

# Ganas returns to York after major CFL disappointment

By KARIM HAJEE

Five years ago a six-foot, 215-pound running back out of Central Tech arrived at York University filled with hopes and dreams of playing football in the Canadian Football League (CFL). That dream nearly became reality when George Ganas was drafted in the seventh round by the Ottawa Rough Riders in the 1984 draft.

But the dream was never fulfilled; after a few exhibition games Ganas was released, a big disappointment for the former Ontario University Athletic Association all-star. "It was a big let-down," said Ganas. "It taught me what the CFL was all about. I was just a number out there, it was like they owned you. There was no security."

After being released Ganas took a year off, travelling to Europe and Brazil with the Canadian National Team Handball squad. Ganas has been playing team handball since 1979 and has been a member of the Canadian national squad since 1982. The team picked up a bronze medal at the 1983 Pan-American games and Ganas' goal is the 1988 Olympics in Seoul, South Korea. "The Olympics is my next aim," Ganas remarked. "I'd be lying if I said I didn't want to go to the Olympics."

During his year off Ganas married his long-time girlfriend, Chantal, who is currently finishing a Business Administration degree at Laval University. Ganas credits his wife for helping him through the emotional letdown of not making the CFL and for encouraging him to go back to school. "I wanted to play football and make it big," Ganas said. "After the letdown my wife helped me out a

great deal. She was supportive and encouraged me to come back."

Soon after his marriage in March of 1986, Ganas and friends and former teammates Joe Pariselli and Desai Williams opened a business of their own called The Sports Lab. The 'Lab,' located at 99 Avenue Road, provides bio-mechanical shoes for athletes who require special shoes for their feet and is aided by Dr. Glen Copeland of the Toronto Blue Jays. The consumer visits the Sports Lab, the doctor gives the "prescription" and Ganas and friends "fill" it.

"I had little business knowledge going in," Ganas said, "and there was more to it than I thought." But he is happy with the business and hopes to expand it in the future.

Ganas was born and raised in Toronto and comes from a middle class family of four. Ganas, a linebacker turned running back, joined the Yeomen in the '79-'80 season and is currently in his last year of eligibility. His most memorable season came in 1984 when he won the OUA rushing title and rushed for 270 yards in a game against U of T.

"The rushing title? Great! I'd like to win it again but I don't think I would get the ball enough," Ganas said. "The game against U of T was a big game. It was unfortunate for Terry (Douglas, his partner in the backfield) because he got injured, (but because of the injury) I knew I was going to get the ball and I just made the most of it." It is a day Ganas will not soon forget.

The last years spent prior to that were ones of turmoil, lost hopes and losing records. Ganas gives credit to head coaches Frank Cosentino and

Nobby Wirkowski for turning the team around. "Even though we were one and six (in 1983) that was not a one and six team. Frank and Nobby brought cohesiveness to the team," Ganas said. "Once they did that football was fun again and we started winning."

Back then I wanted to play in the CFL and my anxiety level was too high," Ganas remembered. "Now I'm just going out and having some fun. I'm enjoying the university life, hey, I'm glad to be back." Coach Cosentino is also glad Ganas is back. "George is an outstanding player," Cosentino said, "(and) he adds a lot of stability to the team." "He's a hardworking individual and a grad York U should be proud of."

Ganas' teammates are also glad to have him back. According to Douglas, Ganas is "a team leader, a good knowledgeable football player (and) I'm glad he's back."

For Ganas the past year and a half has meant growing up and learning to take life one step at a time. "I think I've grown up and matured in many ways," Ganas said. "It takes a while but you learn that there's more to life than just football." Ganas has thought extensively about his future during the layoff. "I would like to get into sports psychology, but for now I'll get my degree in psych, and just take it one step at a time."

That kid who walked onto the football field five years ago full of hopes and dreams of playing in the CFL has certainly grown up, and through it all, Ganas says, "I had a great time." Ganas has given Yeomen fans some memorable moments and now is looking to provide some more.



Photo: Ian Maceachern

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## Coach Crandles confident soccer Yeomen will rebound from "first game" syndrome

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Bottos suffered the loss of some teeth playing summer-ball, and tore ligaments in his right hand during a practice this season. With Bottos playing injured, Crandles is searching for another goalkeeper to carry some of the load.

Despite the loss of some key players (three of which accounted for 90 percent of the team's goals last year)

Crandles feels the team can overcome these problems and is looking forward to a good season.

One good reason is the addition of some fine new players to the team, including second-year physics major Anthony Daley. Daley showed some great ball handling skills and scored York's first goal which tied the game

"We were just suffering from 'first game syndrome'," Crandles said

after the game. "Carleton had played yesterday (last Saturday) so they were ready. But I was really pleased with our guys. Except for the first 10 to 15 minutes they looked really good. We kept plugging and working hard and that's what's important. I'm very confident about the rest of the season."

York plays at home this weekend facing RMC and Queens.



JAMES HOGGETT

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