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Jim Popp has repeatedly discovered football talent.

Als' Popp in line for NFL position

MIGHT JOIN REDSKINS' FOLD

Enters final season of contract

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Jim Popp, the only general manager the Alouettes have had since their return to the Canadian Football League in 1996, could be in line for a position in the Washington Redskins' personnel department, according to a western-based source.

Popp, the Alouettes' GM, director of football operations and player personnel, is well known throughout NFL circles, given his tenure. And, although he hails from North Carolina, he should be familiar with the U.S. Capitol area, having served as the Baltimore Stallions' assistant GM in 1994 and '95 - two of the three seasons during which U.S. franchises formed part of the CFL.

The Baltimore franchise, allowed to exclusively use import players, won 27 of 36 games and went to two Grey Cup games, winning once.

"There has been no indication," Popp is about to leave the organization, Als president Larry Smith told The Gazette.

However, there are signs indicating a divorce between Popp and the organization could be imminent.

He's entering the final season of his contract.

Although negotiations are reportedly taking place, it's surprising no extension has been ratified this winter; it should have simply been a formality, given Popp's lengthy association with the organization.

Coincidentally, the Als announced an extension last December for head coach Marc Trestman, taking him through 2012. In pro sports, it's unusual to have a GM and head coach not signed to deals that coincide in length.

Also, Popp's suburban home in Dollard is for sale. That has led to some speculation he's about to leave and return to the U.S., because he's beginning to believe he can't reach agreement on a new contract.

If negotiations are taking place, they're probably between Popp and owner Robert Wetenhall, because Popp's relationship with Smith is virtually non-existent. Popp, given his success, has an ego - perhaps justifiably - and has rubbed many in the organization the wrong way.

It's uncertain whether Popp has an escape clause in his contract. Asked whether such a clause exists, Smith replied: "He's near the end of his contract. If he doesn't want to stay ..."

Translation: The organization probably wouldn't block any potential move, should Popp express that desire.

With training camp set to begin early next month, the majority of Popp's work for the coming season has been completed. Should a transition be required, the move could be made seamlessly at this time.

The Als have been the CFL's flagship organization since their return to the league. Popp has repeatedly discovered talent and bolstered the roster when necessary, because of age or the retirement of players. Only twice since returning to the league has Montreal finished below second in the East Division, never having missed the playoffs.

The Alouettes have been to seven Grey Cups since 2000, winning two, including last season's against Saskatchewan.

"It wouldn't surprise me," a source in Alouettes management said. "Jim might be ready to make the move. It depends on his relationship with Larry and the owner. He does a great job, and to lose him would not be good."

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