



For Immediate Release
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Colts receivers getting their kicks out of Thelwell-Forzani coaching tandem

CALGARY — It's the old silk-and-sandpaper routine, but it sure rubs the Calgary Colts' receiving corps the right way.

This season, the young pass-grabbers with the Prairie Football Conference squad are lucky enough to have two-time Grey Cup winner Ryan Thelwell and Canadian Football Hall of Famer Tom Forzani as their receiver coaches.

And Thelwell, who just retired in January after a stellar decade-long Canadian Football League career with the B.C. Lions and Calgary Stampeders, notes the two former sticky-fingered gridiron warriors have their own style as mentors.

"I think we complement each other. The way we communicate is a little bit different," says Thelwell with a laugh. "Tom's old school. You make a mistake, Tom will let you know. Myself, I'm a little calmer. I'm not much on raising my voice; I'll take a player aside and we'll have a chat."

Tom Shaw (3rd year, Springbank, Alta., Springbank HS), one of three returning starters on the Colts' receiving depth chart, acknowledges that Thelwell and Forzani have different approaches. But he, along with the likes of **Ben Hnatiuk** (3rd year, Calgary, Centennial HS), **Doug Long** (3rd year, Calgary, Bowness HS), **Mac Sarro**, (2nd year, Calgary, Notre Dame HS), and a throng of newcomers, is pinching himself over his good fortune.

"Tom will give you the goods, straight up. Direct. He gets right to the point. And if you're doing it wrong, he'll let you know right away. Ryan's just got a more laid-back approach, but he'll still give you everything you need to know," says Shaw. "Tom has so much knowledge to share, and has already helped us immensely breaking down film and critiquing our form."

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“And having Ryan here . . . unbelievable. I’ve followed him on the field, watching the Stamps, and I still can’t believe he’s one of our receivers coaches. Crazy.”

The Colts (1-0), coming off a season-opening, 9-5 win over the Wildcats in Edmonton, play their 2011 home opener on Saturday, Aug. 20 against the Edmonton Huskies (0-1) at McMahon Stadium. Game time is 7 p.m.

Thelwell, who had got to know Colts offensive co-ordinator Ray Salverda in recent years through Salverda’s guest coaching spots at Stampeders training camp, got his post-retirement “football fix” by joining the junior squad late in the spring. Forzani — whose son Johnny played for the Colts, before snagging pigskins with the Stamps like his dad — joined Keith Kendal’s crew in 2007, and has stepped up his commitment this season after four years in a supporting role.

Bona fide CFL all-stars from different generations — Thelwell hauled in 441 passes for 6,728 yards and 39 touchdowns in 10 years from 2000 to ’10; Forzani brought down 553 balls for 8,285 yards and 62 majors over 11 seasons from 1973 to ’83 — this duo has found itself on the same page. “Ryan’s a great guy. An outstanding guy. We throw things back and forth,” says Forzani. “And the best thing about it is the players. They give you 100 per cent. If you told them to run through a wall, they’d try it.”

Returnees such as Hnatiuk, Shaw, Long, and Sarro have been joined this season in Colts red, white and blue by new receivers in **Nik Petros** (1st year, Cochrane, Cochrane HS), **Ben Lawrence** (1st year, Cochrane, Cochrane HS), **Ryn Hyrn** (1st year, Brooks, Alta., Brooks Composite HS), **Mike Jones** (1st year, Brooks, Brooks Composite HS), **Matt Lamoureux** (1st year, Calgary, Notre Dame HS), and **Rodreke Joseph** (2nd year, Toronto, OFC Burlington). And when it comes to talent, enthusiasm, and commitment, Forzani doesn’t mince words about this group. “I think we could possibly have the best receiving corps in the league,” he says.

The Colts will practise at 7 p.m. Tuesday, Aug. 16 through Thursday, Aug. 18 at Optimist Park, and hold a 7 p.m. helmets-only walkthrough on Friday, Aug. 19.

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ABOUT THE CALGARY COLTS: A member of the Canadian Junior Football League, the Calgary Colts are a community-based organization that provides and promotes the opportunity for young men aged 17 through 22 to play in a highly competitive football environment and develop skills on and off the field through commitment to excellence. The Colts were back-to-back CJFL champions in 1989 and 1990.

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