

Veteran adjusts to old role

By DAVID PLUG

Free Press staff writer

One of the best lessons Dexter Tabora learned in his first year of college was patience.

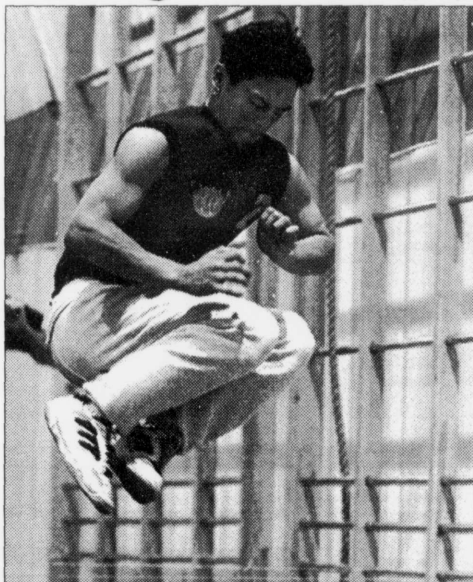
After being an elite player in local high-school volleyball, Tabora sat on the sidelines his first year at the College of New Caledonia more often than he was on the court.

"In high school I always started; others sat. It took a while getting used to not playing," says Tabora.

Now the third-year Kodiak looks back on his first year as an important maturing process that's helped raise his game.

"At first, I was pretty intimidated; the players were bigger and more dedicated," he says. "The competition at this level is pretty intense. There's not as many weak players as in high school and these are players who have workloads, school and jobs, but still want to play."

Instead of letting his play deteriorate, Tabora stayed dedicated in practice to try and make the most out of his limited playing time. It paid off last season as coach Randy Wagner not only gave Tabora



Dexter Tabora will be a vital utility player for the CNC Kodiaks this season. JOHN MCKENZIE/FREE PRESS

the nod as a regular starter but also as team captain.

"Last year he was our starting setter and we needed him frankly," says Wagner. "He's probably the most athletic player on the team and also kind of a role model in terms of attitude, intensity and concentration."

Tabora says he increased his contribution to the team to

equal the size of the role they expected of him.

"My confidence level increased with more responsibility. When Randy made me captain, I had to bring my level of play up because people watch you more for leadership when you're the captain," says the 20-year-old business student.

Considering how much he

meant to the Kodiaks last season, it seems strange to see Tabora with a reduced role again this year and without the captaincy.

Tabora only stands 5'8" and that means trouble cracking the starting line-up with a new crop of 10 tall rookies on the team this year. And captaincies usually go to one of the starting five players.

This year, Wagner knows he can count on Tabora and hopes to have his well-rounded skills as a utility player.

"Dexter with his diversity will fill in all the spots and it's handy to have a guy like that," says Wagner.

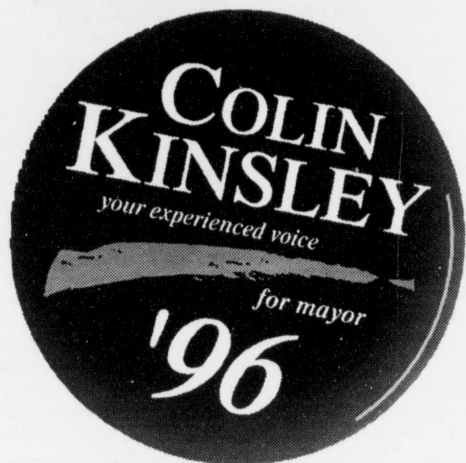
As a substitute, he knows the routine of being mentally and physically prepared to go in at any point. "You're warming up constantly and keeping an eye on the play," says Tabora.

For someone who was so key to the Kodiaks last season and is now back on the bench, Tabora is taking it all in stride. He says he's happy just making a contribution to the team's run at the division title this season which begins at CNC November 8. "Everyone is good enough to make the team," he says.

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Cougars put Roed on list

The Prince George Cougars only iced two 20-year-olds this weekend against the Kelowna Rockets, but they had three on their protected list.

The Cougars had to declare their three overaged players on Friday and general manager Dennis Polonich penciled in the names Chris Mason, Chris Low and Peter Roed.

But that doesn't mean Roed is coming back to Prince George anytime soon.

"I haven't talked to him personally," says Polonich. "He's in Louisville in the East Coast League (ECHL) and his agent says

he's happy. I never saw him play but I know he was a 19-year-old who scored 18 goals last year."

Because of that, Polonich says he's not sure if he wants Roed back. What he does want is a 20-year-old forward who can fit in on the team's top two lines.

"I'm not interested in a 20-year-old defenceman because we've already got four 19-year-olds," says Polonich. "I'm not interested in a 20-year-old goaltender because we already have one. If we get another 20-year-old, it will have to be a forward and he'll have to be good enough to crack the top two lines."

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