

Trestman Reshapes His Staff

Will have four new assistants in 2012

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It's never an ideal situation, Marc Trestman would acknowledge, to add three new assistants – with a fourth on the way – in one fell swoop.

But then again, how is this any different than 2008, Trestman's first season as Alouettes head coach, when he named nine assistants with whom he had never worked? History will note Montreal reached the Grey Cup that year.

"This is the way we've gone about it. It's a process," Trestman said Wednesday. "They spend time with (the Als' other assistant coaches) and we see if it's a good fit. But all hires are leaps of faith.

"You don't think about who your friends are, just about who and what's best for the organization," he added. "And you hope."

The Als on Wednesday announced two new assistants to Trestman's staff – Matt Sheldon, who will coach the linebackers, and Brendan Nugent, who will be an assistant on special teams and also is responsible for offensive quality control. Trestman already added former Winnipeg head coach Jeff Reinebold as defensive coordinator and is expected to announce the hiring of Pat Meyer as the offensive-line coach before training camp begins in June.

Reinebold's hiring became necessary when Tim Tibesar departed to become the defensive coordinator at Purdue. Tibesar also coached the Als' linebackers, creating the opening for Sheldon. Nugent replaces Carson Walch, who received a promotion and is the Als' new receivers coach. Marcus Brady, who coached Montreal's receivers, replaces Scott Milanovich as offensive coordinator. Milanovich was named Toronto Argonauts' head coach.

"When a job opens, it gets out there fast," Trestman explained. "Instead of pre-determining a direction, we let it take its course. It's a long process. You never just call and hire someone."

Sheldon, 43, spent the last two seasons as an assistant defensive-backs coach with the Minnesota Vikings. He was the Buffalo Bills' linebackers coach from 2006-09 and was with the St. Louis Rams between 2001-05. Coincidentally, he's a former defensive back at the University of Minnesota, Trestman's alma mater.

He's familiar with Andy Bischoff, an Als assistant. As part of a pro development program, Bischoff spent some time with the Vikings at one point. Sheldon then crossed paths with Bischoff at the Senior Bowl a year ago and was introduced to Trestman at that time.

Sheldon was one of about eight candidates for the linebackers position, according to Trestman.

Nugent, meanwhile, spent

five seasons coaching collegiately, at William and Mary. The 29-year-old handled the running backs and tight ends most recently.

"Both are very good fits for our program," Trestman said. "Brendan has great passion and knowledge. Both are bright and good communicators. We got guys who can stimulate the players on and off the field."

Trestman's assistants will convene in Raleigh, N.C., his winter home, early next week to begin preparing the playbook, strategies and philosophies for next season.

Sheldon is more than familiar with the Canadian Football League from his time with the Bills. Buffalo has recently started playing one regular-season or exhibition game at the Rogers Centre in Toronto on an annual basis. And he should be comfortable in his new home, having vacationed twice in Montreal.

"The NFL has become a passing league. That's the way all of football's going," Sheldon told The Gazette from his winter home in St. Paul, Minn. "Now I'm going to a league where there's one less down. There's some urgency, due to the width of the field, along with an inherent difference in the kicking game.

"I'm excited to expand my horizons. I understand player development is my No. 1 job ... the development of the total player," he said.

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