

Humble Trestman perfect fit for Als



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Since this seems to be nostalgia week around here, we'll go back to 1970 by way of introducing the Alouettes' new head coach.

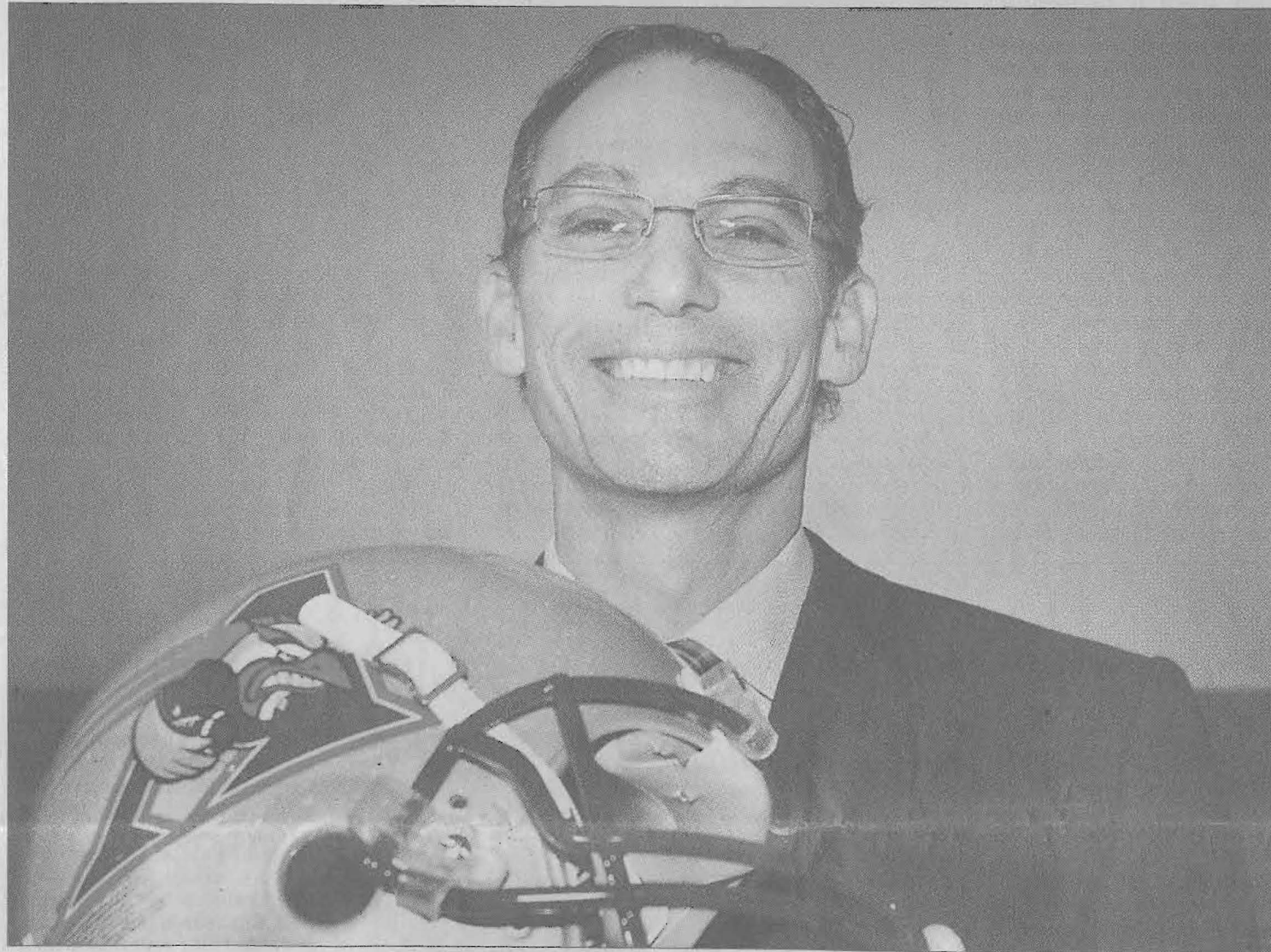
That was the year a chap named Freeman White came to Canada to play for the Ottawa Rough Riders. This, I thought, should be some show: White had been an All-American wide receiver for the Nebraska Cornhuskers. He was a senior when I was a freshman at Nebraska, a 6-foot-4, 220-pound pass-snagger to make pro scouts drool.

White was drafted by the New York Giants and spent four years in New York before ending up in Ottawa. When I saw that he was playing in the CFL, I thought White would light it up.

One season, and he was gone.

White, of course, was neither the first nor the last of many: Americans who come up here from the NFL or from big college football programs thinking they will show this little league a thing or two. More often than not, they get their comeuppance in a hurry. Think of Vince Ferragamo, another former Husker who had gone to a Super Bowl with the Los Angeles Rams. With the Alouettes, Ferragamo flamed out in spectacular fashion.

Point is, if you come to the CFL thinking it's a bush league that you're going to dazzle with your big-time American talent, you're going to get burned. The CFL, as too many athletes and



DAVE SIDAWAY THE GAZETTE

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coaches learn the hard way, is a terrific and highly competitive league in terms of its players' athleticism and the pressure to win. If it's somehow lesser than the NFL (and I'm not convinced it is) it is by degrees so slight they are all but imperceptible.

That's why, if Marc Trestman didn't quite march the Alouettes downfield for a touchdown in his first Montreal outing yesterday, he did at least move his team into scoring position: He was humble. He indicated a boundless willingness to learn.

And he won, I suspect, more than a few friends while he was being introduced as head coach of the Als yesterday. For a guy who was all but counted out within moments of his hiring three weeks ago, that was quite a feat.

"If you aren't humble," Trest-

man said, "if you aren't ready to work hard, this game will eat you alive. You have to be hard-working and you have to be humble. And you have to treat the players and all employees with respect."

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ALS Trestman sports impeccable football résumé

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So here's the skinny on the new guy: He's tall, lean, highly intelligent and articulate. He has a beautiful wife. He has a portfolio many football coaches would die for, even if things have been a bit rough for him of late. And I am not just saying these things because he has a law degree and might sue me if I don't.

Above all, he doesn't suffer from that Arrogant American syndrome. He's humble, and in the end that might take him farther than all the rest of it.

"I'm glad I'm not a defensive coordinator in the CFL," Trestman said, "where the field is 53 per cent larger and you have only one more guy to cover it and all that motion."

Because the CFL is unique and because Trestman acknowledged that his strength is on offence, one of the first tasks he faces is to find a defensive coordinator to replace Chris Jones, who left for Calgary. The Alouettes also announced yesterday that Scott Milanovich, after one season with the Als as quarter-

backs coach, will become the offensive coordinator – replacing the departed Marcel Bellefeuille – and that Vince Martino will be the offensive-line coach after winning the World Bowl as head coach of the NFL Europe Hamburg Sea Devils.

But Trestman is the man of the hour: If he has a weakness, it is that he has not spent time on the sidelines in the CFL, apart from a brief visit to the Als train-

Obviously, Als owner Wetenhall believes in his new head coach Trestman.

ing camp last spring. But yesterday, you could see the qualities that persuaded the Alouettes to hire him over a long list of candidates with CFL experience.

First, there's the résumé: He has worked with some of the best people in the game, starting at the University of Minnesota, where he was the backup quarterback to a guy named Tony Dungy. He was quarterbacks coach for the Mia-

mi Hurricanes in 1983 when (we painfully remember) the 'Canes defeated the 'Huskers 31-30 in the Orange Bowl.

The next year, with Trestman still as his coach, Bernie Kosar set school records for pass completions, passing yards and touchdowns.

When Bud Grant came out of retirement in 1985, he hired Trestman for his staff. Four years later, Trestman was named offensive coordinator for the Cleveland Browns, going back to work with Kosar. In 1995, he was hired by George Seifert as offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach for the San Francisco 49ers.

He also worked as coordinator for the Arizona Cardinals before becoming the senior offensive assistant to Jon Gruden with the Oakland Raiders. When Gruden left, Bill Callahan made Trestman his offensive coordinator and the team went to the Super Bowl, where they lost to Gruden's Tampa Bay Buccaneers. Most recently, Trestman was the offensive coordinator at North Carolina State before the entire

coaching staff was let go.

If there's an alarm bell on the résumé, it's that Trestman hasn't stayed anywhere that long, but assistant coaches rarely do, and the trend seems to be downward of late, but that's the nature of the game: You have to find a situation that suits you, an owner who believes in you. The good part is that with all the names on his résumé, Trestman could come on like the reincarnation of Vince Lombardi. He doesn't, and that will give him a chance to succeed.

Obviously, Bob Wetenhall believes in Trestman. After some of the things he said yesterday, his players should, too. And Trestman emphasized that he wants to work with the media and with the community, which means he's already a far cry from Don Matthews.

His first words to Montreal were: "*Je m'appelle Marc Trestman.*"

This guy is going to succeed with the Alouettes. You read it here first.

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