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CANADIAN GRIDDER LEARNING
WHILE PLAYING FOR GRIZZLIES

bill schwanke/gm
6-13-69
sports one



sports

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MISSOULA---

Willie Postler knew virtually nothing about American football when he came to the University of Montana.

After two years, one in freshman ball and one as a varsity "redshirt," Willie still doesn't know it all. And he's got his own way of describing his particular situation.

"When I first came to Montana, I practically had to start from scratch," Willie said. "When they said 'pull,' 'block down' or 'grab some grass,' I didn't know what they were talking about."

Postler attended Windermere High School in Vancouver, B.C., which didn't have a football team until his senior year.

"Because I was the biggest kid on the team (6-4,240), all they told me to do was stay low and hit the first guy in front of me," Willie said. "We never had linemen pulling or anything like that. It was all straight-ahead blocking."

Postler's main athletic efforts at Windermere were aimed at rugby, basketball and track. He said he went out for football because he was the biggest player available, and the coach asked him to.

Despite his lack of experience, Postler was named as one of the outstanding linemen at the Development Camp of the British Columbia Lions professional football team in the spring of 1967, and that's what caught the coaches' eyes at Montana, along with Willie's size.

Willie had far from an impressive season as a frosh at Montana in 1967. He spent most of his time trying to learn the terminology.

"When I played high school football that one year, we had to provide most of our own uniforms," Postler said. "All the school gave us was shoulder pads and jerseys."

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"When I turned out for freshman ball at UM, and they provided us with an entire uniform, I was so psyched up I just wanted to go out and hit people," Postler said. "But I soon found out it wasn't all that easy. I didn't know how."

The coaching staff at UM had Postler pegged as either an offensive or defensive tackle, because of his size and great speed. But after that rather poor frosh season, they weren't sure Willie would make it, so they redshirted him for a season to give him more experience. He had to learn.

"After two years of nothing but learning, I decided I had to prove to the rest of the team that I could make it," Willie said. "But I got pretty discouraged sometimes trying to prove it."

Postler began making his move early in spring drills, and after the first Saturday scrimmage of the spring sessions, he was moved up to first team offensive guard.

"I dropped weight from 240 to 230 and picked up some speed, and they moved me to offensive guard," Postler said. "So I had more to learn."

Postler realizes that football players are learning continually, but for him the situation is more pronounced.

"It seems like every time we scrimmage, I run into a situation that's new to me. But I've certainly found out a guy can learn by his mistakes, because I've made plenty of them along the way," he said.

Although he is continually learning new things, Postler said he picks up things more quickly as he goes along. It gets easier all the time.

Since he redshirted last year, Willie will have three years of eligibility with the varsity starting with the 1969 season. UM assistant coach Bill Betcher, who works with the offensive interior linemen, thinks everything that has happened to Willie so far will have great future benefits.

"I think he's going to be some kind of lineman by the time he's through at the University," Betcher said. "He's gotten over his fear of asking questions because he thinks they are stupid questions."

"He's got a lot to learn, but he'll learn faster just because he really wants to."