

DeAngelis wonders where it went wrong

Former all-star kicker looking for new team

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Sandro DeAngelis was the Canadian Football League's outstanding special teams player in 2006. Two seasons later, he was a league all-star for the third time in four years and was named the outstanding Canadian in Calgary's Grey Cup victory over the Alouettes.

Today, at his request, he's on the unemployment line, wondering what the future holds at age 30, wondering how it all unravelled so quickly.

"This has been one of the most difficult six months of my life," DeAngelis told The Gazette in an exclusive interview after learning of his release. Montreal's backup kicker was waived on Friday – as first reported by montrealgazette.com – learning of the move only upon landing in Phoenix for a family vacation.

DeAngelis signed with Hamilton as a free agent in 2010, following five seasons with the Stampeders. The native of Niagara Falls, Ont., said he did so to be closer to home and his aging parents – claiming he would have been paid more by remaining in Calgary.

But DeAngelis was released last May, following one season with the Tiger-Cats, after displaying some inconsistency in his field goal kicking. DeAngelis has connected on 82.8 per cent of his attempts throughout his career, but slumped to 76.2 per cent in 2010, missing 10 of 42 kicks.

Released by the Ticats on May 24 – not long before the start of training camp – the Als signed him six days later. Montreal had traded a first-round draft choice to British Columbia for Sean Whyte, and DeAngelis thought there would be a fair competition at camp. That never seemed to occur.

Whyte had an outstanding season and was named the East Division's outstanding Canadian. DeAngelis remained on the Als' 46-man roster

throughout the season, but wasn't among the 42 dressing for games.

"I have no idea what happened. I ask myself the same question," DeAngelis said. "Obviously (signing with Hamilton) backfired. I never thought my career would take this crazy a detour. The Als compensated me well to be a good team guy, take a vacation and work on my craft."

"I was led to believe it would be an open competition. I wouldn't have signed had I known this was the situation."

DeAngelis, by no means, is bitter. But every athlete wants to play. Almost immediately following Montreal's elimination against the Ticats in the division semifinal, he requested his release.

General manager Jim Popp, eventually, acquiesced – probably after attempting in vain to trade the commodity.

"I spoke to Jim Popp (Friday) night. He could have crushed me," an appreciative DeAngelis said. "Jim was really classy. He took the time to take care of me. In this business that's tough, but he honoured his word."

"I knew I had no future here."

DeAngelis's exit doesn't necessarily mean Whyte will come to camp in June unchallenged. Despite trading for Whyte, the Als selected kicker Brody McKnight with their first choice (eighth overall) in last year's Canadian college draft. McKnight, who played collegiately at Montana, was expected at that time to be selected in this year's NFL draft. That might still occur, although those with knowledge of the situation are suggesting that scenario now appears more remote.

If McKnight isn't drafted and doesn't get signed by an NFL team as a free agent, he'll have no alternative but to report to the Als.

"I'll say Sandro will be back. The CFL hasn't heard the last of him," said Fred Weinrauch, his Montreal-based agent. "We have to wait for the time and right opportunity."

"He's near the top of a lot of stats and he's a non-import. That helps."

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