

Chiu tackles new career as a coach

Former Als centre joins Stingers staff

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Retiring from the Alouettes might turn out being the best career move of Bryan Chiu's life - he was unemployed only two weeks.

Chiu, the Als' former veteran centre who retired on the eve of training camp following 13 Canadian Football League seasons - all with Montreal - has accepted a full-time coaching position with the Concordia Stingers. Chiu becomes the team's offensive-line coach, assistant offensive co-ordinator and director of the Stinger football school.

Chiu officially begins on July 5 although he has been huddling with head coach Gerry McGrath most days. Stingers players report for training camp Aug. 12 and are on the field for the first time two days later. Concordia is coming off a 3-5 season in 2009 - it's first losing record under McGrath, the full-time coach since 2001.

The Stingers also announced the hiring of Phil Roberts as defensive co-ordinator.

Since retiring, several CFL teams - most of them believed to be western-based - also inquired about Chiu's availability to become an assistant coach. Not only did he figure it was more prudent to cut his coaching teeth at the university level, he was also reluctant to uproot his family from Montreal, where they live year-round.

"I wasn't ready to make the jump. And I would have found it weird," said Chiu, 35. "I didn't wear another team's jersey, so to be part of a different organization...

"This is a great opportunity to work with Gerry McGrath. We've been friends for the last five years and our paths have crossed. We talked about this possibility many times. Still, I'm surprised it happened so fast. He called, and it was a no-brainer. Now I'll have an opportunity to lead more of a normal life."

The Stingers potentially have to replace two offensive linemen from last year's team - right-guard Jordan Ciampini and right-tackle Kristian Matte, the Als' first-round draft choice this year. Matte, recently released by Houston of the NFL, has a year of college eligibility remaining and is still exploring his options.

McGrath believes the addition of Chiu will enhance the Stingers' program and make recruiting offensive linemen easier. Chiu was a nine-time all-star and the CFL's outstanding lineman in 2002.

"I think he's going to be a great teacher," McGrath said. "I'm thrilled and honoured to have him. He's a great addition because he played in the CFL a long time. He'll make the offensive linemen as good as they can be, and this should enhance our recruitment program. Who wouldn't want to play for Chiu?"

Despite his lack of coaching experience, McGrath said he believes Chiu can compensate because of his communication skills. Plus he has proven to be a people person.

"He was the quarterback of the offensive line, another coach on the field," McGrath said. "He's proven to have a great understanding of box play. He ran the show."

"There's no substitute if you played pro and can communicate."



DAVE SIDAWAY GAZETTE FILE PHOTO

"Now I'll have an opportunity to lead more of a normal life," former Alouettes centre Bryan Chiu says of new post with Stingers.