

'Very disappointing': DeAngelis

Kicker isn't happy about not playing this season

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If the kicker on any team has the loneliest job in professional football, what's it like for the backup kicker who never plays?

"There's gold, silver and bronze. You're probably lead," Sandro DeAngelis admitted. "I never expected to sign up for what I signed up for."

Few athletes will ever experience the scenario DeAngelis endured with the Alouettes this season. Released by Hamilton on May 24, less than two weeks before the start of training camp, he signed with Montreal as a free agent six days later. Earlier that month, the Als traded a first-round draft choice to British Columbia for kicker Sean Whyte.

Whyte won the job at camp – predictable, considering the hefty price Montreal paid – and was the Als' punter and placekicker throughout the season. Indeed, Whyte's the East Division nominee for outstanding Canadian at Thursday night's awards ceremony in Vancouver.

DeAngelis, meanwhile, failed to dress for one game, spending all but one week on the reserve roster. He was among the 46 players who received a game cheque, but wasn't among the 42 who dressed.

"There's a side of me that felt like I was stealing cheques," the 30-year-old admitted from his offseason home in Niagara Falls, Ont. "But I'm not here for a paid vacation. I couldn't perceive or enjoy the experience. We have a small window in which to create memories as a player."

It's not like DeAngelis didn't arrive with some credentials. He spent five seasons in Calgary, where he won a Grey Cup in 2008. Indeed, he was named the game's top Canadian player. He's a three-time Canadian Football League all-star and was named the league's outstanding special teams player in 2006.

He signed a lucrative six-figure free-agent contract with the Tiger-Cats, but made a modest 32 of 42 field goals. Although Hamilton paid him an offseason bonus last Feb. 1, the team surprisingly released him, nonetheless.

And now, quite frankly, DeAngelis is wondering what's next.

"I thought I knew the business. But after what happened the last 12 months, it's very confusing," he said. "I have no answers. But I thought, with my resumé, I'd never be in this situation. It's very disappointing. The one year that I'm not an all-star, and I'm out of a job."

"I'm amazed at how quickly people forget."

Nobody expected Whyte to excel in his first season with the Als, given his relative lack of experience with the Lions. While Whyte rarely missed any field goals, a perception existed his punts and kickoffs

could have been better. He punted for a 41.3-yard average, almost a full six yards less than Calgary's Burke Dales and Edmonton's Damon Duval. Whyte's average on kickoffs was only 56.4 yards.

This frequently resulted in the opposition getting good field position, although Andy Bischoff, who co-ordinates the Als' special teams, repeatedly stated Whyte was kicking to a designated spot on the field, hoping to limit returns.

DeAngelis thought Montreal might dress two kickers, with him concentrating on punts and kickoffs. And, since he remains under contract to the Als in 2012, DeAngelis's hands are tied, unless the team trades or releases him. He's unlikely to retire.

To his credit, DeAngelis never was a distraction, although he frequently practised alone, in the end zone, away from the team. He spent the year working on his punting technique.

"I learned more about myself, when a lot of things didn't go my way," he said. "I'm grateful the Als employed me, as horrible as it was not to play."

"This was a tough pill to swallow."

Note – Als owner Robert Wetenhall is to receive an honorary degree from McGill University Wednesday morning during a Place des Arts ceremony. Wetenhall, credited for bringing football back to Montreal, is to receive a Doctor of Laws.

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