

# Deslauriers not making excuses

## Receiver says the season opener's poor 'performance can't happen'

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For the record, Éric Deslauriers insisted, it was one drop—not two—last Sunday in the season opener at Calgary. And the Alouettes receiver would be the first to admit that's one drop too many.

"I like to say I'm on a short leash," Deslauriers said following Wednesday's practice at Stade Hébert in St. Léonard. "Every day I'm trying to get one more chain, one more chain."

Deslauriers, the former first-round (seventh overall) draft choice in 2006, figures to finally have an expanded role with the Als this season created, in part, because of the retirement of Kerry Watkins. It has been a slow and laborious process for Deslauriers, who has a scant 48 career receptions through his first five seasons with Montreal.

The 6-foot-4, 206 pounder knows he's in no position to make mental mistakes and drop passes should he continue seeking an increased role.

"I'm happy with my greater role and to finally be involved in the offence," he said. "It's more than my role in past years."

Deslauriers caught two passes, gaining a modest 13 yards, in last Sunday's embarrassing 38-10 defeat against the Stampeders. He dropped a pass late in the opening quarter—the third time the Als failed to generate a first down on a drive—with Montreal already trailing 17-0.

And Deslauriers appeared to drop another in the second quarter, just before Sean Whyte's 32-yard field goal.



TODD KOROL REUTERS

Alouettes tailback Brandon Whitaker was held to 43 yards on 11 carries by the Stampeders on Sunday.

Deslauriers said he feared the pass was going to be intercepted, so stuck his hand out to disrupt the defensive back. In retrospect, he should have allowed the pass to continue to Brian Bratton, who was open on the play.

It was that kind of a day for the Als offensively, limited to an uncharacteristically low 208 yards and 11 first downs.

"I should have definitely caught the first one," Deslauriers said. "The defender made a good play, but I should have had it. I'm human, but obviously, I have to have that. That was a play I needed to make to get the offence started. A lot of things were going a little sour, and that would have been a big boost."

Deslauriers, like most others, is curious to see how the Als will respond this week. Montreal launches its regular-season home schedule Friday night against Winnipeg.

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# ALS 'We were flat'

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The defending East Division champions also lost their first game, at British Columbia.

"No excuses. It's an offence filled with veterans," Deslauriers said. "That performance can't happen."

While players and coaches are loath to juxtapose one season with another, the fact remains Montreal has failed to win its last five games, dating to Oct. 16. The Als lost their final three regular-season games, when only a tie would have propelled them into first place in the division, as well as their semifinal playoff game.

A loss to the Blue Bombers, combined with a return encounter against theStampeders on July 12 could lead to this season getting ugly fast

"I did realize we've been on a slide, but I didn't realize it was that much of a slide," Deslauriers said. "I don't want to say this week's a must-win but, being at home in front of our fans, ...

"Obviously the guys in the locker believe, but there's a lot of doubters," he added. "There's a lot of doubters and haters that don't believe in us."

Als tailback Brandon Whitaker is among the offensive members seeking retribution against the Blue Bombers. Whitaker, the Canadian Football League's rushing leader in 2011, was held to 43 yards on 11 carries by Calgary. Take away a game-high

14-yard gain and Whitaker produced 29 yards on 10 carries – not that the offensive line did him any favours.

"That was unacceptable for me and the team. I'll make up for it," Whitaker vowed. "We weren't in a good flow. We were flat and our energy was down. When one person makes a mistake, it affects the entire offence – and there were mistakes every play.

"We didn't want to be 0-1. There's urgency every game," he added.

Head coach Marc Trestman knows one game doesn't define a season – not this early, anyways. But should his players come out without emotion for a second consecutive game, he knows there will be an underlying question of motivation that will require addressing.

"We've got seasoned guys who have to step up," Trestman said. "We've got to show we're going to move in the right direction and are getting better as a team. That's what this week's all about.

"We've got to find a way to win a game and be a better team."

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## EMRY FINED

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