'s director of player personnel. "They didn't appreciate him in Saskatchewan and ran him out. But you can see he's getting better."

It appears the sky's the limit for Richardson, who is only 29. And he seems determined to elevate his game in 2011, attempting to become more complete – if that's possible.

"I'm trying to give the CFL my whole game this year," said Richardson, who remains under contract to Montreal through 2012. "I believe I can get better. There's always room to grow. I watch a lot of film and am trying to add different dimensions."

"This year, I'm trying to put it all together."

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