

Hobbled Harrison puts his ailments into perspective

Stamps offensive lineman admits frustration with nagging injuries

BY VICKI HALL, CALGARY HERALD JUNE 13, 2012



Calgary Stampeders offensive left tackle Edwin Harrison, who has been dogged by injuries, manages to crack a smile during training camp at McMahon Stadium on Tuesday.

Photograph by: Leah Hennel, Calgary Herald

Edwin Harrison resisted the temptation to throw himself a full-scale pity party after pulling his hamstring on Day 1 of Calgary Stampeders training camp.

But the hulking left tackle couldn't help but feel a just a tad sorry for himself. After all, he is considered one of the best at his position in the Canadian Football League — when he is healthy. A torn pectoral muscle sidelined the affable Houston native for the first nine games of the 2011 season. And now a wonky hamstring has the 27-year-old playing spectator yet again. What gives?

"It's frustrating, to say the least," Harrison said on a beautiful sunny Tuesday morning at McMahon Stadium. "To have it carry over to the season, that would absolutely kill me."

Down in the dumps over the latest war-wound, Harrison found himself avoiding the world a little due to his sombre mood. He didn't call his mom. Didn't call his dad. Then his mother Linda sent a text Monday morning asking her boy to call. Fully aware of her son's predicament, Linda proceeded to provide a news update from Houston, Texas.

"She knew I was frustrated and having a tough time," Harrison said. "But when you hear about people back home who are struggling with cancer and are close to being put in a hospice. And another friend of ours, this is her second liver transplant, and it's actually doing well. The last one failed and put her back in intensive care."

Madison Poston, a close friend of the Harrison family, is only in Grade 10, and she has already more than her share of hospital stays and medical procedures. Another close family friend, John Broussard, is reaching a breaking point in his fight with cancer.

"He's been taking it like a trooper," Harrison said. "It truly makes you grateful for what you have seeing the people you have known all your life are going through far worse things."

A bum hamstring is one thing. A failing liver — or cancer — is quite another.

"It really puts into perspective the things we go through as athletes," Harrison said. "When you hear about people who are fighting with cancer — when you hear about kids who really haven't experienced a whole lot in their lives and can't hang out with their friends, go to birthday parties and play sports — it really makes you appreciate the things you have."

"The things we go through don't even compare. I mean, what's a pec? What's a hamstring? What's a knee?"

Provided he can get healthy again, Harrison has a starting job on the offensive line protecting Drew Tate's blind side. But the injuries just keep dogging him.

"It's never been a question of my playing ability," Harrison said. "I think the coaches here know that. When I'm out on the field, it's not a question of what I can do or what the coaches believe I can do. It's just actually being out there."

In a perfect world, offensive line coach Mike Gibson would have Harrison on the field for Friday's pre-season game against Edmonton. But barring a miraculous recovery, that just isn't going to happen.

"We just need to get him out of this little jinx he is in — this little rut of injuries," Gibson said. "He's a good player, but he's missed a lot of practice. He's one of the better tackles in the league. When he's out, we notice it."

In keeping with the theme of looking on the bright side, Gibson chooses to focus on the extra experience Harrison's absence has provided the youngsters on the line.

Harrison also vows to stay positive no matter how much his patience is tried.

© Copyright (c) The Calgary Herald