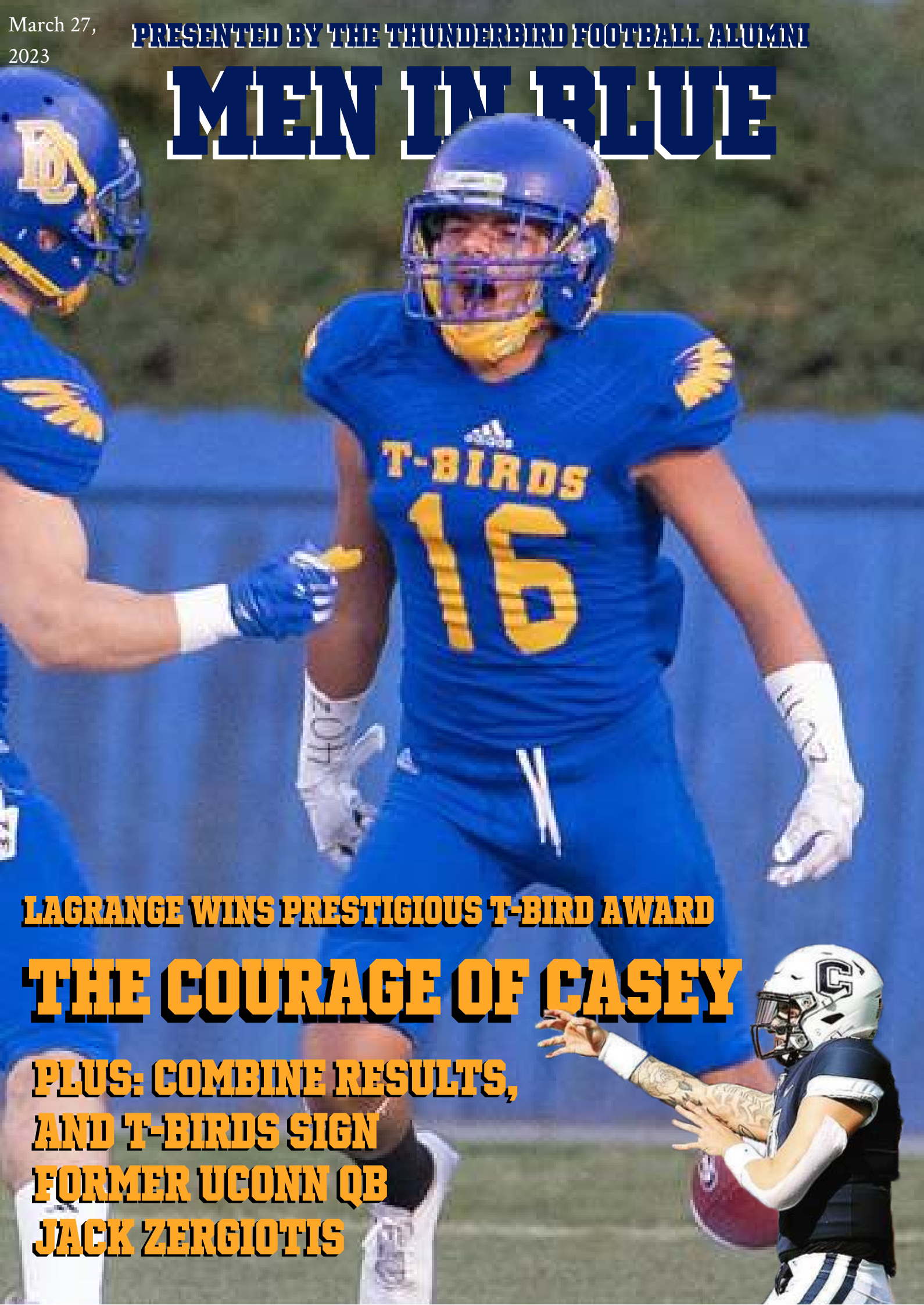


March 27,
2023

PRESENTED BY THE THUNDERBIRD FOOTBALL ALUMNI

MEN IN BLUE



LAGRANGE WINS PRESTIGIOUS T-BIRD AWARD

THE COURAGE OF CASEY

**PLUS: COMBINE RESULTS,
AND T-BIRDS SIGN
FORMER UCONN QB
JACK ZERGIOTIS**

COACH'S NOTE

Doing Justice to 100 Years of Excellence



In what is shaping up to be an extraordinary year for football on the UBC campus, it's business as usual as athletes and coaches are working hard to bring the potential of 2023 to fruition. Under Coach McCullum, weight room gains are noticeable as players go through four

sessions each week. Recruitment nears completion and once again recruitment coordinator Shomari Williams has led an effort to attract some of the most sought-after talent in the country. Finally, as we enter the second half of spring football, the staff appears in place with a few key additions recently announced.

From the perimeter, all this seems consistent from years past, but there is a different "buzz" around the program nowadays, a unique urgency. This of course stems from the reality that 2023 represents the Centennial Year of football at the University of British Columbia. So, while football operations continue in stride, preparation is extensive as Thunderbirds Football looks to showcase our alumni, past coaches, and influential supporters who have all made the last 100 years so exceptional.

Football has, and always will be about the alumni. They are the key in any program, as they have cemented the legacy through past effort, and ultimately hold the keys to success in any future accomplishment. Current Thunderbirds are told regularly they play for those who wore the uniform previously, and to respect that ideology as someday they will ask for the same. So from the 2023 staff and players, we want to say thank-you to everyone who has put on a UBC jersey, or impacted this program over the last century.

Note: Keep alert for details regarding the Centennial Year of Football.

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— Head Coach Blake Nill

INSIDE THE LOCKER ROOM

UBC Signs NCAA Transfer QB Jack Zergiotis

Jack Zergiotis, a former starting quarterback at UConn, has recently committed to play at UBC.

"We're pumped to get him," said OC Stevenson Bone. "He's a guy who can compete at a really high level, he's played at the Division 1A level, he's played in the Power 5 conference. Somebody who elevates the room. Good arm, super athlete. Somebody I've kept tabs on for a long time." The 6'2", 218 lb Zergiotis, a native of Montreal, threw 7 TDs and 1 INT in four games for Merrimack last season.

Bone is careful to distinguish Zergiotis from UBC's last high-profile NCAA transfer, Michael O'Conner. "The comparison is going to be there," Bone said, "but we just want Jack to come in and be comfortable with who he is. And just compete and not worry about what happened here previously, five years ago, 10 years ago, 20 years ago. Just be you, come in, and compete with the guys right away and let the chips fall where they may.

"Everything that Jack is going to get, he's going to earn, much like Mike did when he was our quarterback here before and took the team to a Vanier Cup."

Zergiotis provides an important reinforcement in the QB room, as starter Garrett Rooker continues his recovery from a hip fracture. Backup Derek Engel looked strong in leading the T-Birds to an upset win over Regina in the playoffs, and Jay Mather has been rapidly improving as well, but Zergiotis offers invaluable experience and competition at the game's most important position.



INSIDE THE LOCKER ROOM

LaGrange Receives Courage of Casey Award



Payton LaGrange embodies the traits that Coach Casey looked for in his players, which we define now as “Citizenship, Athletics, Scholarly, Excellence, Youth.” LaGrange has made the Dean’s honour roll, and was named a U SPORTS Academic All-Canadian. LaGrange was a 4-year starter playing defensive halfback, field corner and was a key contributor on the special team units since his freshman season in 2017. That season, the former Notre Dame Cougar was a starter on the record-breaking defensive unit that

ranked number one in the conference. He recorded 30.5 defensive tackles and had two interceptions, including a team-high 50-yard return vs. the Regina Rams.

In 2022, he returned to the field after rehabbing two knee injuries sustained during the 2020-2021 seasons. He's played in three Hardy Cup finals, and accumulated 50 solo tackles and 71 total tackles over his career.

LaGrange is a well-rounded student athlete, a high character and team-first player with outstanding leadership qualities. He was a positional captain and is an ultra-competitive player. He is currently in the interview process for graduate school in Physiotherapy. Throughout his career, Payton has been involved in several UBC football community programs.

"I am truly honoured to receive this award – to share this achievement with previous teammates and alumni that have paved the way for individuals such as myself is very humbling. I am extremely grateful for my time at UBC. Words cannot describe the impact my teammates, coaches, and the athletic therapists have had on my life." – Payton LaGrange

INSIDE THE LOCKER ROOM



Lake Korte-Moore (44)



Jadyn Pingue (35)



Luke Burton-Krahn (40)

Korte-Moore, Pingue, Burton-Krahn Impress at Combine

Three UBC prospects showed out at CFL combines over the past month.

DL Lake Korte-Moore, who rose from 20th to 10th in the most recent rankings from the CFL's scouting bureau, participated in the National Combine, where he put up 18 reps on the bench and ran a 5.04 40 and registered a 35" vertical at 264 lbs.

LB Jadyn Pingue worked out at the Invitational Combine, where he ran a 4.96 40 and hit an 8'8" broad jump. Pingue also had a 31" vertical.

DL/LS Luke Burton-Krahn tested off the charts at the Invitational Combine. Burton-Krahn, one of UBC's most notorious gym rats, ran a 4.84 40, had a 34" vert, and put up 18 reps on the bench. His broad jump was 9'8 1/8". Burton-Krahn topped all participants with his overall testing scores at both DL and LS.

Other big-time T-Bird prospects such as Giovanni Manu, Kyle Samson, and Theo Benedet would have raised their stock as well, but they've withdrawn from this draft to play one more season at UBC.



THE TFA HUDDLE



Thunderbird Football Alumni: Our Mission

1.) To build a strong, actively engaged UBC Football Alumni base.

2.) To raise funds to provide the necessary resources for the Football Program.



2020-2021's Wall of Honour Inductees at the TFA Legacy Dinner (Oct. '22).

Membership is Critical!

Football Alumni are not automatically registered with the Thunderbird Football Alumni. To be able to grow and run a sustainable alumni program, we must have an organized Alumni base. Your TFA Membership is imperative to help us put on events and have an impact on the team. Sign up now!

**CLICK HERE TO
BECOME A TFA
MEMBER**



Define Your 100 Year Legacy

To a large extent, the program's incredible legacy and your own are tightly intertwined – you're a T-Bird for life. The friends, memories, and achievements you got from playing at UBC will always be there, and UBC Football will always be proud to count you as one of their own.

You have the opportunity to help shape the direction of UBC Football in its 100th year, to ensure that our proud winning tradition is maintained, to protect your own legacy and those of the great young men who came before and after you.

By signing up with the TFA and getting involved in any capacity, you can contribute to generating the resources that the program direly needs to exist in Canada's elite tier.

This team has the coaching, and it has the players. The last two seasons, the T-Birds have lost in the playoffs to teams that went on to the Vanier. We're close. With a unified Alumni base, UBC can dominate U SPORTS for years to come.



Alumni golfers at last year's Legacy Golf Classic, which raised \$10,000 towards TFA Scholarships.

Coach Nill's Challenge to the TFA

Head Coach Blake Nill has asked the TFA to achieve three primary objectives this year.

- 1.) Successfully execute our two signature events to raise \$50,000 to max out the scholarships we're allowed to offer.
- 2.) Continue to support the assistant coaches as part of the Coaching Sustainability Program. We are excited to help sponsor the hiring of Dan Dorazio to our coaching staff.
- 3.) Support our student-athletes' well-being and career aspirations with things like mentorships and job opportunities.

SHRINE BOWL GREATS



Leo Groenewegen

UBC's History at the Shrine Bowl

Since 1925, the NFL East-West Shrine Bowl game has benefited the Shriners Children's programs. Each year, the event gives top college players a chance to showcase their talents to NFL/CFL scouts. Since 1985, Canadian university players have also been invited and UBC has had four standouts represent the Thunderbirds in the big game: #66 Leo Groenewegen –OT ('87); #64 Bob Beveridge –OT, ('98); #95 Nick Johansson –DT, ('05); and now #72 Theo Benedet –OT ('23).

Leo Groenewegen (OL): 6'5 280 lbs. Hardy Cup Finalist ('83), Vanier Cup Champion ('86), CW Metras Trophy Lineman –MOP ('86), CW All-Star ('85, '86), CIAU All-Canadian ('86). CFL: Drafted 1st Rd, 1st overall ('87), NFL: Signed as an undrafted free agent with the Oakland Raiders, New England Patriots ('87).

1. Your team wins the game 24-21 at Stanford Stadium – what stands out the most from your Shrine Bowl experience?

The entire experience was incredible. Flying into San Francisco and then getting chauffeured into Palo Alto. Practicing against the best NCAA graduating players who I followed on TV. A packed venue at Stanford Stadium with 77,000 fans on a beautiful California day. I couldn't believe that I was a part of it! A great memory will always be going to the Shriner Hospital and visiting the kids. The players were blessed to be treated so well but the real stars were those children fighting for their health. They and their families had tremendous strength and courage. I loved every minute of being there.

2. Tell us about the coaching leading up to the game?

Without the coaching that I received from Frank Smith (who flew

SHRINE BOWL GREATS

down for the game with his wife Diane) and my T-Bird teammates, the experience would not have happened. We had a disciplined, very talented and hard-working squad that won the Vanier Cup a month previously. I held my own against the best the NCAA had to offer because of them. Ted Tollner (USC HC) was the head coach of the West Squad with Jack Elway (Stanford HC) as an assistant. Everything they coached was something I already experienced and learned through Coach Smith. I will be forever grateful for him, my teammates and UBC for that week in California.



Theo Benedet

1. Theo, you played OG and OT at the Shrine Bowl. Who was the best competition during the week?

Playing both on the inside and outside of the line, I was able to face a large amount of the defensive linemen present at the Shrine Game. From my experience, the best edge rusher I faced was Habakkuk Baldonado from Pitt University, while Dante Stills from West Virginia was the best DT I faced. Many of the players I shared the field with should go in the early rounds of this year's draft, such as Zay Flowers from Boston College.

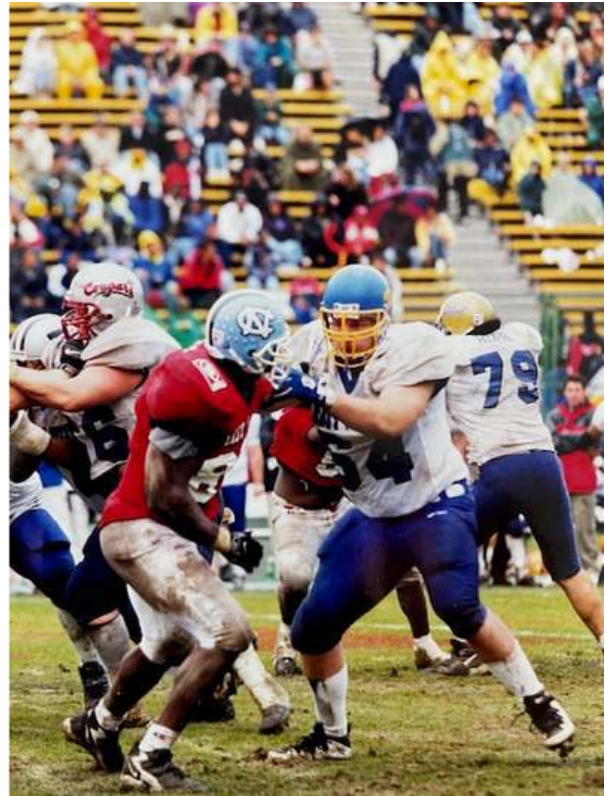
2. Your coaching staff was from the New England Patriots, what was that experience like? Did you get to meet Bill Belichick?

Having an NFL coaching staff has served as a very productive building block for my career. The Shrine Game was my first exposure to the terminology of NFL offences, and, importantly, American offences. Throughout the week, Bill Belichick was actively involved in coaching the team and imparted some words of wisdom when speaking to the team which I will certainly take to heart. He did also tell us all that we had a long way to go (in not as nice terms)! By the end of the week, I was able to shake his hand and introduce myself, which was a super cool moment.

SHRINE BOWL GREATS

Bob Beveridge (OL): 6'6 280 lbs.

Hardy Cup Finalist ('96), Vanier Cup Champion ('97), CW Metras Trophy MOP –Lineman ('97), Bobby Gaul Memorial Trophy ('97), CW All-Star ('96, '97), CIAU All-Canadian ('96, '97). CFL: Drafted 2nd Rd, 10th overall ('98). NFL: Signed as an undrafted free agent with the New England Patriots.



1. '97 National Championship to blocking for QB-Scott Frost of Nebraska, RB-Michael Pittman of

Fresno State, to the New England Patriots training camp. What lessons did take from the Shrine Bowl to propel your football career? The Shrine Bowl was an incredible experience that forced a rapid and steep adjustment in game speed for myself. First day at practice I was doing everything in my power just to survive (and it “seemed” like my competitors were just going 3/4). Each day of practice the game slowed down slightly until the game itself, in which I was able to perform well in my opinion. The biggest factor was obviously the skill and speed level of NCAA Div 1 players, and secondly, looking back, I did not do enough as a player to prepare for the experience. I should have been practicing more independently but that was a big lesson learned there.

2. The week is filled with practice, meetings and social events. Can you tell us about your visit to the Shriners' hospital and the overall impact of the week?

The entire event was meaningful, from the social components to the NFL scout attention and the visit to the Shriners' hospital, which put everything in perspective in terms of how lucky I was to participate in such an event and just appreciate my health.

SHRINE BOWL GREATS



Nick Johansson (DL): 6'2 280 lbs.

Led UBC in tackles for loss—6 and QB sacks—2 ('04), invited to the CIS East-West Bowl ('04), CW All-Star ('03, '04), CIS All-Canadian ('04). Career Stats: 69 defensive tackles, 14 tackles for loss, 6 QB sacks, 2 fumble recoveries.

1. The East squad had two Canadians, Jesse Lumsden from McMaster and Nick Kaczur from Toledo. What were the highlights of the week and did you get to meet with your fellow Canadians?

For me the highlights of the week revolved around attending practice and competing against some amazing athletes. In particular doing 1-on-1 drills against former New England Patriot great Logan Mankins. Suffice to say I did not win that 1-on-1 battle but was able to hold my own throughout our weekly practices. I did have a change to meet briefly with Jesse Lumsden but the majority of my time was spent with my teammates.

2. The d-linemen were from San Jose State, California, Oregon State and Texas A&M. What were the biggest differences in Indy drills and systems leading into the game?

The system that was implemented was a basic 4-3 and I was able to pick it up quickly. In terms of indy drills, nothing stands out — we did many of the drills that we had been doing at UBC.

I think the biggest challenge for me was the adjustment of lining up right on the line of scrimmage and not having a yard off the ball. The speed of the game was faster — I remember correctly reading a down block when the opposing guard pulled across the centre but I wasn't able to squeeze the gap down before the back hit the hole. I think if I had another week to get adjusted to the speed I would've ripped across that down block and stuffed the run!

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1997 VANIER CUP CHAMPIONS