



Ken Preston as a player ...



... general manager ...

Preston, 73, dead

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Ken Preston, who built the Saskatchewan Roughriders' first Grey Cup championship team during his 20-year tenure as the CFL team's general manager, died Friday at the age of 73.

Preston also served the Roughriders as a player and as a coach. But he is best-known for spending 1958 to 1977 as the team's fiscally responsible general manager.

"I've got my first contract on my office wall," said Al Ford, who played for the Roughriders from 1965 to 1976 and is currently the team's general manager. "It's for \$5,600."

"He was a constant factor with this football team. I don't know if anybody can repeat what he has done."

Preston was also able to recruit talented import players such as fullback George Reed, quarterback Ron Lancaster, defensive tackle Ed McQuarters and flanker Hugh Campbell.

Plus, by establishing strong amateur programs throughout Saskatchewan, he

ensured that local players such as centre Ted Urness, split end Gord Barwell and halfback Ford joined the team that won the 1966 Grey Cup with a 29-14 victory over the Ottawa Rough Riders.

"He gave the impression that he didn't know what he was doing," said Reed, an all-star fullback who played for the Roughriders from 1963 to 1975 and is president of the CFL Players' Association. "But he was an astute gentleman. In our situations you always have disagreements, but he was always looking after the football team."

"All you have to do is look back at it. The year after he retired — and I'm not pointing fingers at anybody — but that's when the team began heading down and their financial problems began. They didn't have a general manager who was as proficient until Bill Baker came along (in 1987)."

During his 20 years as general manager, Preston's team made the playoffs 15 times and advanced to the Grey Cup in '66, '67, '69, '72 and '76.

Preston was elected to the CFL Hall of Fame in 1990 as a builder. He was an ini-

tial inductee into the Roughriders' Plaza of Honor in 1987.

"Ken Preston epitomizes everything that's good about the Saskatchewan Roughriders," Roughriders president Phil Kershaw said. "No one has forgotten what he did for the Roughriders."

Preston joined the Regina Roughriders as a halfback and a quarterback in 1940 before joining the Winnipeg Blue Bombers for their 1941 Grey Cup season.

After three years in the armed forces Preston spent the 1945 season with the Ottawa Rough Riders. In 1946 and 1947 he was a playing coach with the Roughriders. He retired as a player after the 1948 season and bought a paper box factory in 1950. He was enticed back to the Roughriders in 1958 and in 1961 he sold the factory.

"I was close to the football team through my childhood," said Gord Staseson, a past-president of the Roughriders who was on their management committee for the last five years of Preston's tenure as general manager. "I remember Ken as a coach, a player and a general manager."



Leader-Post file photo by Robert Watson

... and in retirement in this 1985 photograph

"He managed the football team like it was his own business."

"He operated by the simplest accounting principle: Never pay from one pocket any more than you had in the other pocket. We used to marvel at his financial statements because he would read the players' salaries from an adding-machine tape."

"I know he's been suffering for the past few years. But we'll miss him deeply."

Preston, who was born in Smith Falls, Ont., on Oct. 29, 1917, had been stricken with Alzheimer's disease for the past several years.

He was predeceased by his wife Dorothy and is survived by one daughter, Donna (Murray) Holmlund of Regina, and three sons, Bill (Holly) Preston of Regina, Doug Preston of Calgary and Rich (Laura) of Chicago, seven grandchildren and two sisters, Norma Chant of Edmonton and Evelyn (Gerry) Glendenning of Barrie, Ont. Rich Preston was recently named an assistant coach with the NHL's Chicago Blackhawks.

Funeral arrangements are pending with Speers Funeral Chapel.