

Lemm Says Oilers Are Improving, But So Are Raiders

By B. F. KELLUM
Associated Press Writer
HOUSTON, Tex. (AP)—Coach Wally Lemm said Tuesday his Houston Oilers have shown marked improvement in the last few games but so have the Oakland Raiders.

The Oilers meet the Raiders Sunday at Oakland in an American Football League playoff contest. The Oilers, with a 6-6-2 record, are runner-ups in the AFL

Eastern Division. Oakland, with a 12-1-1 mark, won the AFL Western Division title.

The Eastern Division champion New York Jets, 10-4 meet the West runnerup Kansas City, 11-3, Saturday at New York in this year's unique AFL playoff setup. The two playoff winners meet later with the survivor going to the Super Bowl.

Lemm feels quarterback Pete Beathard is responsible for Hous-

ton's improvement.

"Quarterback inconsistency has been our problem during the year and that is why I am so happy with Beathard's performance the last four games," Lemm said.

He said Beathard still was nursing an ankle injury suffered in last Sunday's game against Boston but team trainers believe he will start the Oakland game.

"Beathard must be labeled as a possible starter," Lemm said.

He said Don Trull would be the backup quarterback.

"All this team needs is leadership," Lemm said. "A team can get leadership from the quarterback and that's what Pete is giving this team."

He noted that Beathard has completed 54 per cent of his passes in the last four games.

"We know we will have to be able to throw the ball to beat Oakland," he said.

He also praised Daryle Lammonica and said the Oakland quarterback has improved since the Raiders defeated Houston earlier in the season.

Lemm said the loss of the Raiders' star pass receiver Warren Wells would hurt Oakland. Wells was injured last week in the Raiders' victory over Kansas City.

"Wells is good for two or three

long passes a game," Lemm said.

However, Lemm said the Raiders have good replacements for Wells. He specifically mentioned Drew Buie, a speedy rookie.

Lemm feels the Oilers, despite their mediocre season record, are

about on par with the other three playoff teams as far as team and individual statistics are concerned.

"We have had trouble scoring and we have given up a lot of easy touchdowns," he said.

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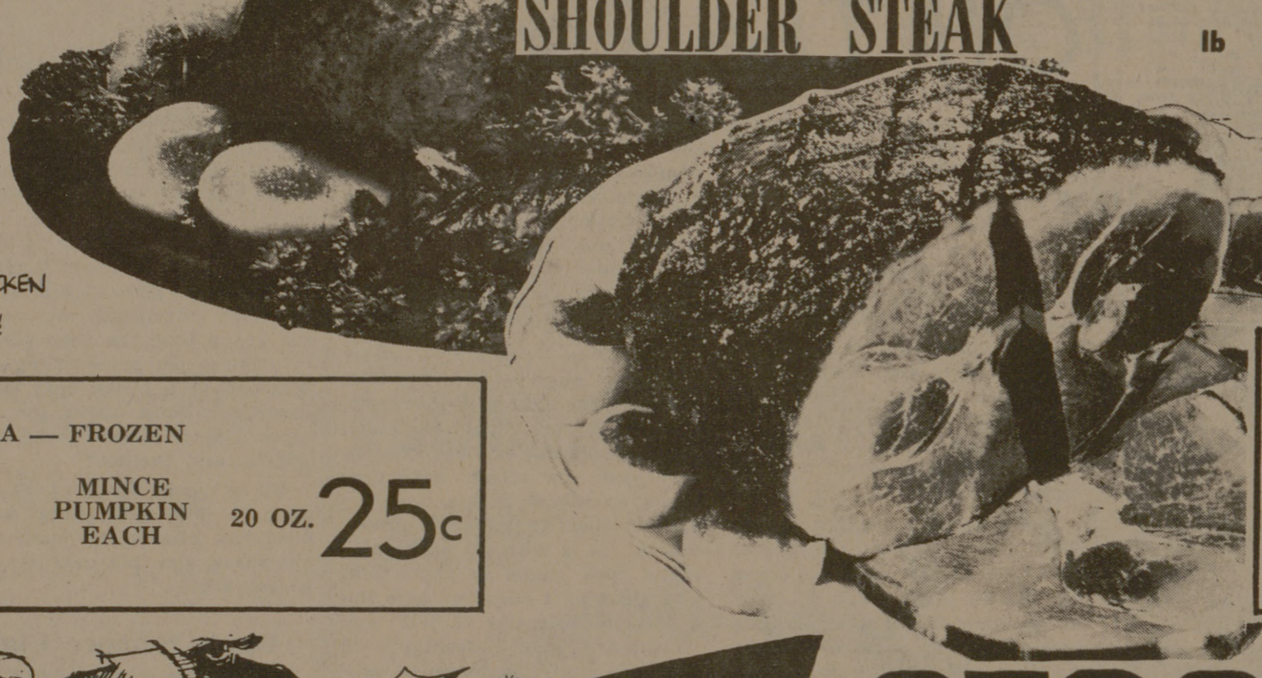
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