



It's time to Brock n roll

Ticats ready to dance

BY KEN PETERS

The Hamilton Tiger-Cats will put another major rebuilding plank in place today with the announcement the club has re-signed blue-chip Canadian receiver Brock Ralph.

There is no question the move signals to the Tabbies competition and Ticat fans that the team is serious about achieving its 2006 target of hosting a post-season contest.

Ralph has agreed to a two-year plus an option pact that could keep the Raymond, Alberta native with the Tabbies for at least the next three seasons. Terms of the pact were not released.

Ticat GM Rob Katz had earlier identified this re-signing as his key off-season priority and for good reason.

"It's an indication that we are firmly committed to getting better every day and having Brock Ralph on our team makes us a better football team," Katz said. He added that it "allows you to become better in other areas where you may want to play imports at."

"He (Ralph) brings a lot of things to the table and we're excited that he is here for the next three years," Katz said.

The Tabbies also announced yesterday the club had re-signed veteran Canadian free safety Wayne Shaw to a two-year pact, a move which adds an experienced defender and provides more ratio flexibility. Shaw was set to become a free agent next month.

The 6-foot-3, 190-pound Ralph, who spent three seasons with the Edmonton Eskimos before joining the Tabbies in the Oct. 7 Troy Davis swap, has a solid resume as a pass receiver. The 25-year-old re-joined the Eskies mid-way through this past season and played five contests for the green and gold after being released by the New York Jets.

While the Cats made no secret of their desire to keep Ralph, the receiver was set to become a free agent on Feb. 15 and was believed to be interested in joining the Calgary Stampeders where his brother Brett is a receiver.

Katz said dogged determination, persistency and pro-ac-



THE CANADIAN PRESS

Brock Ralph has signed on with the Cats for a two-year plus deal. 'It makes us a better football team,' says GM Ralph Katz.

tiveness all played a role in convincing Ralph to remain in Steeltown.

"Ever since we acquired Brock in a trade in October we made it a priority to have him become a member of the Hamilton Tiger-Cats for a long time. When we looked at Brock and what he had done in Edmonton in the past, what he had shown in camp with the Jets, we saw a guy who had a

ton of talent, all the physical characteristics you're looking for— a big, tall receiver with excellent speed. He is a good guy in the locker room and a hard worker and you know he is going to give you his all in practices and in games. He is the kind of guy you want to build around," Katz said.

The Cat GM said new offensive co-ordinator Joe Paopao and new Cat quarterback Jason Maas, who used to sling the cowhide in Ralph's direction in northern Alberta, both talked to the Canadian receiver and were likely factors in his decision to remain in central Canada.

"Overall I think he saw the direction the organization was going and he decided he wanted to be a part of it," Katz said adding the receiver gave his employer the answer they were looking for late last week.

Ralph's agent Chris Gittings said his client opted to stay in Steeltown after he had a chance to get to know the area and the Ticat staff, saw the effort Katz put in to making a deal, the club's plans to utilize him on the field, and the team's contract offer.

After a 5-13 campaign that saw the Cats miss the post-season for the third time in four seasons, the Helena, Montana-based agent acknowledges his client's signing sends a clear message.

"I think what it signals is they are serious about trying to win and win the right way. They are trying to build a team here and trying to get a core group of players and really build this team. They are very serious about that," he said.

With Ralph in the fold, the Ticat receiving corps is starting to take shape in the likes of American speedsters Craig Yeast and D.J. Flick, who both went over the 1,000 yard reception mark for the second consecutive season last year and talented but drop-plagued Canadian Kamau Peterson. Two other Canadians, veteran slotback Mike Morreale and youngster Iain Fleming, add depth to the unit.

Katz vows the Tabbies will also prowl aggressively in the free agent market once the Feb. 15 deadline expires. The Cats will be hunting for an experienced American receiver, running back, linebacker, offensive linemen and possibly a defensive halfback and a returner.

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Ticats sign Shaw. Gain another Canadian – and more flexibility

BY TONY FITZGERALD

The Tiger-Cats' search for continuity has brought a veteran back to the fold.

Veteran defensive back Wayne Shaw signed a one-year (plus an option) contract.

"He's a veteran but a young veteran," said Ticat head coach Greg Marshall. "We're pretty young in the secondary. One of the things we're trying to do is get a little bit of continuity back there. It's about playing together, playing as a team and knowing the system."

The 5-foot-9, 185-pound native of Winnipeg finished the 2005 season with 30 defensive tackles, four special teams tackles and three interceptions.

The 31-year-old signed with the Cats as a free agent in 2004. That season he played 18 games and led the team with four interceptions and nine pass knock downs.

"Wayne's played two spots for us. He came in as a corner and he can play that spot really well," Marshall said. "He can also play the free safety spot." Marshall said free safety is one position where experience counts

for a lot. "At free safety, you're the quarterback of the secondary. You have to make all the formation checks, have to be in the right spot."

Shaw's signing gives the Ticats another Canadian and more flexibility. "You have to make sure you have depth in Canadians," said Marshall. "With (Adriano) Belli, (Roger) Dunbrack, (Auggie) Barenechea and Wayne Shaw, we have some good depth on defence."

Shaw played 18 games with the Montreal Alouettes in 2003. He also played three seasons with Toronto Argonauts, where in 2001

he led the Canadian Football League in interceptions with six and was selected an All-Canadian and Eastern All-star.

The signing of receiver Ralph Brock increases the club's rich Canadian talent pool. "Ralph Brock is a huge signing," Marshall said. Marshall noted that the last game of the season when the Ticats played 14 Canadians and did well against Montreal proved the depth of the Canadian pool.

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