

McCrumbly signs Bills' pact

John McCrumbly, perhaps the most intriguing of the Bills' newcomers, is the latest Buffalo draft choice to sign a National Football League contract, the team announced today.

Known as "Train" at Texas A&M University because of the railroad engineer's hat he wears so often, McCrumbly is a middle linebacker. He is 6 feet 1 1/2 inches and anywhere from 250 pounds to the general vicinity of 265.

To purists, the rookie's position and dimension may seem mutually exclusive. But the Bills, who would welcome an intimidating

presence in the middle, have reason to believe that isn't the case.

McCrumbly, who was drafted in the fifth round last January, has the reputation of being a punishing tackler. Although the Bills would like his weight to be about 240, their over-all impression of him was favorable during the March mini-camp in Rich Stadium.

EIGHT-YEAR veteran Jim Cheyunski, who is no more than 220 pounds, is the incumbent at middle backer.

Other strong candidates are Doug Allen, last year's No. 2

draft choice, and Bob Nelson, this year's No. 2. Nelson presently is penciled in as backup for John Skorupan on the strong side.

Texas A&M's basic defense was the 4-3, which also is the standard NFL alignment. After sharing his job for the first half of last season, McCrumbly won it outright and was selected to the All-Southwest Conference second team.

Described by A&M publicist Spec Gammon as "a big cutup . . . very outgoing . . . real happy," McCrumbly admits to having difficulty saying "no" during meals.

But if curbing his offensive appetite at the table doesn't curb his defensive appetite on the field, the Bills may be real happy, too.

THE BILLS also announced the signing of free agent Hal Thomas from Bowling Green. The 5-11, 170-pounder will be tried as a corner back; he hopes to arrange the first meeting next week.

Thrall, who has spent considerable time in London during the last few weeks, said conflicting schedules have precluded any extended discussion with the Bills.

"We are at a very early stage," he explained.

LOU SABAN, head coach of the Bills, was in Toledo Friday to play in a celebrity golf tournament to benefit the blind.

THE BILLS have signed 12 of their 17 draft choices and 11 free agents.

STEVE BARTKOWSKI, the California quarterback who was the first selection of the NFL draft, today was expected to sign a 4-year contract for about \$600,000 with the Atlanta Falcons.

ALL-PRO linebacker Ted Hendricks declined comment on a report in Miami that he is considering a contract offer from the Dolphins.

Hendricks played with Green Bay last year but became a free agent last month.

OFFENSIVE TACKLES Jim Tyrer, 36, of the Washington Redskins and Dave Hill, 34, of the Kansas City Chiefs announced their retirement.

GLEN HOLLOWAY, former Chicago Bears guard, signed with

Shreveport of the World Football League.

RAY HESTER, a starting line-backer with the WFL Hawaiians

last year after three seasons with NFL's New Orleans Saints, has Hodgkins disease and only a 50-50 chance to live, it was reported Friday. He is 26.

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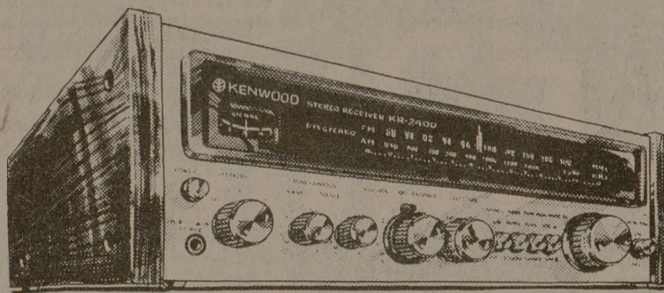
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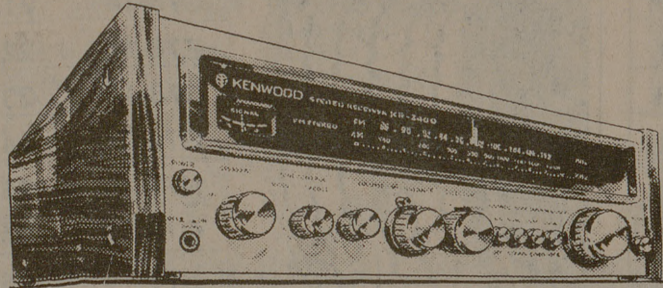
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