

sports

Business could boom for Yeomen's marketable linemen

By PETER BECKER

Offensive linemen—they work without any fanfare. "Just do your job and nobody will notice you," the saying goes. They're the unsung heroes of football.

Mike Chesson and David Maganja are two of the York Yeomen's unknown warriors. Game in and game out they fight for every inch, giving the quarterback a little time to pass or to spring loose a running back for a long gainer.

Your eyes pass them by as you focus on the quarterback or running back, but they are the ones who started the machine in motion.

Chesson, 25, a sociology major and Ontario University Athletic Association (OUAA) all-star tackle, and Maganja, 23, an economics major, who also serves at left guard, are two Yeomen standouts eligible for the Canadian Football League draft this year.

The road that led to a York football jersey for these two athletes went through divergent paths.

Maganja is a transfer student from Wilfred Laurier University and had to sit out five games in his first season at York until the CIAU and OUAA committees ruled him eligible to play.

Chesson started out on a different route. He had a shot at the pros when he was playing junior football in Ontario. Forrest Gregg, then head coach of the Toronto Argonauts, had scouted him and asked him to attend spring training.

But by the time spring had rolled around, Gregg had left the Argos in favor of the Cincinnati Bengals of the National Football League, leaving the head coaching duties in the hands of Willie Wood.

When Chesson came to the spring camp, Wood, apparently unaware of the invitation, turned a cold shoulder. After being cut by Wood, he decided to attend York partly out



David Maganja (left) and Mike Chesson are ready for shot at pros.

of want to play football and partly out of the desire to pursue a university degree.

But playing football and attending class put a strain on the amount of time allotted to studying. Football practice consumed two hours every evening during the season along with an off-season schedule that demanded 2-3 hours every weekday—to the tune of weight training, agility drills, and blocking techniques performed over at the track and field centre.

"When I first came here I was embarrassed to lift," offered Chesson. "But most guys don't hound you, if you are trying to better yourself."

"We worked out together all summer—we push each other. By now I'd feel bad if I missed a day," Maganja commented. "You have to be disciplined."

The dedication these two feel for their sport stems from their high school and even public school days.

"Sports is a way of meeting people, it becomes part of your life," Maganja said. "From grade 12 on I've had the dream of playing in the pros."

"Football has been important to me," Chesson said. "I can remember in grade six when the teacher asked everyone in his class to draw a picture of what they wanted to be—I drew a football field."

The opportunity to play professional ball is not afforded to every college player. Canadian quarterbacks and running backs (in the CFL) are an extinct breed.

But, for offensive linemen, business is booming. In Canada the import and non-import rule makes the wholly Canadian offensive line a valued asset. It enables a coach to play his imports at the other, higher skilled positions.

Maganja and Chesson, along with Nord Williams, Trevor Williams, and Dirk Leers, jetted to Vancouver some weeks ago to attend a CFL evaluation camp.

Under the dome of B.C. Place, they were tested for their strength, flexibility, and agility skills along with blocking and pass blocking technique.

"Last season we really learned a lot from coach Rainford," said Chesson. "We were very familiar with the terms and techniques they (CFL scouts) wanted."

What about the losing record—the Yeomen have never made the playoffs in their 12-year gridiron history? "Everybody wants to win," Maganja said. "The scouts weren't turned off by our record."

"I hate playing on a loser," said Chesson, "especially with the talent we had here. It would have been easier to take if we didn't have the talent."

"They (scouts) didn't give any indication of when we'll go in the draft. I don't care when, I just want an opportunity to show what I've got."

"Back when I had the tryout with the Argos I didn't feel I was ready for the pros," Chesson added, "but now I know I'm ready, I just want another shot at it."

Although they might have the full understanding and support of their families and friends, around campus it's not so clear cut—being above average in height and size does bring some undue attention. "In one class this prof. was giving back some tests and when he was finished doing that he gave a little speech about not wanting to have a 200-pound football player coming after him crying about his mark," Maganja said, "and throughout that speech he was looking straight at me."

Their football talents have not only attracted the athletic world's attention but also the attention of the media: "The sinuab commercial came about through the football team," said Chesson. (Former Yeomen) coach Dave Pickett recommended 10 players on the team and had sent them down to the shoot. It was the commercial with the football coach standing in the middle of a football practise and he gets asked about his headache," said Chesson.

"We also did the 'catch the CFL on CBC commercial which ran in the summer," Maganja said, "and we've done a photo shoot for Pepsi and we're up for a beer commercial."

If you still don't recognize them, you just might have run into them at the Club Blue Note—they worked there as bouncers at one time.

Aside from their off-field activities, however, the real desire remains in playing pro football. Their chances at having a long and successful career are better than average. Neither has missed a game in their career at York. Nor has either had a major injury.

"Football opens up a lot of doors," Maganja said. "You're always on stage—in front of the public... you get to meet the right people."

York aiming for titles

The Yeowomen gymnastics team hosted and won their third meet of the season last weekend defeating the University of Toronto 97.45 to 87.95.

Kathy White dominated the competition with a first place all-round finish, a first place finish on the floor exercise (87) and the balance beam (8.05), and second place finishes on the vault (8.2) and uneven bars (7.75), giving her a total score of 32.70 and qualifying her for the Canadian Interuniversity Athletic Union (CIAU) championships to be held in Edmonton in March.

Gail Thornton, also from York, placed second all-round and qualified for the championships. Gretchen Kerr, competing in her first meet of the season, put in a strong performance and came up third all-round. Gretchen also qualified for the CIAU championships.

Beth Johns, who also competes for York, entered the competition as an individual, as only six members

from the team could compete. She ended up with a score of 31.60.

The Yeomen gymnastics team, ranked number one in Canada, narrowly defeated third-ranked Penn State in one of the most exciting meets ever staged at the Tait gym.

The final score between the nine time defending Canadian champion and the National Collegiate Athletic Association's number-three-ranked Lions was a close 279.50 to 277.40.

The York team looked impressive as four of its six athletes, who are Canadian national team members, turned in top notch performances.

Frank Nutzenberger emerged the victor in the individual all-rounds, scoring a 56.70, which was highlighted by a 9.70 on the vault.

Penn State's Terry Bartlett, a member of the British national team, placed a close second with a 56.60. York's Allan Reddon placed third with 56.40, showing tremendous consistency throughout the meet.

Green Machine doubles it

Stong College's Green Machine hockey team continued its domination of Ontario inter-college level hockey, winning the 14th annual Laurentian University Invitational College Hockey Tournament in Sudbury last weekend.

It was the second straight year Stong has won the tournament championship, and the fifth time in the past 10 years.

The Stong team won five games on its way to this year's championship. In the first game, Stong shut out Victoria College (Toronto) 4-0, with Robe Martellaci firing two goals and Andrew Spitzer collecting the shutout.

In its second match, the Green Machine edged Huntington College (Laurentian) 4-3, with Chris Dieghan scoring a pair of goals. Game three against the Mudsharks of Laurentian was probably the best of

the tournament, with Stong emerging victorious after a 3-1 battle. Chris Dieghan again led the team with two goals while Jack Lehman notched three assists. In its semi-final contest, Stong picked up the pace in a 7-1 romp over the University of Sudbury as seven different scorers accounted for the goals.

Facing the University College Unicorns (Laurentian) in the tournament final, Stong jumped to a 3-0 lead after two periods and coasted to a 4-1 victory. Stong's marksmen in the championship match were Jeff Carr, Trevor Figuiera, Fred Hermack, and Chris Dieghan.

Stong goaltender Andrew Spitzer was named the Best Goaltender of the tournament while centre and team captain Chris Dieghan won the award for Top Scorer. It was the third straight year that Dieghan received that honor.



Photo: M. SCATTALONI

Yeomen square things in rivalry

Dave Samek gives his imitation of weightlessness, stabbing for a dig in York's 3-game 15-13, 15-13, 15-4 wipe-out of their cross-town rivals, U of T. With the win the Yeomen up their record to an East Division-leading 10-2 while the Blues dropped to 8-3. The two teams were even in their four previous meetings this year which set the stage for last Thursday night's showdown. The East Division winner will get home-court advantage through the playoffs which get under way later this month.