

Former Paladin Reed Restores Tradition

Written by Mike Kelly
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Kavis Reed has the Edmonton Eskimos of the Canadian Football League off to their best start since 1980, when a future Hall of Famer named Warren Moon was leading the franchise.

The Eskimos, who rallied to beat Toronto 26-25 at Commonwealth Stadium Friday night are now 5-0. They are the last unbeaten team in the league and they currently own a four-point lead on the Calgary Stampeders in the CFL's Western Conference. They say a team reflects the personality of its head coach.

Well, if that's the case, the Eskimos have done just that. Reed, a relentless player, who had his career cut short by a neck injury, has taken his determination to the sidelines. He developed a reputation for his aggressive, attack-style defenses. The Winnipeg Blue Bombers, despite their 4-14 record last season, allowed the fewest net passing yards (4,580) were second in fewest net yards allowed offensively (6,203) in 2010. His aggressive style led Saskatchewan to a Grey Cup (the CFL's version of the Super Bowl) appearance in 2009.

Reed, who was small in stature (5-foot-11, 165 pounds) but played with emotion, competed at Furman from 1992-94, where he racked up 114 tackkes and five interceptions; he played for the Eskimos from 1995-99 before his career was cut short by injury. Ironically, Reed failed the eye test on his first day at practice.

Since then, he has taken his talents to the sidelines, beginning as a defensive backs coach and working with special teams in 2001. And now he has a franchise known of its championships and post-season success back on track.

"We're going to build a culture that has been reflective of the Eskimos of the past, where you're afraid to be the weak link and you're excited about being part of the process," Reed said. "I'm prepared to roll up my sleeves and help restore this franchise's lustre.

"Football is sort of like a flu bug. When it hits you, it's in your system and it consumes your system. For whatever reason, that bug is still there. It's a passion for me."

And for a proud team that's missed the playoffs three times in the last five years, the Eskimos are tied with Calgary for the second fewest points allowed (99) in the the CFL (Winnipeg has allowed the fewest points with 94). And even though the season is just five games old, Reed has succeeded in bringing back something that's been missing the last five years.

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