

'A good kid who loves football'



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On the first day of the rest of his life, Patrick Lavoie - one of the newest Alouettes following Thursday's Canadian Football League draft - arose at the crack of dawn for his day job - a 7 a.m. shift delivering beer in Quebec City.

He celebrated with friends the previous night, after being selected by the Als in the second round (11th overall), but retired early, knowing what awaited him in the morning.

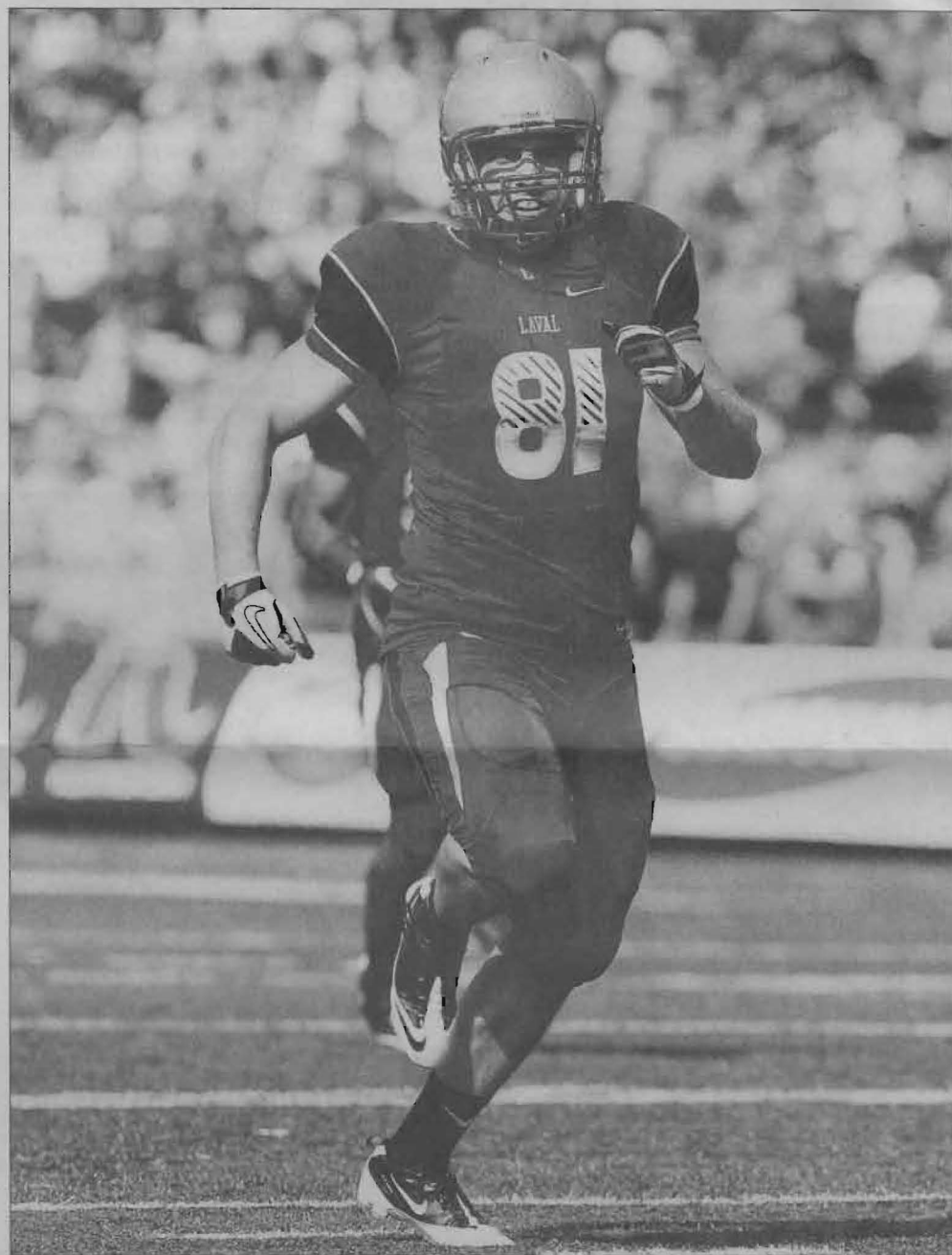
When Lavoie's cellphone rang after 4 p.m. on Thursday - right after Hamilton selected his Université Laval teammate, linebacker Frédéric Plesius, 10th overall - he was surprised to hear the voice of Als general manager Jim Popp, wondering whether he was healthy, and ready to catch and block for Montreal. Lavoie, who figured he might get picked in the third round, was told by Popp to watch TV, since he was about to become an Alouette.

Surreal?

Most certainly. But no more than the path the native of Ste. Flavie took to make it this far.

Forget for a moment that Lavoie, 6-foot-2 and 240 pounds, was the first running back selected in the draft, perhaps after displaying some proficiency at the CFL's evaluation camp in March. There, he ran a 4.8 over 40 yards - fourth-fastest among backs. Along with his running ability, Lavoie displayed reliable hands.

Lavoie, 24, didn't begin playing football until age 16 - he was a hockey player until then - when he took the sport up at a Mont-Joli high school, hardly considered a beehive of football activity. While Lavoie said he had good hands and hockey vision, the centre knew his skating skills



YAN DOUBLET

Patrick Lavoie, who won two Vanier Cups with Université Laval's Rouge et Or, didn't start playing football until he was 16. He switched to fullback from slotback in 2010.

would prevent him from advancing much farther in that sport.

He was green and at least 20 or 25 pounds lighter when he arrived at the Rouge et Or's Ste. Foy campus in 2008, playing sparingly his first two seasons. But Laval head coach Glen Constantin saw something in the prospect.

"He's very smart. He's just a good kid who loves football," Constantin said. "The first year, he didn't dress much, but he trusted us. He learned. He was a late bloomer who

picked it up.

"He's a solid person," Constantin added. "I wouldn't say he's blue-chip, but he blossomed over the years."

Lavoie arrived at Laval as a slotback before being switched to fullback in 2010. Constantin, the school's head coach since 2001, believed Lavoie was oversized and not quick enough to play receiver. The kid easily could have balked when approached by Constantin, realizing the slotback position is more prestigious. But he accepted, doing

everything that was asked.

Lavoie caught a modest eight passes for 88 yards last season, scoring three touchdowns. That increased his career totals to 30 passes for 374 yards and nine TDs in 25 games. He won the Vanier Cup in 2008 and 2010 with the Rouge et Or, catching two passes for 22 yards in the latter championship game.

Lavoie makes no qualms, believing he wouldn't have been drafted were it not for the position change.

"For sure, no," he said. "I

just wanted to help the team when I made the move.

"For me, it wasn't important to be a glamour player. I do my job and that's it. I played some tight end my first two years, so I learned some blocking skills. I learned blocking and pass protection. I'm just a hard worker who understands football."

The Als undoubtedly did their due diligence on this one, scout Joey Abrams calling Constantin the night before the draft to inquire about Lavoie.

"I wouldn't say it's a steal, but it was a good, astute choice," Constantin said.

The Als were full of surprises on Thursday.

With their second choice (18th overall) they selected Bo Adebayo, a defensive end from Western Kentucky. The 6-foot-3, 265-pounder reports to the National Football League's Detroit Lions next Thursday for a three-day mini-camp. Adebayo goes there strictly on a tryout basis, having not yet been offered a contract. That comes should he impress Lions officials.

In the meantime, he reports without pressure, knowing the Als make a more-than-viable option.

"It's a dream to play pro. It doesn't matter which league," Adebayo said from his Bowling Green, Ky., residence. "I'll go to the Lions and give it my best. But if it doesn't work out, I'm ready to play for the Als. This is another opportunity on the table. I'm blessed and humbled to be part of the Alouettes' organization."

Born in Edmonton, Adebayo moved with his family at age 8 to Lawrenceville, Ga., just north of Atlanta. He applied to the CFL last January for non-import status, after coming off his most successful collegiate season. He had 31 tackles and four sacks in only nine starts.

"Bo could very well be the steal of the draft," said Darren Gill, his Montreal-based agent.

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