

TIGER-CAT Q&A

Name: Ryan Donnelly

Birthday: December 13, 1978

School: McMaster

Position(s): Guard/Tackle/Center

Years with Tiger-Cats: 6

CAREER

1. Tell us about how you got started in football and your amateur career.

I didn't play football until my final year of high school. I have the high school football team to thank for starting my career as 3 years of making fun of me for playing volleyball paid off and I made the switch. I decided to try out for the McMaster Marauders in 1997. I was only 190lb and was not recruited. Apparently tall, skinny, slow guys that can't catch are not hot commodities. I walked into McMaster and met with Greg Marshall and he told me "well..... you have a good frame but you're a bone rack!" He told me to gain weight and come to training camp. I bulked up to a massive 195lb and walked on. I started at TE and quickly was asked to join a depleted offensive line which endured injuries in training camp. Two games into the season I was the starting left tackle at 200lbs. The bravest man on the football field was QB Ben Chapdelaine as he had to stand behind me! I enjoyed a great first year which capped off tying the #1 ranked Western Mustangs in the last game of the season.

2. How did you get started in the CFL (draft, free agent, trade etc.)?

I was drafted by the Hamilton Tiger Cats in the 4th round 28th overall

3. Do or did you hold any records?

Is a career rushing total of 3 yards a record?

4. Do or did you have a nickname?

Rhino

5. Tell us about some of your fondest memories with the Tiger-Cats or in the CFL.

I lived in Winnipeg and Hamilton growing up and was fortunate to play in both of those cities.

6. Who were some of the team-mates and opponents you admired the most and why?

A teammate and opponent I admired the most was Joe Montford. Joe lined up against me in my first training camp at Brock University.

I must have closed my eyes because when I opened them he was sacking the quarterback. That was my first one on one pass rush and Joe welcomed me to the league. I always knew how good he was but when he moved on to Toronto I had to find out first hand. He was definitely the best player I have ever played against.

7. Which coach did you respect or enjoy playing for the most and why?

Ron Lancaster was my first coach in the CFL. He cared about you more off the field than on. Always had time to tell me a story, say hi and make you feel part of the team. He did more than just coach the Tiger Cats and the ones who had him were the lucky ones.

8. Tell us about some of your favourite Grey Cup memories.

Missed the 99 Grey cup by 2 years... :(

POST CFL CAREER

9. Tell us about your life and career after playing/working with the Tiger-Cats or CFL?

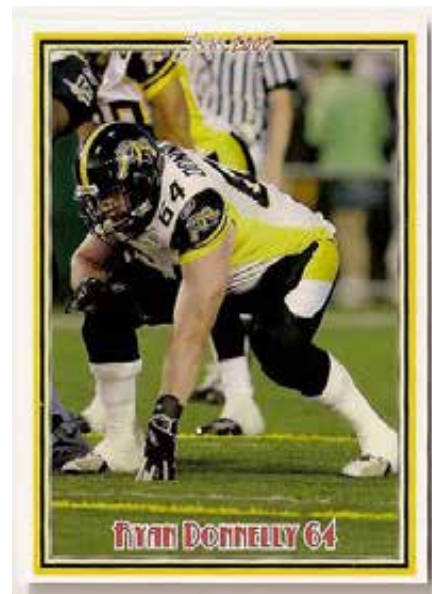
I am now a regional manager for GoodLife Fitness in southern Ontario. I have 3 beautiful children Logan (6) Lucas (4) and Reese (2). They are my world and make everyday a better one. My wife Nikki and I have been together since my Tiger Cat years.

10. Tell us about your interests, hobbies, your passion or anything else you would like to. Share about yourself.

I love to build. I finished my basement top to bottom last year and love the sense of accomplishment tackling carpentry/home improvement. I have many projects on the go, it is my way to get alone time.

11. Share with us some of the places you've been or things you have experienced.

Not many people know I spent 4 years living in India in the Himalayan Mountains. My father's job took our family over there. We lived along-side 30 other Canadian families and assimilated into the Indian culture. We went to a convent to be taught by nuns. Monkeys routinely mugged us for food. I rode elephants to school. When I tell people my Forrest Gump stories they rarely believe me. I could spend hours telling stories.



THE GAME

12. What aspects of the Canadian game do you like the most?

The 3 downs is the only way to play football. As a lineman I love to run block but the excitement of always being in a passing down situation is what gets me out of my seat as a fan.

13. Is there any aspect of the game you would change if you could?

The instant replay for pass interference. That's the most ridiculous thing I've ever seen.

FINAL THOUGHTS

14. What advice do you have to either young players or those just starting out in the CFL?

You are way better than you think. When I came into the league I never got beat at Mac. I felt I had to do the same in the CFL but that's just not the case. The first few years I always doubted my ability but I realized everyone has plays they want back. You get better from the ones you wished never happened.

15. Is there anything else you would like to share? (thoughts, advice, stories, memories)

A story for you. John Macdonald and I were roommates in our first year. We were rookies and came back to our hotel room to our room floating in water. The guys welcomed us to the CFL with a mattress full of water and everything we had for the trip floating in water. It was a tough night sleep that night!

One thing I always loved was the fact I was able to be teammates with so many of my McMaster Marauders. Jesse Lumsden, Kojo Aidoo, Ray Mariuz, Fabio Filice, Mathew O'Meara, Kyle Koch and Chris Rankin. It was a testament to such a strong program from 1999-2002.