

Alouettes' return game falling well short

Guy averaging only
4.6 yards per carry

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THE GAZETTE

THURS. 19 JULY 2012

In a business that demands results, one in which only fools are considered tolerant, Trent Guy is asking for patience.

The latest player to handle punt returns for the Alouettes sincerely believes it's only a matter of time before he busts one for significant yardage.

"We're going to get a big one, eventually," the rookie said on Wednesday, after the team's outdoor practice at Stade Hébert in St. Léonard. "We've put a big emphasis on special teams this week – as we have the past two weeks."

"It's going to happen sooner than people think."

The Als' poor return game is nothing new, and it has reared its ugly head again this season. Guy, the latest in a carousel of returners Montreal has utilized since the successful days of Larry Tay-

lor and, following him, Tim Maypray, has a ridiculously poor 4.6-yard average. He has 10 returns for 46 yards.

In a league where Hamilton's Chris Williams is averaging 20.6 yards and already has scored two touchdowns, Guy's statistics are almost embarrassing. Guy does have a 21-yard return to his credit, undoubtedly meaning he's capable of success, but time could well be running short for the 24-year-old, who comes to the Als from the Louisville Cardinals – and following stints with Oakland and Carolina in the NFL.

Head coach Marc Trestman, while reluctant to make a change prematurely, continues to address the issue. It seems rarely a day passes without him being asked about the team's lack of success.

"At some point in time, we'll sit down and analyze exactly what we're doing. We've made changes before," Trestman conceded. "But we're hoping and not anticipating that we'll have to."

"It certainly has our attention," he added. "We have to make sure they all know who

to block. Do that, and we give ourselves a chance. We've missed some blocks and lost guys as we're running downfield. At the end of the day, we've got to do a better job."

When Trestman and his assistants review the situation, they'll have to determine whether it's the players or the system, but something appears amiss. Last season alone, eight different Montreal players returned punts, although the majority were handled by Perry Floyd and Maypray, once he was repatriated. Rashaud Slaughter and Bo Bowling also got their opportunities for a game.

The Als averaged 7.7 yards on punt returns, failing to score a touchdown. Conversely, opposing teams averaged 9.5 yards against Montreal – and scored three times.

No matter how anyone

looks at it, it's difficult to put a positive spin on the dilemma.

Against Calgary last week, Guy particularly struggled, generating five yards on six punt returns. Considering one generated eight yards, it's not difficult to determine he was spinning his wheels in neutral on the others.

"Only progression. We can't go nowhere else but up," said Guy who, as the returner, is the focal point of fans' derision. "We'll continue to work hard and believe in our return game. We'll keep fighting to get that big one. This is a team game. I'm going to keep believing in myself, and my teammates believe in me. They haven't given up on me."

"Maybe I've got to make another guy miss," Guy acknowledged. "I can't blame those guys and they can't blame me. If they want to put it on my shoulders, I'm willing to take it. We've drawn up good schemes. It's one thing, here and there. We can't have that mess-up every single play. Everything has to be right."

Trestman said he wants a returner who, obviously, takes care of the ball and makes good decisions. That,

he added, is paramount. He also wants a returner who makes good decisions when he's not handling the ball and it's rolling around. In other words, knowing when to concede a single and when it's worthwhile attempting a return.

"We're looking for a difference-maker, certainly," the coach said. "We want him to take the ball, have some space, make a play and make a difference. Recapture field position and put our offence in better position to score."

Presumably, that day's coming. We're just not sure when. And whether it'll be Guy who finally discovers the elixir.

"If they decide I'm not the fit, I can't control that," Guy said. "Believing in myself got me this far."

"A lot of our situations, it has been a safe punt return. The coaches want us to catch the ball and hit it, north-south," he added in explanation. "The main thing is catching it and getting it into (Anthony Calvillo's) hands."

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ANDERSON RETURNS

Dwight Anderson returns to the Als secondary, wearing a cast on his finger. For more, go to montrealgazette.com/thesnap