



### **Zach's back: McNeill, other core players return to Colts from CIS spring camps**

Just call him the Zach of all trades. Zach McNeill didn't expect to set some sort of informal club record for versatility when he first tried out for the Calgary Colts, but he'll finish up his five-year junior career in 2010 having started at three different positions on the defensive side of the ball.

McNeill (5th year, Calgary, Lord Beaverbrook HS), a team captain and linebacker for the Colts, headlines a group of core players returning to the Prairie Football Conference club from spring university training camps. And at first blush, the linebacking position looks to be the strongest of the lot for the Colts heading into the 2010 season, considering that McNeill, Jordan Colebrook (2nd year, Calgary, Henry Wise Wood HS), and Jason Lee (2nd year, Calgary, St. Francis HS) are all returning to junior after eschewing the varsity option this year. McNeill and Colebrook were put through their paces by the University of Calgary Dinos, while Lee tried out for the University of Alberta Golden Bears.

"U of C camp was a great opportunity for me, to see where I stand," says McNeill, who's started as a defensive halfback, safety, and strong-side linebacker over his first four years as a Colt. "But I felt I wanted to finish out my run with the Colts, and try to win a national championship with this club."

While the Colts' pre-season camp doesn't start until Aug. 3, McNeill, Colebrook, and Lee are penciled in as the starters on the club's linebacking crew. But a strong group including Geoff Eikerman (3rd year, Calgary, St. Francis HS), Jase Skelton (2nd year, Medicine Hat, Alta., Medicine Hat HS), Wyatt Sutherland (3rd year, Calgary, St. Mary's HS), Joel Iannace (5th year, Calgary, Bishop O'Byrne HS), and former Saskatchewan Huskie Kai Green will be pushing for playing time, too.

"A very solid group," notes Colts linebackers coach Biagio Iannace. "I wouldn't hesitate in making any member of that group a starter."

Notes Colts head coach Keith Kendal: “We thought we were really going to have to look hard for linebackers, and all of a sudden our linebacking corps could be the strength of our football team.”

Also back in Colts red, blue, and white are a pair of lynchpins in the defensive secondary, team captain Tom Knitter (3rd year, Cochrane, Alta., Cochrane HS) and Kyle Grant (2nd year, Calgary, Western Canada HS). Knitter, a halfback, tried out for the Golden Bears while Grant, also a halfback, travelled to Antigonish, N.S., to audition for the St. Francis Xavier X-Men.

“Tommy’s smart and tougher than nails,” says Kendal. “A very hard hitter. He plays on the same side as Alex Saretsky, and the two of ‘em are a pair of peas in a pod.”

Also back in the fold are running back Chucks Okafor (2nd year, Calgary, Crescent Heights HS) and receiver Ben Hnatiuk (2nd year, Calgary, Centennial HS), who both attended Dinos camp.

Defensive end Ben Rush (4th year, Sylvan Lake, Alta., H.J. Cody HS), the 2009 Canadian Junior Football League’s sacks leader, and wide receiver Tom Shaw (2nd year, Springbank, Alta., Springbank HS), who totalled 245 yards through the air last summer, are still undecided, with Rush considering Saskatchewan and Shaw mulling a move to the Bears.

Departing for Canadian Interuniversity Sport this season are wide receiver Ty Hinds (University of Manitoba), offensive lineman Matt Kuhnen (Concordia), defensive lineman and captain Mike Forzani (Dinos), defensive end Matt Meyer (Concordia) and defensive back Kevan Hafichuk (Dinos). Hinds, Hafichuk and Meyer played just one season for the Colts. “We don’t like it when we lose ‘em after one year,” says Kendal. “If you don’t have ‘em for a couple or three years, it’s really hard to build continuity in a team.”