

One Moment Please ...

by Kurt Allen



Picks may be wrong, but ...

Okay, okay, so I was wrong on my picks for the two biggest National Football League games of the week. Anybody can make an intelligent mistake. As Tom Snyder might say, "I've said it, I've done it, and now what are you going to do about it?"

Let's face it, the Houston Oilers and Washington Redskins proved to be real washouts when the final gun sounded. But before I lose total credibility with a lackluster 5-3 record for last week's picks, let me try to explain what caused my temporary insanity and resulting enthusiasm for these two teams.

Let's take this thing one team at a time and get the Oilers' regrettable performance out of the way first.

Houston Head Coach Bum Phillips had said before the season started that this would be the year the Oilers "kicked in the door," meaning they would beat Pittsburgh in its home territory and go on to the Super Bowl.

However, Bum and crew apparently forgot that the door in question is made of steel. Instead of emerging victorious, the Oilers wound up retreating for the Bayou City with a figurative stubbed toe, not to mention wounded pride.

In evaluating my pick, I realized the Steelers hadn't lost in Three Rivers Stadium since 1977, when Houston was the last team to win there.

I further knew that the Steelers had better depth, although things are fairly even when comparing first-team squads.

Yet, it seemed like Pittsburgh was finally due to lose another one at home. The Steelers had simply been too prosperous. An unwritten rule of nature says sooner or later, everyone reaches his peak. Boy, was I wrong.

The Steelers were not just impressive, they were downright devastating. Meanwhile, it was an unbelievable complete Oiler breakdown. Everything that could possibly go wrong did.

When a new quarterback takes over a team, as did Kenny Stabler, you expect a little uncertainty in communications between passer and receivers. But never has one group of receivers shown a worse case of the "droopies."

You can't fault the Snake. He hit every last one of them right on the money. Still, people like Mike Renfro, Billy "White Shoes" Johnson and Mike Barber managed to drop five passes and tip three more to Steeler defenders in just the first half. I've seen better fetching by Lassie and Rin-Tin-Tin look-alikes.

Then, to my temporary amazement, the Oilers rose from the dead, and like would-be Super Bowl champions, thrashed Pittsburgh for 17 points in the third quarter.

Needless to say, that wasn't enough. Terry Bradshaw and company weren't through yet. They reached back for a little more magic and took home a 31-17 victory.

I guess what I'm trying to say is that I'll write this loss off as a fluke. Although it's possible, it seems doubtful the Steelers can put together another perfect mix of *skill* and *luck* in one game.

Likewise, I feel confident Houston will never be that bad again.

When it comes to the Washington-Dallas disappointment, I certainly had more than wishful thinking going for me. Believe it or not, there were cold, hard facts backing up that prediction.

For one thing, Washington had won eight straight Monday night games at home without a loss. For another, the Cowboys play worse than ordinary in Robert F. Kennedy Stadium. Overall, they were 9-12 in the nation's capital. On Monday nights, they were 7-12.

Furthermore, it's the first season in years Roger Staubach hasn't guided Dallas by the hand. It was questionable how effective Danny White would be despite his talent.

At this point, I came down with a bad case of Redskin Euphoria, generically known as "the Fever." I completely ignored the fact that the Cowboys had won 15 straight opening games. I also forgot about Washington's lack of a running game.

Those two lapses proved to be costly. Tradition is a strong force in the Dallas organization and the Cowboys were not about to give up a 15-year effort.

Now only 1 game back Astros beat Dodgers, 5-4

United Press International
HOUSTON — Art Howe lofted a tie-breaking sacrifice fly and Gary Woods followed with an RBI single in the seventh inning Tuesday night to enable the Houston Astros to move within one game of error-plagued Los Angeles in the National League West with a 5-4 victory over the Dodgers.

In the American League, Mitchell Page belted a pair of home runs and Dave McKay capped a four-run fourth inning with a two-run double to lift the Oakland A's to a 6-3 victory over the Texas Rangers.

The Astros' win also allowed third-place Cincinnati, which beat Atlanta 7-1, to move within 3½ games of first-place Los Angeles.

In the seventh, Joe Morgan walked off loser Steve Howe, 6-7, and first baseman Steve Garvey missed Jose Cruz's hard grounder for the fourth of six Los Angeles errors. Cesar Cedeno was intentionally walked to load the bases.

Howe, who had a first-inning RBI single, hit a high fly to medium right field, but outfielder Jay Johnstone's throw home was up the third base line and Morgan ran around catcher Steve Yeager, flopped on his sto-

mach and crawled back to touch home plate.

Rookie Woods then sent a bouncing single over third baseman Ron Cey to score Cruz. Both runs were unearned.

The Dodgers, held to two hits in six innings by starter Joaquin Andujar, rallied for three runs in the

seventh to tie the score. Derrel Thomas had an RBI double and Gary Thomasson pinch hit a two-run single.

Dave Smith, 6-5, replaced Andujar and pitched into the ninth, when he was relieved by Frank LaCorte, who allowed an RBI single to Dave Lopes.

Lacrosse team looks for a few good Aggies

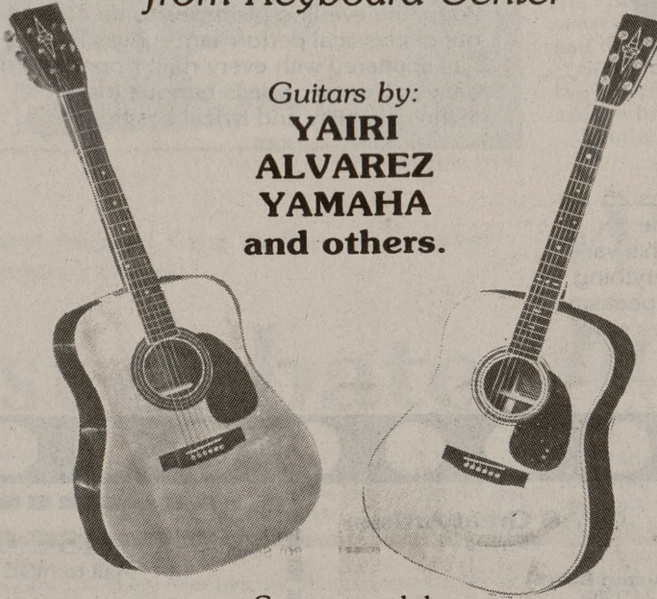
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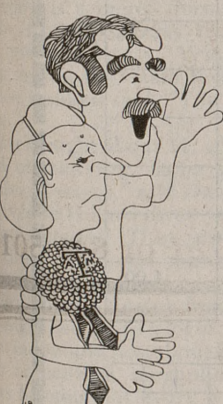
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