

TOMMY MANASTERSKY: 1929-2012

Versatile athlete had stints with Alouettes, Canadiens

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Tommy Manastersky, who won a Grey Cup with the Alouettes and also played for the Canadiens, died Sunday in Toronto at age 83 after a lengthy illness.

As a 17-year-old student at Montreal High, Manastersky earned a spot with the Alouettes in 1946.

"I was practising with the Alouettes, but just for the experience," Manastersky told *The Gazette* for a *Where Are They Now?* feature in 2002. "I wasn't thinking about making the team. I was going back to play at Montreal High."

The Alouettes understood Manastersky's plans and

didn't use him in any exhibition games, since that might have affected his high school eligibility. But that same year, there was a polio epidemic in Montreal and all school sports were cancelled.

"I guess the Alouettes liked the way I practised and they offered me a contract," Manastersky recalled. "The Alouettes had me running back punts and kickoffs my first year, and the next year I was backup halfback on the offensive unit."

With Virgil Wagner carrying the ball most of the time, Manastersky's number wasn't called often. But when it was, the teenager did the job.

By 1949, Manastersky had become a fixture on kick-

off and punt returns under coach Lew Hayman, as the Alouettes beat Calgary 28-15 in the Grey Cup game at Toronto's Varsity Stadium.

Manastersky was also an outstanding hockey player. Six months before winning the Grey Cup, he was a defenceman with the Montreal Royals team that won the junior Memorial Cup.

On the ice, Manastersky was a physical defenceman, and when injuries hit the Canadiens during the 1950-51 season, they called him up for six games. He was returned to the minors and finished his hockey career that season with the Victoria Cougars. He finished his football career with the Saskatchewan

Roughriders in 1954.

Back in 1949, players didn't receive Grey Cup championship rings. But the Canadian Football League later put in a plan that made rings available to players registered as Grey Cup champions.

"My wife, Carol (Reynolds), and sons, Tim, Tony, Larry and Bill, bought me one as a birthday present," Manastersky said.

A private funeral service is planned and a date for a memorial service has yet to be announced.

For more information and condolences, visit the website at www.etch.ca.

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Tommy Manastersky won a Grey Cup with the Alouettes in 1949.