



JOHN MAHONEY GAZETTE FILE PHOTO

Robert Edwards (47), who was granted his release from the Alouettes last week, says it was time to jump ship before he was pushed.

## Edwards gets fresh start in Toronto

### Veteran tailback doesn't understand why he fell out of favour with Alouettes

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Robert Edwards continues maintaining his innocence.

Almost a week after his release — at his request — from the Alouettes, and as he prepares to play for a new team, the veteran tailback still is attempting to fathom his fall from grace in Montreal following a pair of 1,000-yard rushing seasons.

"I was upset ... more disappointed," Edwards said yesterday by telephone from Winnipeg. "I played hurt, with cracked ribs. There's a lot I didn't have to do, but I put it on the line.

"All people outside the organization think it's me, but they don't know my position or my role. I had eight one-yard attempts. Of course, my average is going to be down."

Edwards, 32, was the Als' starting tailback for three games this season, but gained only 72 yards on 27 carries. His longest run was seven yards. He fumbled twice, turning the ball over once, and blew a blocking assignment on a critical third-down play in a game, as Montreal failed to score from the one.

With the Als sitting at 1-3, Edwards was replaced by CFL rookie Jarrett Payton, a player six years younger who has a similar running style. Edwards was a healthy scratch, meaning he continued receiving his salary.

With Montreal on a three-game winning streak, and after watching Payton burn Calgary for 160 yards along the ground in the last game — although Payton committed two turnovers, one of which was returned for a touchdown — Edwards requested his

release from general manager/head coach Jim Popp.

Edwards signed with Toronto the next day and will start in the Argonauts backfield tonight, against the Blue Bombers, replacing the injured John Avery.

"I didn't have a lot of fumbles in Montreal," Edwards said. "I could have gone the rest of the season and not had one. Yeah, I had one in the Grey Cup, but I can't remember the last one before then.

"A lot of issues were brought to light and magnified. Just like all of a sudden I'm not a good blocker. They need reasons to justify their decision. I knew I was fighting an uphill battle coming to training camp. When you're losing, it's not hard to make a change.

"Jarrett had 20 carries in one game," Edwards continued. "I got 27 in three games. And Jarrett had two fumbles in one game."

Edwards said it was time to jump before he was pushed. With NFL training camps coming to an end, there will be a plethora of

players on the street seeking employment. He figured the Als would only go so long paying a player who wasn't playing.

"I still want to play and didn't like the situation," he said. "They weren't going to hang on to me forever. I just want to be on the field. I have no ill will against Montreal, Jim Popp or the organization.

"I have a lot of heart, and you can't measure heart."

Yesterday, Popp maintained it never was his intention to jettison Edwards. But, Popp added, he didn't want a disgruntled player on the team.

"We had to give somebody else a chance," Popp said. "I hope Robert plays (in Toronto) a long time. I'm sure he did his research before deciding to leave."

The Als and Argos don't meet again until Oct. 12, but Edwards' stay in Toronto could be long. Avery is nursing an ankle injury. He was to undergo an ultrasound on Wednesday, but it was cancelled. Instead, Avery will have an MRI performed.