

## Part 2 of 2

The East is going to be the story in the CFL this year as in the first time in a long time most of the teams have made a concerted effort to get better. With Ricky Ray, Henry Burris and the ageless Anthony Calvillo as well as Buck Pierce and his crew of backups in the East it can be argued that the West no longer boasts about having the stronger Quarterback contingent.

With Toronto and Hamilton both making strong pushes this year it can be argued that it's the first time in a long time that Montreal's given first place finish is in jeopardy. On top of that with a strong emphasis on interdivisional play the distance between first and last place is probably going to be very close and we might see an Eastern Crossover for the first time in CFL history.

So how is it going to play out, let's look at it and see

## Eastern Division

### Hamilton Tiger-Cats 10-8

**Key Departures** – Mark Dewitt, Kevin Glenn, Simeon Rottier, Luc Mullinder, Agustin Barrenechea, Stevie Baggs, Justin Hickman, Justin Medlock, Marcus Thigpen, Milt Collins

**Key Arrivals** – George Cortez, Henry Burris, Andy Fantuz, Kevin Eiben, Greg Peach, Tim O'Neill, Luca Congi and a cast of millions

The Hamilton Tiger-Cats made serious changes to their team in the offseason from top to bottom. The biggest gamble is around Henry Burris who leaves a long time team in the Calgary Stampeders in a quest to find his mojo after struggling last year. Andy Fantuz gives them something that they haven't had a lot of in a long time which is a big play game breaking receiver. On offense the Tiger-Cats probably have one of the best receiving corps in the league at the moment with Fantuz, Dave Stala, Samuel Giguere and Chris Williams. Avon Cobourne was a late camp inviting due to the season ending injury to Martell Mallett. Their offensive line has been stabilized with the addition of Tim O'Neill which should help Henry Burris with some extra time.

Hamilton's defense should be fairly decent, but the offense is going to carry the load but the additions of Kevin Eiben and the newly acquired Geoff Tisdale will go along ways in keeping the ball in Burris' hands.

**The Big Question** – How long will it take this team to discover some chemistry?

### Toronto Argonauts (9-9)

**Key Departures** – Jermaine Copeland, Lin-J Shell, Wes Lysack, Taylor Robertson, Willie Pile, Dominic Picard, Bryon Parker, Rob Murphy, Kevin Eiben, Dalton Bell, Taylor Scott

**Key Arrivals** – Ricky Ray, Marc Parenteau, Jason Barnes, Jarious Jackson, Andrew Jones, Brandon Isaac, Ahmad Carroll, Scott Milanovich, Chris Jones.

After years of struggles and experimentation with Quarterbacks including Cleo Lemon (Why oh why didn't the Argo's have a ball under the shirt play?) the Argo's went out and got a all star Quarterback who can actually control the game. For the past two years the Argo's have been Feterik level mismanaged but the light at the end of the tunnel might have arrived this year as the Argo's make a strong push for a Grey Cup matchup in their own barn.

On offense Ricky Ray is the unquestioned leader and he's the right fit for head coach Scott Milanovich who was a sub par quarterback but a very good offensive coordinator in Montreal. The problem is that the Argo's are very thin at receiver with Joe Barnes being the main threat. If the Argo's follow Ricky Ray's usual short pass offense it shouldn't matter as much though. In the back field though they have a true game breaker in Cory Boyd and some other really nice depth behind him in bruising power back Chad Kackert.

The defense might have to carry this team at least initially and they have a very strong front seven that can get to the QB in a hurry and the late addition of Robert McCune doesn't hurt their depth at all.

**The Big Question** – Can Chris Jones' defensive set get more sacks in Toronto?

## **Montreal Alouettes (9-9)**

**Key Departures** – Anwar Stewart, Kitwana Jones, Eric Wilson, Diamond Ferri, Mark Estelle, De'Audra Dix, Walter Spencer, Kerry Carter, Kerry Watkins, Tim Maypray

**Key Arrivals** – Aaron Hunt, Luc Mullinder, Adebayo, Brentrell Jenkins, Rod Davis, Kyries Hebert, Noel Devine

Every year we hype the death of the Als and every year they defy predictions, but the cracks did start to show last year as the Als were bounced in the Semi-Finals and didn't look good doing it.

Anthony Calvillo returns for his 100<sup>th</sup> year behind center and dosen't look to be slowing down. But his style of play doesn't require him to be athletic or absorb a lot of hits so I wouldn't expect a big drop in his production. Offensively this team will still be one of the top scorers in the CFL, boasting the likes of last years CFL rushing leader in Brandon Whitaker, and a receiving core that features Jamel Richardson, S.J Green.

The defense is where the cracks start to show a bit and started a massive airlift at the mid-point of last year and lead to their defeat in the playoffs last year. This isn't the shutdown defense that Montreal fans got used to but a sit back defense that doesn't get a lot of pressure on the opposing QB and lives and dies by the big play.

**The Big Question** – Is this the last year for AC, and if it is, is that enough Motivation to get them to the Grey Cup?

## **Winnipeg Blue Bombers (8-10)**

**Key Departures** – Obby Khan, Brandon Labatte, Doug Brown, Odell Willis, Dorian Smith, Joe Lobendahn, Donny Oramasionu, Greg Carr, Fred Reid

**Key Arrivals** – Alex Hall, Brandon Collier, Anthony Woodson, Dan West, Rory Kohlert

Is Swaggerville officially dead? With the Bombers shipping Odell Willis out because of his status as a team distraction the Bombers look to have closed the book on the whole it takes a village philosophy and moved forward.

The Bombers are the ultimate mystery team this year, we don't know how good they're actually going to be, but it looks like the Bombers are a much less talented team than they were last year.

There are always going to be questions around Buck Pierce's health but the Bombers have exceptional depth at Quarterback with Elliot and Brink behind them, and the Bombers have exceptional receiver depth with Terrence Edwards, Clarence Denamrk and Cory Watson. Their offensive line isn't going to be as strong this year with the loss of Brandon Labatte which isn't good news for Pierce fans. The Bomber's also have an unknown quantity at running back as puny human Bloi-Dei Dorzon takes the starting spot in the face of the departed Fred Reid and a major injury to Chris Garrett.

On defense the Bombers boast one of the strongest secondaries in the CFL with Jonathon Hefney leading the way. Their front 7 has been retooled with Doug Brown, Odell Smith and Joe Lobendahn all leaving the team, so the Bombers might see a drop in production in terms of pass rush but will also see a sharp reduction in undisciplined penalties.

**The Big Question** – Can Buck Pierce survive this season?