

# Learning from the best

## Concordia head coach McGrath, others, get to pick brains of Trestman and staff

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As he stood in the press gallery of an indoor soccer facility on Monday morning, watching his former team conduct its training-camp workouts, Gerry McGrath's mind couldn't help but wander. And he realized just how far things have advanced in three decades.

"My first CFL training camp was here, at the University of Sherbrooke," said McGrath, a former kicker who spent four seasons with the Als in the 1980s. "We practised in a cow pasture and had to walk across the highway. There was no security and (you hoped) the cars stopped."

"There were twice as many players and we spent six weeks at camp," he added with a laugh. "Rain or shine, we were out there in the mud. I guess I was born way too soon."

Now, at the first sign of rain, the Als move from Bish-

op's University to the confines of Centre MultiSport Roland-Dussault. And their training camp lasts only about two weeks.

McGrath, the head coach of the Concordia Stingers, spent the day with Montreal general manager Jim Popp, head coach Marc Trestman and his assistants. Part of an initiative adopted by Popp, seven Canadian Interuniversity Sport coaching crews had a question-and-answer session with the staff, watched practice, were treated to lunch and had the option of reviewing game film from last season.

The quarterbacks from the Quebec conference teams spent two days working out and talking strategy, that experience also ending Monday.

"I appreciate the gesture. It was good to come and watch, but most CFL teams are more open," McGrath said. "It's no knock against them, and this will make us all a lot better. I understand they're getting

ready for the season. They're a great team with a brilliant staff. It's nice to have access and pick their brains."

McGrath said he has a good relationship with Trestman, the Als having spent 2010 conducting many of their practices at Concordia.

"The Als are just more closed and secretive," McGrath said. "I understand why. What they're doing here, all CFL teams take a part of and try to emulate. I can tell you that for a fact. Marc's done a fantastic job. We just all would like more insight."

McGrath, 52, spent a handful of seasons as a guest coach at Saskatchewan's training camp, working with the kickers. The Roughriders even attempted to hire him full time. But McGrath, entering his 21st season of university football, is reluctant to leave the program and insists he won't uproot his family.

"It's never a good time to leave," he said. "You recruit young kids and promise them you'll be there. I also promised I wouldn't move my family around."

"It has been a great relationship and ride with Concordia."