

BIG DAN

Would you believe a 130 pound, 5 foot 9, high school freshman would become the approximate size of a large oak door? Believe it. Check your programme, he's Montreal's number 67.



At 6 feet 4 inches high and 265 pounds heavy, Dan Yochum is very noticeable. That may not be exactly why he's 6 feet 4 inches high, but it is precisely why he is 265 pounds on the hoof.

"I felt the only way to impress my coaches at University of Syracuse was to be the biggest man around," the Alouette offensive lineman recalled recently. "So I worked on the weights and paid attention to proteins, and built myself up."

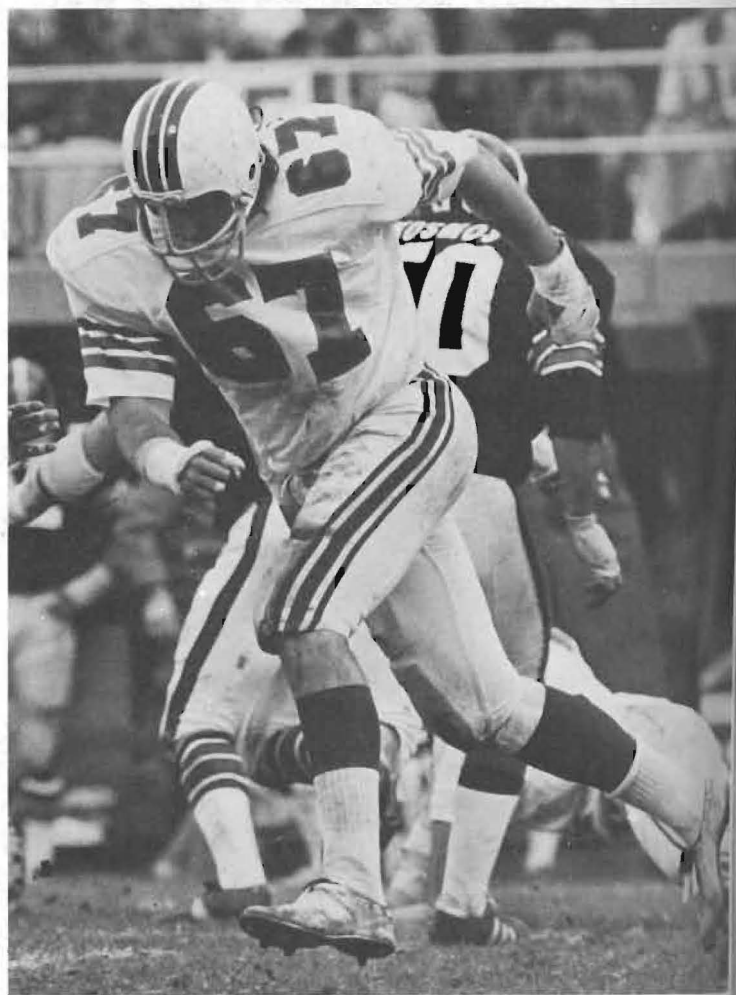
The moral of that little story is that kids in school shouldn't pick on skinny other kids who can only stretch 130 pounds over a 5-9 frame. Those were Yochum's dimensions when he started high school. When he graduated from high school he was 6-3 and 185. By the time he got to University of Syracuse he was 6-4 and 200 pounds.

At that point he stopped soaring skyward and devoted his efforts to growing muscles. In four years at Syracuse he grew 60 pounds of them and he did indeed get the attention of the coaches.

First they had him playing defensive end for his freshman and sophomore years. The graduation wiped out the entire offensive line. The coaches looked around for the biggest replacements, and sure enough they couldn't miss large Daniel.

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Attention to weights and proteins gave Yochum 265 pound silhouette, and the eye of college coaches, and pro scouts.



Forward, or lateral, discipline is a large part of an offensive lineman's makeup.

Yochum:

The same coaches seemed a little perturbed in Dan's senior year, that he would allow something like a broken neck to keep him out of some games, although he came back for the final two games of the season.

"All the strength left one arm," Yochum recalled. "I couldn't even lift a glass. The team doctor was an osteopath and he had X-rays taken and said I had a broken neck."

"Then a neurologist examined me and confirmed that I had broken my neck, but it must have happened when I was a kid. Anyway the fracture had knitted and wasn't troubling me. He said my problem was a stretched nerve, and he wouldn't give me clearance to play football."

"I had been picked to play in the East-West Shrine Game, the Hula Bowl and the Senior Bowl, but the coaches wouldn't let me go to any

A broken neck hadn't stopped him playing before. Why couldn't he play in the East-West Shrine game, the Hula and Senior Bowls?

of them. I don't know whether they thought I should have been playing all along despite my arm, or what. They sent a player to two of those games who hadn't started all the time he'd been at Syracuse until I got hurt."

Fortunately the coaches couldn't stop him from playing when he was picked to join the College All Stars for the annual pre-season joust against the defending National Football League champions. That year it was Dallas Cowboys. "That was good experience for me," he says now.

"We scrimmaged with Chicago Bears and St. Louis Cardinals before we played the Cowboys."

Philadelphia Eagles thought highly enough of Yochum to select him on the second round of the college draft, then for some strange reason they played hard to get when it came time for Dan to commit himself to a professional future.

"The Eagles said they wanted to see me perform in the All Star game, and I felt pretty good when it was over because I felt I had played well. Then they said they hadn't scouted me at the game. I decided they weren't dealing in good faith, so I went home."

When J.I. Albrecht called, Dan was willing, almost eager, to prove himself in football. That's how the Alouettes got a good break.

To paraphrase Al Jolson's famous line, "You ain't heard nothin' yet" about Yochum's football talents. He made All-Eastern Con-

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YOCHUM:

ference last season as an offensive tackle, but his best days are still out in front of him.

He considers his main asset as a football player, is his strength.

"I think I have good speed, too. I don't think I've utilized all my football talents. I'm not a polished player yet by any means. For instance I had problems my first year when they put me on the left side of the line. I had always played the right side and I didn't really feel at home."

He considers himself better suited for offense than defense.

"There is a lot of thinking and control to offensive line play. You have to be more disciplined in your approach to the game. On defense, a lot of the time anyway, you can go all out, go crazy, to get at the quarter back any way you can. You can't play with that abandon on offense."

Big Dan knows the role of offensive tackle isn't likely to make him the cynosure of football action. "You realize you won't be in the limelight and you won't get to be as well known as the exciting backs,

but you do get that warm inner feeling that comes with knowing you've done your job well. I never have to see the game-film to know how I've played."

As an offensive tackle, he comes muscle-to-muscle with defensive ends. How does he rate them? Who is the best at that job?

"I'd say Bill Baker." The answer came promptly as if there was no question about it. "Oh, and that kid from Winnipeg. What's his name? Heighton, yes, Jim Heighton. He's very fast and strong. He's a good one. Baker is very good on the pass rush. He's good on the run too, but he's better on the pass rush."

For awhile last winter, Yochum gave some consideration to joining Alouette teammate Mark Harris as a rugby player in Australia.

"I haven't played a lot of rugby, but I played some around our way. They have teams in Allentown and Harrisburg—college boys mostly. The idea of going to Australia and playing some rugby was attractive (Harris told him he'd be 30 or 40 pounds bigger than any other player) but I had to consider the possibility of picking up an injury that would jeopardize my football career, so I passed it up.

"It's hard to compare rugby and football. In football the players are bigger. In rugby, no one is allowed to block, and blocking is what causes most of the injuries in football."

Yochum is a surprisingly articulate member of the football breed. Not that you expect the language to flow flawlessly from a giant-sized, muscular lineman.

There is a reason, of course. He graduated from Syracuse with degrees in English and Education. He hopes to return and earn his Masters in Education, so he can teach at the college level.

"That's where I would like to teach if I went into it. I'm qualified now for teaching at the high school level, but I don't know. You either love it or you hate it."

He didn't work during the off season but he would like to work into something constructive.

"I don't want a job for a job's sake, but I would like to work at something with a future—probably in sales."

Who could say "No" to dimensions like 6-4 and 265? ●

Yochum and Ottawa's Jim Piaskoski duel in the mud.

