

# Billy Tohill Fired as TCU Head Coach

## A&M Receiver Coach Gil Bartosh Possible Successor

FORT WORTH, Tex. (AP)—Billy Tohill, the tough Texas Christian University football coach who nearly lost his life this spring in an automobile accident, has been fired, the Associated Press learned exclusively Monday night.

Tohill told Associated Press Southwest Sports Editor Denne Newman in an exclusive interview that "They fired me because I hadn't been winning."

The firing is effective Dec. 1 with TCU's last game against SMU in Dallas.

The 34-year-old Tohill, who stepped into the job midway through the 1971 season when Pittman dropped dead of a heart attack, relayed the news in an emotion-packed speech to his squad Monday night.

Tohill told The AP that Athletic Director Abe Martin walked to the office at 2:30 p.m. Monday and asked, "Are you busy?"

Tohill said Martin handed him a statement from chancellor Dr. James M. Moudy.

He said he had been relieved of his coaching duties, "Tohill said, 'It was hard to get past the first paragraph . . . the rest

was kind of blurry." Tohill, whose team was 3-6 this season and lost 52-7 to Texas last week, has two years remaining on his contract.

Those mentioned in rumors as possible successors to Tohill included Jim Shofner, the San Francisco 49er receiver coach, Gil Bartosh, an assistant at Texas A&M and former TCU star, and Hunter Enis a former TCU quarterback who has entered private business after spending a few years as a quarterback coach of the Denver Broncos.

"They told me they would pay off the contract if I can't find another job," said Tohill, who walks on an artificial leg because of surgery required from the accident in which his car hit a bridge abutment going 90 miles an hour.

Tohill, his voice choking with emotion, said, "I hope I can get another coaching job somewhere . . . I don't have any future plans . . . right now I'm coaching through the SMU game."

The tobacco-chewing coach said, "I would have liked to have had one more year. We had the nucleus for a good team. We just had so many injuries this year. Just look at what happened to our frontline players like Mike Luttrell and Kent Marshall. . . . We didn't have any depth . . . We just needed one more good recruiting year."

Tohill came to TCU with Pittman from Tulane. He and Pittman shared the Southwest Conference Coach of the Year honors in 1971 after Pittman's death as the Horned Frogs surged to a

surprising third place.

Tohill said, "There's no need to be bitter—that's not going to accomplish anything. I've had a good relationship with the people here . . . I'm not going to cut them up."

Tohill opened the season on a rutch but has gained strength with each succeeding week and walks now with only a slight limp on his artificial leg.

"This is the first time I've ever been fired from anything," Tohill said, still not believing the news. "I heard the rumors but I still thought we had done a good job considering the injuries and all. There's not many folks beating Texas these days you know."

TCU plays Rice Saturday at Amon Carter Stadium in Fort Worth, and Tohill said, "I know the kids will give me everything they have. I wouldn't want to be Rice Saturday."

Before joining Pittman at Tulane, Tohill had served five seasons at his alma mater, Mississippi State. He was a schoolboy All-American quarterback—fullback at Batesville, Miss. He lettered three years at Mississippi State.

Tohill, who has an 11-13 record at TCU, said he called his wife, Bobbie Jean, to break the news and "It kind of floored her. It will be a bleak Thanksgiving at our house. Come to think of it . . . it's going to be that way Christmas, too. I just wished they had given me one more year."

"It upsets me. I really think a lot of Tohill. I think he is a great coach," said quarterback Lee Cook, who took over the

starting signal calling job last week after Kent Marshall was injured.

"He's got more courage, more guts, than anyone I've known. I really hate to see it happen," Cook said.

"We've been hearing about it all along but nobody really believed it. It was like something had been dropped on us."

Split end Ronnie Littleton called the abrupt dismissal cold-blooded and said: "A man has to struggle for his life and come back and now he is gone."

Continuing, Littleton said, "I'm really shocked you know. I care for him not only as a coach but as a man. He's a very strong man . . . probably one of the strongest on earth."

Ace running back Mike Luttrell, also expressing shock, said "I haven't really formed an opinion yet. I think if they were going to fire him, they'd want to wait until after the season."

Luttrell called the action "Another setback . . . it's going to set our athletic program back another three years."

He said Tohill "is one of the greatest men I've ever met. He's been underrated as both a coach and a man."

Merle Wang, the Frogs huge offensive tackle, said "I'm just dumbfounded right now . . . I'm disappointed . . . I didn't think he would be fired."

Wang said he was aware of the rumors that Tohill was on the way out and said, "If there was any truth to them, they should have told him then. I don't think they should have not let him know."

Jerry Boudreaux, the offensive line coach, said "It was a complete shock—a shock to Coach Tohill, a shock to me, a shock to all of us."

Boudreaux said he could not assess the development at once, saying "We have two ball games left and we're in the midst of trying to prepare for them."

As the players flowed out of the dressing room into a light rain, one mumbled only to himself:

"I don't like it, I just don't like it."

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## Falcons Destroy Vikings' Win Streak

ATLANTA (AP)—Bob Lee, the field general of an inspired Atlanta offense, fired two second-period touchdown passes Monday night and the Falcons knocked the Minnesota Vikings from the unbeaten ranks of the National Football League with a 20-14 victory in their nationally televised game.

Ignited by a crowd of 56,519 who roared almost constantly the entire game, the Falcons rolled to their sixth consecutive victory. It left them only one game behind the Los Angeles Rams in the National Conference West Division race with a 7-3 record.

The defeat was the first after nine straight victories for the Vikings, who clinched the NFC Central Division crown a week ago, their fifth in the last six years.

Lee, who connected on 10 of 18 passes for 171 yards in the first half, teamed with Dave Hampton on a 19-yard screen pass for Atlanta's first touchdown and then scrambled away from a fierce Viking rush to find Eddie Ray alone near the goal line for a 39-yard scoring strike later in the second period.

However, the Falcons had to withstand a late charge by Fran

Tarkenton, Minnesota's scrambling quarterback who once was benched by Atlanta Coach Norm Van Brocklin when both were with the Vikings during the 1960s.

Tarkenton, who threw a 39-yard scoring pass to John Gilliam in the second quarter, drove the Vikings 49 yards in 11 plays and pitched a two-yard touchdown strike to Bill Brown with 6:29 left in the game to cut Atlanta's lead to 20-14.

With less than two minutes remaining, shortly after Atlanta had ground out a first down, Lee fumbled and Jim Marshall scooped up the ball and raced 18 yards where he fumbled, but Alan Page recovered for the Vikings. The Vikings took a 15-yard penalty on the play for tripping, but had possession at the Falcons 48.

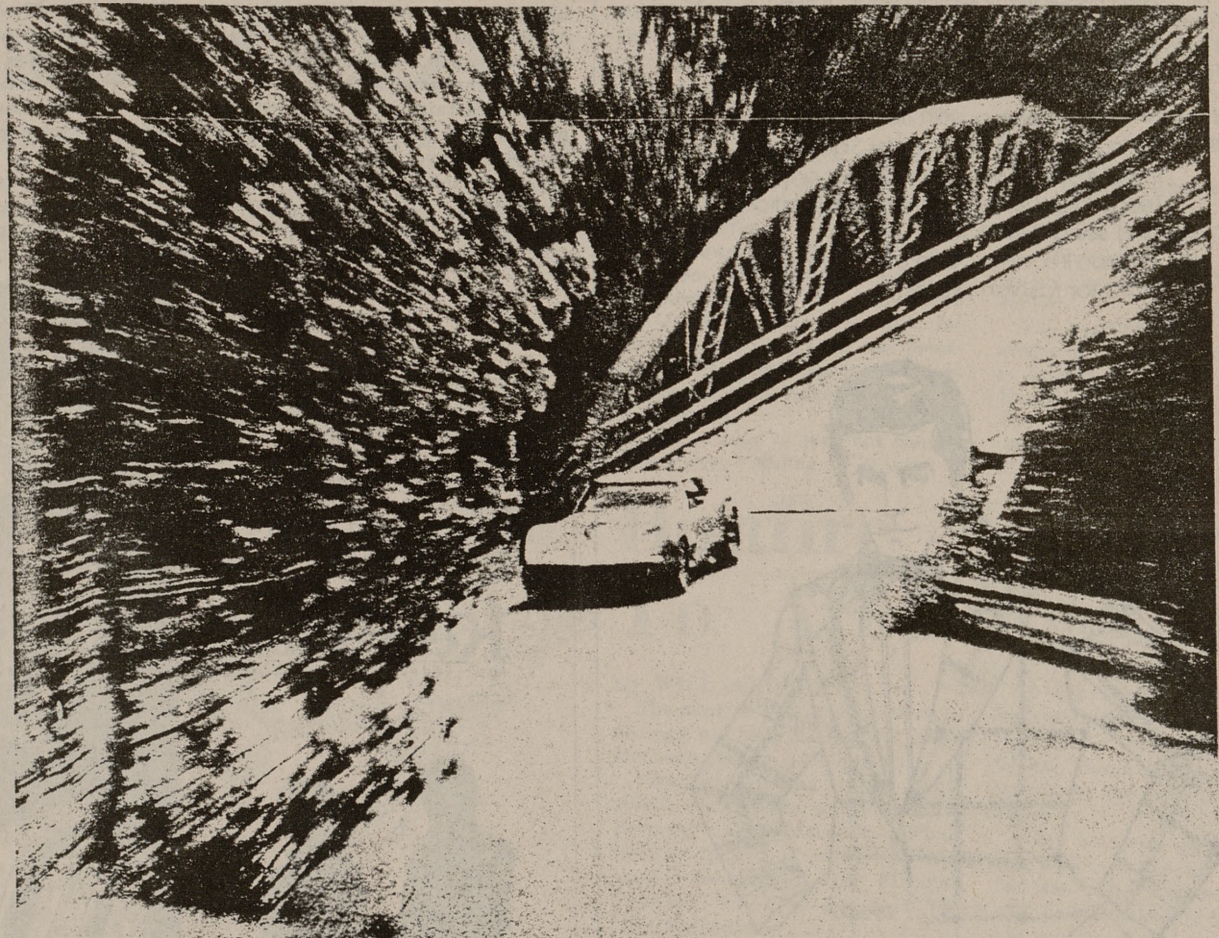
Tarkenton threw two incomplete passes, was sacked for a four-yard loss and on fourth down scrambled attempting to get the yardage for a first down, but went out of bounds a yard short and the Falcons took over and ran out the final 55 seconds of play.

Atlanta's other scoring came on Nick Mike-Mayer field goals of 25 and 49 yards, the latter a line-drive in the third quarter.

Mike-Mayer, the NFC's leading scorer, had missed on field goal attempts from the 46 and 21 in the opening period.

Fred Cox, Minnesota's kicking specialist, had a 49-yard field goal try hit the cross bar and fall away in the final quarter, but he did kick a pair of extra points to extend his NFL scoring record to 150 consecutive games.

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