

Ten Things You Probably Don't Know About the Montreal Alouettes



KIDWILER COLLECTION/DIAMOND IMAGES

New York Giants running back Alex Webster (29) with the ball during the NFL Championship Game on December 30, 1956 at Yankee Stadium. Webster signed with the CFL's Montreal Alouettes and played for them for two seasons before joining the Giants in 1955.

Sheldon Mulman _____

1. How the Name Came About.

The origin of the team's name comes from the 425th Squadron—the Royal Canadian Air Force's first French Canadian squadron. Founded in 1942, the 425th Squadron quickly became known as the "Alouettes" in honor of the native Gallic bird renowned for its tenacity as well as for flying at very high altitude. The unit holds more than 190 medals for defending its country during the Second World War.

2. First African American Player.

Herb Trawick, who played his college ball at Kentucky State, joined the Alouettes in 1946, and was the

first African American to play in the CFL. He played with the Als until 1957 and was a seven-time All-Star. He was elected team captain in 1951.

3. And the Heisman Goes to...

Three Heisman Trophy winners have played for the Alouettes—Johnny Rodgers (1973–1976), Troy Smith (2013–2014), and Johnny Manziel (2018).

4. Alex Webster's Start.

Former New York Giants running back and head coach Alex Webster started his pro career in Montreal. He was drafted by Washington in the 11th round in 1953, but opted to sign with the Als. He played with the team in 1953 and 1954 before joining the Giants.

5. Heading It Up in the Box.

Darrell Mudra was the head coach of the Alouettes in 1966 (his record was 7–7), before resigning to join the University of Arizona. What was somewhat unusual was that Mudra coached the team from the press box.

6. Montreal and NFL Head Coaches.

The Alouettes had two head coaches who later became NFL head coaches—Marv Levy (Kansas City Chiefs 1977–82, Buffalo Bills 1986–97), and Marc Trestman (Chicago Bears 2013–14). And three coaches who were an NFL head coach before becoming the Alouettes head coach. Jim Trimble was the Als head coach from 1963–65 and had been head coach of the NFL's Eagles from 1952–55. Rod Rust was head coach of the New England Patriots for a single season in 1990 and was the Alouettes

head man for the 2001 season. And Mike Sherman, was the Als leader in 2018 and had been the Green Bay Packers head coach from 2000–2005.

7. A New Name.

The Alouettes were renamed the Concordes from 1982–85. Sam Berger had sold the team to Nelson Skalbania in 1981. On May 13, 1982 Skalbania was unable to meet his financial obligations and had to return the team to the league.

On May 14 Charles Bronfman, owner of the Montreal Expos, was granted the rights to the franchise. With Skalbania unwilling to relinquish the Alouettes name, Bronfman renamed the team the Concordes. The team remained the Concordes until 1986, when Skalbania gave up the rights to the Alouettes intellectual property. During the tumultuous Skalbania period, former NFL head coach George Allen was named team president in February 1982, with an option to purchase the team. However, with Skalbania unable to clear up his debts, Allen abruptly resigned in April 1982.

8. Brawling with the Bears.

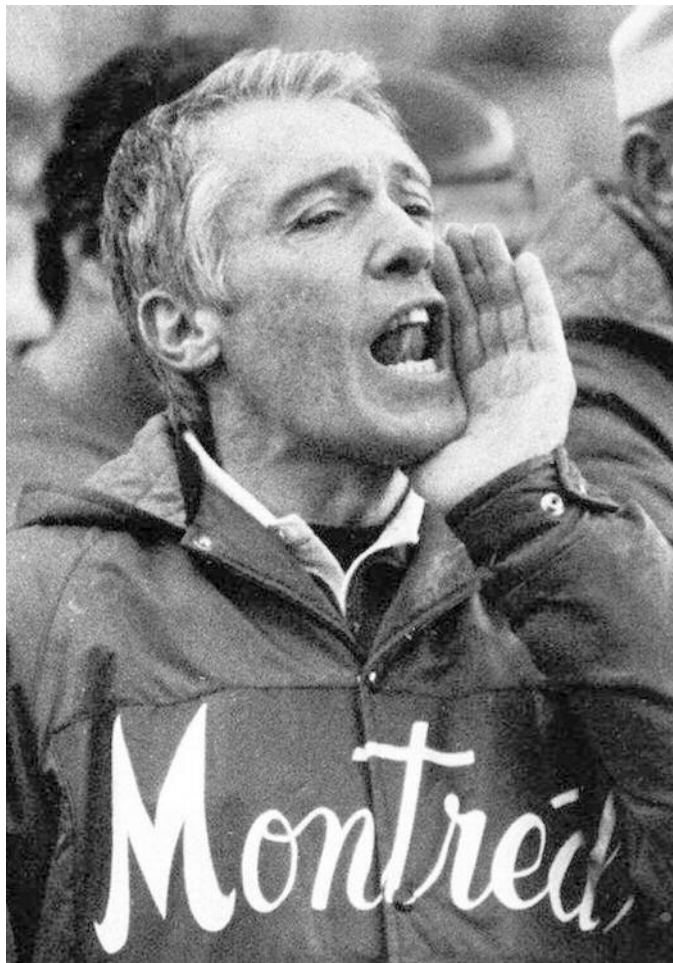
Montreal played the Chicago Bears in an exhibition game on August 5, 1961 at Molson Stadium. The Bears defeated the Als, 34–16. The first half was played under CFL rules, with the second half using NFL rules. Over the course of the game four players were ejected for fighting. Attendance was 16,293.

9. Chasing a Bronco.

Al Cowlings, former NFL player and the close friend of O. J. Simpson who was the owner and driver of the white Ford Bronco during the infamous low-speed police chase on June 17, 1994, played four games for the Alouettes in 1978.

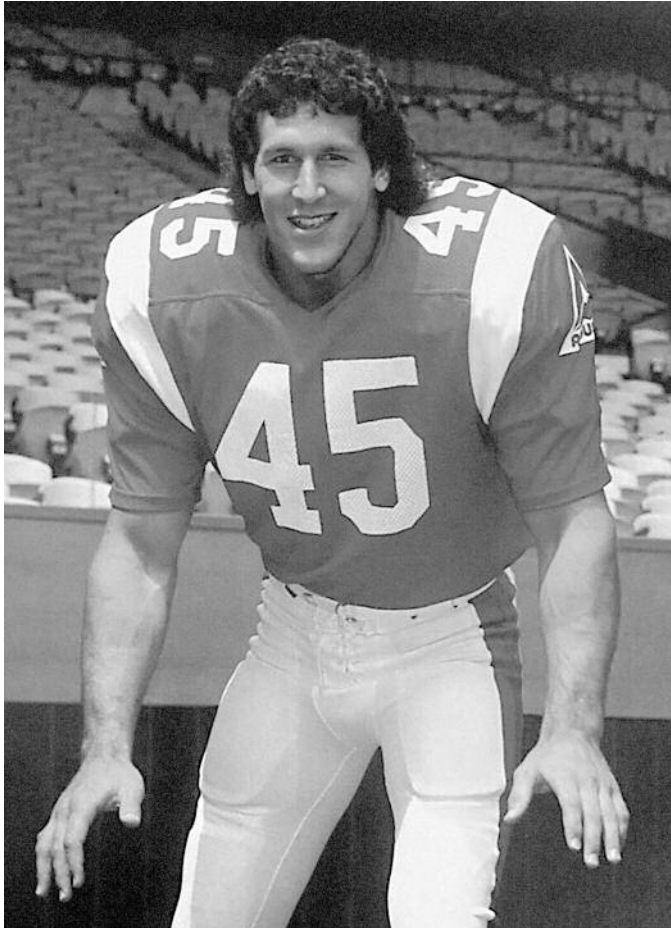
10. One Hand Washes the Other.

Marv Levy and Bill Polian first crossed paths in 1976 when Polian was a Montreal scout and head coach Levy was impressed with his scouting reports. When Levy moved on to the Kansas City Chiefs, he hired Polian as a professional scout in 1978. And when Polian became the Buffalo Bills general manager in 1986 he appointed Levy as head coach.



THE (MONTREAL) GAZETTE

Alouettes head coach Marv Levy on the sidelines during a game in 1976. Levy would leave Montreal in 1978 to coach the Kansas City Chiefs in the NFL after winning two Grey Cup titles in Canada.



Montreal linebacker Tom Cousineau in a publicity photo from 1981. Despite being drafted as the first overall pick in the NFL draft by Buffalo, Cousineau chose to play in the CFL with the Alouettes. He would later sign with the Cleveland Browns in 1982.

Five Bonus Things You Probably Don't Know About the Alouettes

11. Als Steal No. 1 NFL Draft Pick.

Tom Cousineau was the first overall NFL draft choice by the Buffalo Bills in 1979. He chose instead to sign with the Alouettes and played with the team from 1979–81. He was named Most Valuable Defensive Player in the 1979 Grey Cup game.

12. Homes of the Alouettes.

The Alouettes have played in four home stadiums in Montreal: Delorimier Stadium (1946–1953), Molson Stadium (1954–1967, 1972, 1998–present), Autostade (1968–1971, 1973–1976) and Olympic Stadium (1976–1986, 1996–1997).

13. Grey Cup Winners.

The Alouettes have won the CFL Grey Cup championship eight times (1949, 1970, 1974, 1977, 2002, 2009, 2010, 2023), and have been defeated 11 times.

14. The CFL's Largest Crowd.

The Montreal franchise hosted the largest ever CFL crowd. There were 69,093 fans in attendance at Olympic Stadium on September 6, 1977. The Toronto Argonauts defeated the Alouettes, 20–14.

15. NFL Quarterback “Super-Fail.”

In 1981 the Alouettes and owner Nelson Skalbania signed former NFL star quarterback Vince Ferragamo, who had led the Los Angeles Rams to the 1978 Super Bowl, to a contract reported to be worth \$400,000 a year, that included a one-year option. However, Ferragamo was never able to adapt to the Canadian game with its 12th man, and lasted only one season before returning to the Rams. In 13 games he completed 175 of 342 passes (51.2%), with seven touchdown passes and an incredible 25 interceptions.

SHELDON MULMAN is the national accounts manager for a knitwear manufacturer and a long-time Montreal Alouettes fan. He has also made two trades of memorabilia with former New England Patriots head coach Bill Belichick.

Editor's Note: The sources listed below correspond to the item numbers in the article.

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