

# Mudge keeps surgeon on speed-dial

## CLEANS OUT RIGHT KNEE DURING BYE WEEK

### Als' 6-foot-7 tackle has had 10 procedures

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THE GAZETTE

THURS. 23 AUG. 2007

How I spent my summer vacation, by Dave Mudge.

Rather than spend the bye week in the schedule – the only week off enjoyed by the Alouettes this summer – by going to New York, or returning home to Winnipeg, the veteran offensive tackle underwent arthroscopic surgery on his right knee. Oh yes, he also squeezed in a side trip to Vermont with his girlfriend.

For those keeping score at home, the surgery was the fourth performed on Mudge's knees. In all, 10 surgical procedures have been performed on his 6-foot-7, 305-pound frame during his nine CFL seasons. The surgeries have required him to miss only two games. However, a third will probably come Saturday, against Hamilton.

"For whatever reason, my joints go in or are pulled out and require relatively minor surgery," he said.

Mudge believes the injury was

sustained early this season, but he continued playing, struggling at left tackle. There might be some correlation between the injury and his performance, but he has always been more comfortable playing the right side, and returned there Aug. 9, against Calgary.

After an MRI proved inconclusive, doctors ordered the surgery, removing three fragments of cartilage.

"It immediately felt better," he said. "It was good to do it, and I'm glad I did. Before, there was pain when I'd straighten my leg and put weight on it. It was bearable and I could function. It just wasn't comfortable.

"I'd hate to blame anything on the injury, but I'm more comfort-

able on the right side and I was more comfortable getting back there last game."

Mudge will probably be replaced by Luke Fritz, who missed two games with a third-degree sprain of the medial collateral ligament in his right knee. The injury is similar to that sustained by cornerback Davis Sanchez, who was placed on the nine-game injured list. Fritz returns to the lineup sporting a brace.

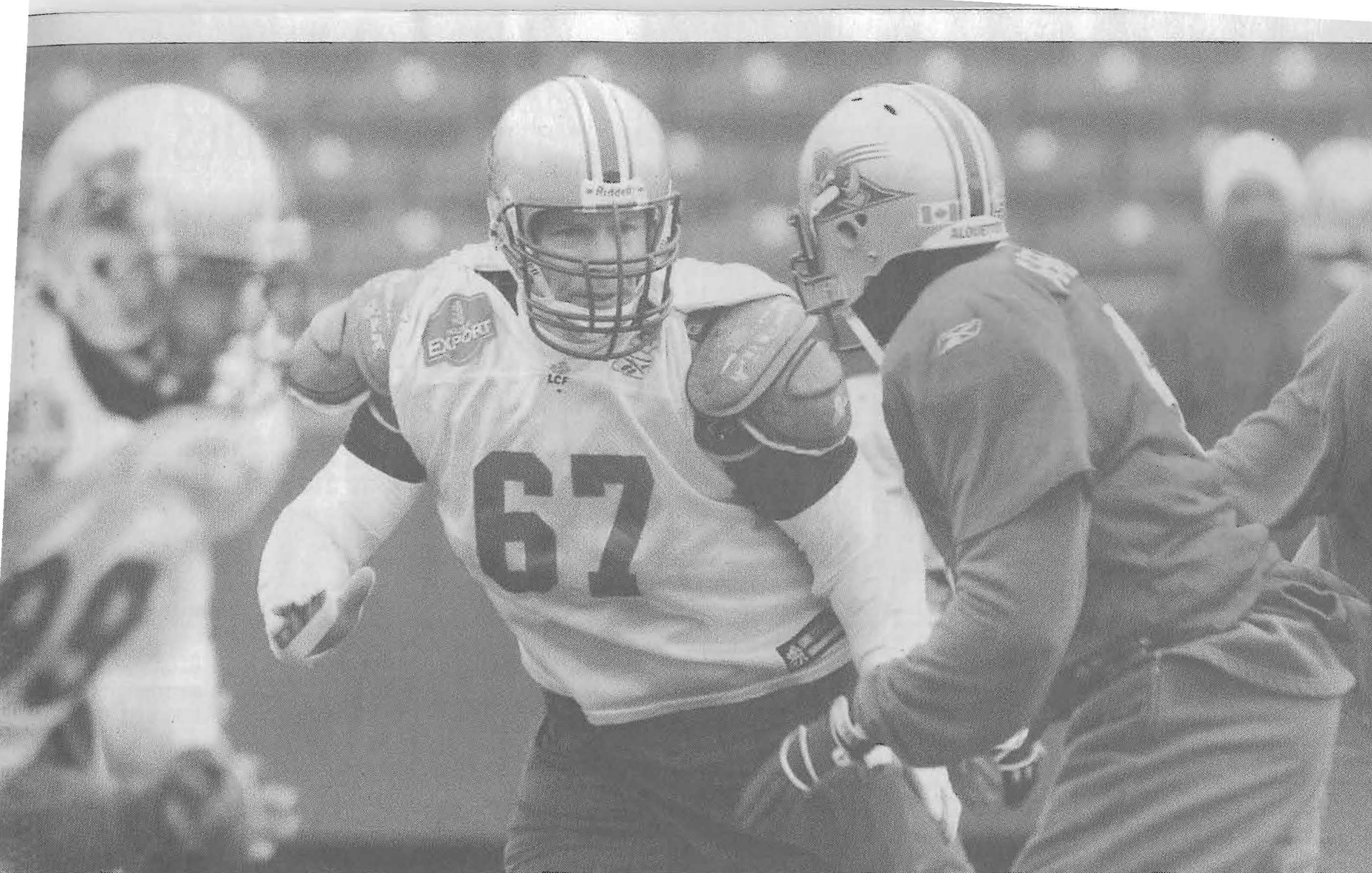
Things could become interesting on the offensive line in a hurry. There's a potential logjam at the position, with nine players vying for six jobs – five starters and one backup. There doesn't appear to be room for Fritz and Mudge at right tackle,

and a trade might be on the horizon.

"There's a lot of linemen, and we all can play. That should make us better," Fritz said. "But I'm here to play. I've made that clear throughout my career."

Mudge's take: "You don't want to think you need external pressure, but it is a reminder: There's a lot (of linemen) here and (management's) watching."

**Notes** – Linebacker **Timothy Strickland** missed his second straight day of practice with back spasms. If he's not on the field today, he's unlikely to face the Tiger-Cats. ... Running-back **Kerry Carter**, who will join the Als once he passes his physical, has returned home to rehabilitate his quad strain.



KEN GIGLIOTTI CANWEST NEWS SERVICE FILE PHOTO

Once he recovers from arthroscopic surgery on his right knee, the Alouettes' Dave Mudge (centre) will have to battle Luke Fritz for playing time at right tackle.