

Dawson lives and learns

Knee injury keeps him on the sidelines

by Richard Oliver
Sports Editor

Mississippi quarterback John Fourcade followed his blockers on the option to the strong side of the Aggie defense.

Texas A&M safety John Dawson watched carefully and followed the ball. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw the Ole Miss split end curl around to block him. Dawson expected the end to hit him high, so he reached out to push him aside. Instead, the player hit him low, driving his helmet into Dawson's knee. It meant the end of the senior safety's 1980 season.

He was operated on a week later. "I tried to move it (the knee) to the side to move away from the hit," he said Wednesday. "But it wasn't enough. He hit me smack on the knee. I never had that happen before; a player hit me like that."

Dawson is not a physically imposing character. His handsome face is decorated with a trimmed moustache and framed by short brown hair.

He sat back on the couch at Cain Hall and patted the cast on his left leg.

"You can't really call it a cheap shot," he said. "It was weird, because a few plays earlier it looked like he wanted to clip me. I looked at the referee and said, 'You saw

that, didn't you?' and he just sort of smiled. It's hard to say."

Dawson entered the fall with high hopes. A pre-season All-SWC pick in several publications, he had been elected as a captain by his teammates before the season started.

"I wish I were out there on the field," he said.

Dawson may be down, but he's not out. The University has applied for a hardship ruling for him, so he can play next year to complete his eligibility. The senior Physical Education major is eager for that chance.

"I'm just studying mostly now," he said. "I lift a little weights for the upper body."

Dawson will get the stitches removed from his leg Tuesday, and will have a new cast put on at that time.

"I should get this cast off on November 14 or something like that," he said, patting the plaster again. "I'll start rehabilitating as soon as I can after that."

He added he will probably go through a non-contact spring training.

Dawson said most injuries occur when a player is not prepared.

"I remember one play in Arkansas. I was lookin' up in the stands and when I looked down the play was coming right at me. I hit the

guy, and it really stung all through my nerves. That had never happened to me before. You've got to be ready at all times."

He added, however, that injuries are never planned.

"You can't go out there thinking about getting hurt," he said. "Hell, you can't worry about injuries."

This season without Dawson, the Aggies have stumbled in the initial stages, losing to Georgia and Penn State after nipping Mississippi.

"I really hope things get better," said Dawson. "People dwell on losses for some reason. If people dwell on losses all the time, it's hard to think about winning. You just have to kind of shrug it off. We haven't even started the conference yet."

Once again Dawson glanced down at his leg.

"I was pretty freaked out," he said thoughtfully. "I just remem-

bered everything after it happened. I kept thinking, 'Why me?' I worked so hard. Maybe the Good Lord's telling me to wait another season."

"I kind of watch the guys that have knee injuries now. You notice certain plays that you didn't before. I mean, I never thought about it before."

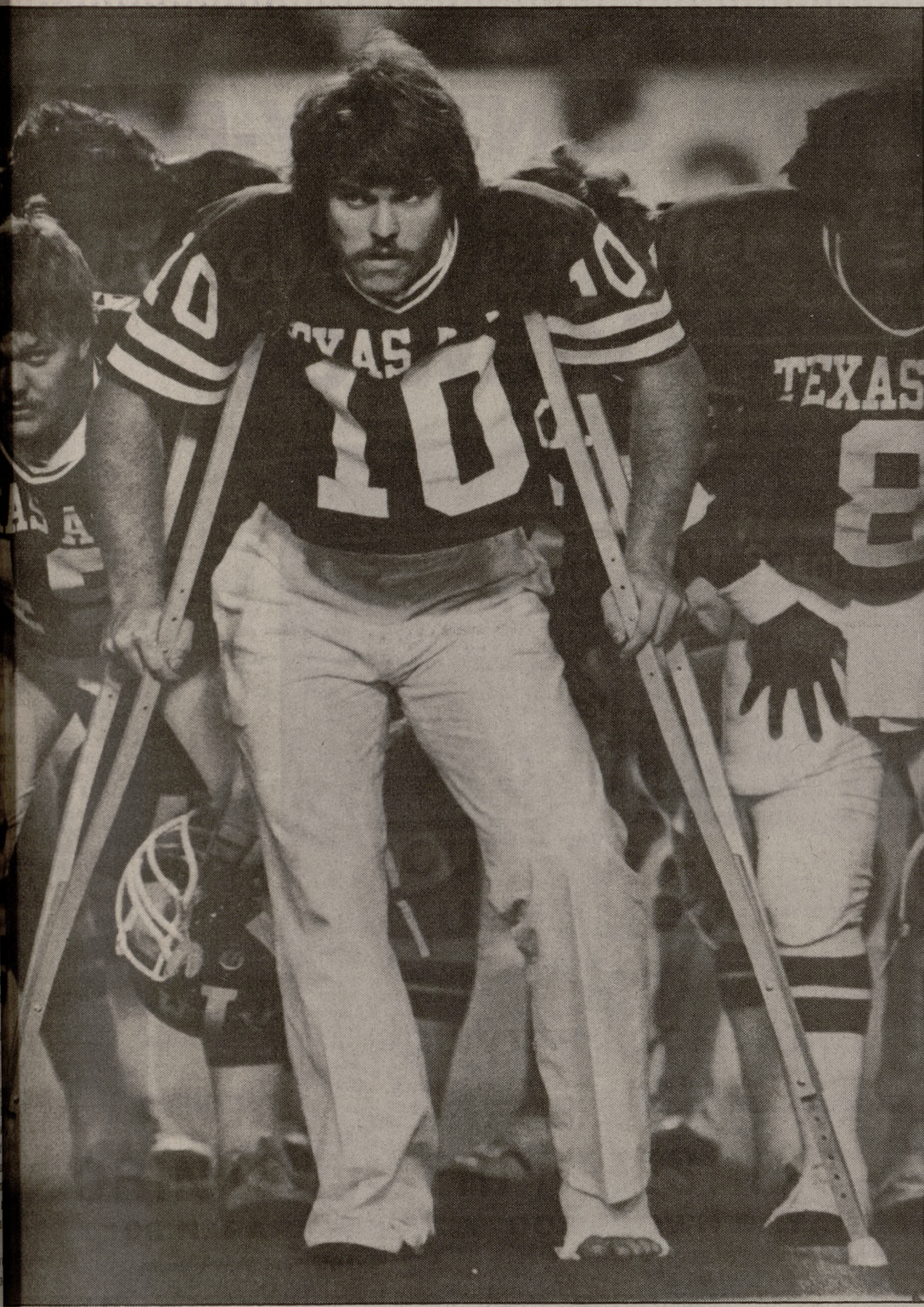
Although the knee injury was enough to sideline Dawson for the season, he stressed the injury is not as severe as some.

"It was pretty bad, but I was able to hobble off the field," he said. "In fact, I was ready to go on back in. It didn't hurt. The doctor knew what was wrong, though."

"It didn't hurt that night that bad, either."

For Dawson, the injury is only a setback, his hopes and dreams are still alive.

"I'd still like to play pro ball."



Staff photo by Pat O'Malley

Injured Aggie safety John Dawson leans on crutches while the team 'humps it' before the Penn State game last Saturday. Dawson is

sidelined for the year because of a knee injury he sustained during the first game of the year at Mississippi.

'Hollywood' is an Oiler

United Press International
HOUSTON — Former All-Pro backer Thomas "Hollywood" Henderson, shunned by two teams the past year, signed with the Houston Oilers Wednesday as a free agent.

Henderson, who had said he would like another chance to play in his home state with the Oilers, went through a workout Wednesday and was signed. No details of his contract were immediately available.

Henderson was dropped from the Dallas Cowboys in mid-season last year when Coach Tom Landry became disgusted with his attitude, especially sideline clowning for television cameras in a loss to Washington.

He retired rather than be traded by the Cowboys. Henderson signed as a free agent with the San Francisco 49ers with a one-year contract but was released last week. Because he had had 25 practices with various teams, players changed his nickname from "Hollywood" to "Ladd."

Oilers spokesman said Henderson signed his contract and took part in the afternoon practice. He had been bothered by a hamstring injury and might be slow to get back in a few days.

The spokesman said Henderson probably would play only on special teams in the Oilers' game Sunday at Cincinnati. He said Henderson was not to be joining the Oilers and team officials that "his troubles are behind him."

Henderson, who gained a reputation for his flamboyant manner and egotistical remarks as well as his strong play, will replace Conrad Hayman on the roster. Hayman has a bad back and was placed on the injured reserve list for at least four weeks.

Henderson, 27, a five-year veteran arrived in Houston late Tuesday after being placed on waivers Friday by the San Francisco 49ers. The 49ers said they wanted a younger player.

Henderson met with Coach and General Manager Bum Phillips, Assistant General Manager Pat Pappeler and Senior Vice President

Ladd Herzeg from 4:30pm into the evening.

Phillips had said he would like to hire Henderson and Henderson said he would like to be an Oiler. However, Phillips has implied money might be a problem.

The 49ers paid Henderson \$125,000 annually more than the Oilers pay any of their linebackers except All-Pro Robert Brazile.

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		Hawken (8 can roll)	\$5.15

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Hayman has ruptured disc

United Press International
HOUSTON — Houston Oilers right offensive tackle Conway Hayman Wednesday was placed on the injured reserve list for at least four weeks with a ruptured spinal disc.

Hayman, an eight-year veteran, suffered the injury in Sunday's vic-

tory over the Baltimore Colts. A team spokesman said doctors would have to evaluate the injury further before making a decision about surgery.

Hayman was hurt during the first half of the Oilers 21-16 victory over the Baltimore Colts.

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