

# Widger: No. 2 and trying harder

*High tributes have been paid to Mike Widger, to the point of suggesting he's the second best outside linebacker in the world. It's enough to make a guy go into showbusiness.*

Widger "bumps" Ottawa's Tom Pullen, a illegal move this season.



Jack Gotta was playing host to the media mob after a tough game between the Ottawa Rough Riders and the Alouettes a couple of years ago. There was nothing of historical significance crossing lips until Gotta, in that serious way he had, mentioned that he had spotted a flaw in Mike Widger.

This may not have been historical but it was certainly significant. Mike Widger, All East-now, later to be All-Canadian linebacker, with a flaw? What flaw, Mr. Gotta? Let's hear more about this. Does he cave in under triple coverage? Do his feet get tangled when he crosses over to another zone? Let's hear it Jocko!

"Well, it's not really much," hedged Jocko as he does when he goes into his con act. The mob was alert, as it closed in on the scoop, eyes gleaming, ears pointing and pencils poised, urging him to continue.

"It's something I never noticed before," admitted Gotta as he fixed his audience with that wide-eyed, honour-bright stare that usually precedes a hearty guffaw, "but today it suddenly struck me that once in about every two or three years, Widger plays a bad game."

*He has the pass-coverage against the tight ends. "Tyrone Walls—he's good, and Muller in Toronto—Gabriel in Hamilton. They're the good ones. They're tall kids."*

## WIDGER:

The master of the put-on game settled back comfortably in his chair and guffawed heartily as his audience was left wiping egg off its collective face.

Later, in a more serious vein, Gotta admitted there was more truth than fiction to what he said. He considered Mike Widger a paragon of consistency at the difficult outside linebacker post, an observation in which he has been joined by many another astute football observer.

J.I. Albrecht, for instance, claimed Widger is the best outside linebacker in Canada and maybe the second best in all the world. Chris Hanburger of Washington Redskins might be faster, said Albrecht, but Widger is right behind. J.I., of course is prejudiced. He dug Mike out of Virginia Tech and brought him into Montreal.

Alouette coach Marv Levy has his own appreciation of Mike. "I make a list before each game of several players I want to talk to in particular, to make sure they're ready. Widger is one of the players who's never on the list. He's always ready."

It's a good thing someone talks about Widger because Mike apparently doesn't believe in self-promotion, unless it involves his business enterprises such as Widger Casting, or the Mike Widger Football School. He doesn't have

any special rapport on the field for enemy players. He doesn't bother yacking with them. "I don't talk too much on the field," he says.

One of his primary duties as outside linebacker is to turn in the sweeps. Who are the good blockers he has to contend with?

"Most of them are pretty good."

He also has pass-coverage duties on the outside, mostly against tight ends. Who are the good ones?

"That Walls in Edmonton, he's good. Tyrone Walls. That Toronto end is pretty good too, I forget his name. Oh, Muller. Peter Muller. And the fellow in Hamilton, uh, Gabriel. They're good ones. They're tall kids."

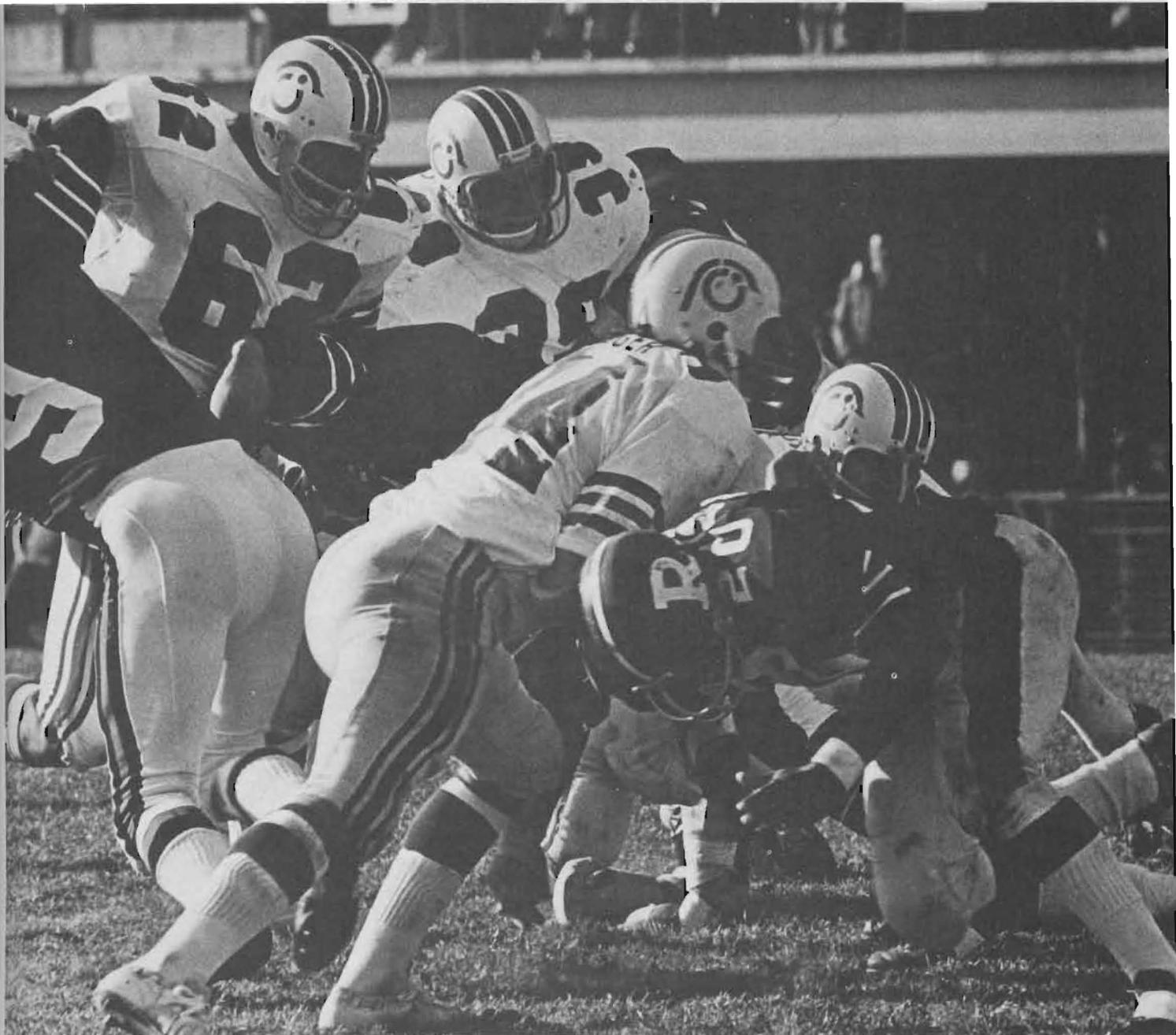
About turning in the sweeps, he had second thoughts on the blocking and figured that Toronto's Bill Symons was a good blocking back and that Ottawa's Jim Evenson was as tough a man to tackle as there is in the league.

Mike is one of the new mob that swept into Montreal in 1970 with such audacious success, transforming a team that had won only two games a year earlier into a Cinderella-like Grey Cup champion. There are only six others besides Widger from that team still on the premises—Peter Dalla Riva,

**Marv Levy claims Widger never needs priming to be up for a game.**



*continued*



Buono (39), Ah You (62) and Widger turn the play to the inside.

## WIDGER:

Terry Evanshen, Gene Gaines, Don George, Barry Randall and Sonny Wade.

Widger and fellow-Alouette Charlie Collins were voted All-Eastern Conference that season, but when next year rolled around, Collins was in a Saskatchewan Roughrider uniform and Widger was the only Alouette linebacker who didn't make All-Eastern Conference. Steve Smear and Mark Kosmos were voted to the jobs.

One year later Widger was back on the all-star roll and Kosmos was

in Hamilton. Then last season Kosmos was in Hamilton and Ottawa, Smear was in Toronto, and Widger made it all the way, finally, to All-Canadian status.

As a full-time resident of Montreal, Widger hopes to pave the way for post-football livelihood with some business ventures, including Widger Casting Ltd., a modest start in show business. He keeps a list of potential actors and actresses, with photographs of them, which makes it easier for the film people to locate talent.

Mike also hopes to develop something lasting out of the Mike Widger Football School for youngsters wishing to learn the finer points of the game.

"There is obviously a market for such a school," said Widger. "It should be good for me, for the Alouettes and for football. There will be no head-busting. We want to show the kids fundamentals. The only contact will be light."

In other words kids, do as Mike says, not as he does. ●