

Sports

Astros rally to take tough Dodgers in playoff

United Press International
LOS ANGELES — If the good philosophy as the Houston Astros would have gone to the beach for French days and created the world in Italy's hurry-up job on the sixth day.

Entering a three-game weekend series with the Dodgers owning a three-game lead, the Astros needed to win just one of the three games to clinch the National League West championship. After losing the first of the 10th inning, they had to win the next two.

They lost the second game, 2-1. Well, there was always Sunday, they figured. Win the game, take a half off and square off against the NL champion Philadelphia Phillies on Tuesday.

Wrong. The Dodgers won Game

No. 3 on Ron Cey's two-run homer in the eighth inning.

And so the title was suddenly to be decided in a one-game playoff. All the marbles, no tomorrow, backs to the wall, all that stuff.

But the Astros, apparently not wanting to have their team picture appear in the dictionary beside the word "choke," were ready for Monday's playoff game.

They scored two runs in the first inning after a pair of Los Angeles errors, two more in the third on Art Howe's two-run homer and three in the fourth on a sacrifice fly by Jose Cruz and Howe's bases-loaded single en route to a 7-1 victory. The win gave Houston its first title in the team's 19-year history.

But if battling back to avoid one of the worst collapses in league history wasn't enough, the Astros had to

board a coast-to-coast flight to arrive in Philadelphia for tonight's opening game of the National League championship series against the rested Philadelphia Phillies at Veterans Stadium.

Houston's title came after a season that was marked by near-tragedy. The Astros succeeded this season despite the loss of star right-hander J.R. Richard with a near-fatal stroke on July 30.

Refusing to give in, however, Houston proceeded to post a 36-24 record entering the final series of the regular season. And it was the much-vaunted pitching that did it.

The heroes were many. Right-hander Vern Riffe, showing a complete recovery from back surgery last year, delivered one clutch performance after another and posted four

victories beginning with Sept. 6. Nolan Ryan, the high-priced free agent, earned the money with a 6-2 record down the stretch. Niekro, 11-8 when Richard suffered his stroke, finished at 20-12. Joe Sambito and Dave Smith gave Houston a bullpen that took control of close games.

Niekro said he wasn't sure whether or not his teammates were ready to throw in the towel following the three straight losses to the Dodgers — but he never even thought of surrendering.

"Maybe some of them were so disappointed in losing those three in a row that they thought it might be four in a row," said Niekro. "Before the game, I told them just to get me a few runs and I'd take care of the rest. I told them I wasn't going to lose the game. I went out there to win.

"The first two innings, the knuckleball was getting over and moving," he said. "The pitching will be the key, as it usually is. They may have more rest than we do, but I'm confident we can match them on the mound."

"There are positives and negatives about them playing today," Philadelphia manager Dallas Green said Monday. "The adrenalin should be flowing for them but they'll also be tired from flying all night and expending that energy."

Opposing the Phillies' silent ace, Steve Carlton, who was 2-0 against Houston this year, will be righthander Ken Forsch, 12-13 and 0-2 against Philadelphia with a 5.79 ERA.

Astros' Manager Bill Virdon feels any disadvantage his team may face because of exhaustion can be handled by his pitching staff.

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and tough, but we can handle them," he said. "The pitching will be the key, as it usually is. They may have more rest than we do, but I'm confident we can match them on the mound."

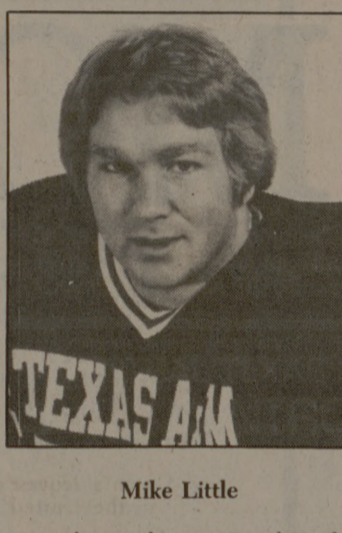
Rejuvenated Ags looking ahead to Coogs

By KURT ALLEN
Battalion Staff

The surprising 41-21 Texas Aggie win over Texas Tech may have rekindled dreams of cotton in College Station, but Texas A&M Head Coach Tom Wilson knows the road to a championship will still be a rocky one.

One of the biggest hurdles the Aggies have yet to clear in the Southwestern Conference race is Saturday's game with the University of Houston. Wilson said Monday he recognizes the Cougars may be wounded, but are still dangerous.

"It's awful hard to tell people how good Houston is with their record (15-3)," said Wilson. "They've still got a lot of awesome talent. I think their main problem so far has been turnovers stopping their offense from getting going."



Mike Little

during a Red Raider kickoff. Asked if Mosley might be doing more of that in the future, Wilson was non-committal.

"The only reason Mosley was in on the special team at that time was we thought they were going to use an inside kick," said Wilson. "I really thought they would do it but it didn't happen. Yes, there has been some thought given to using him on the special teams in the future, but any decision on that for the Houston game would have to come later in the week."

As for other changes on the special teams, Wilson said he would continue trying to use different players in the kicking game, looking for the right combination. He did say that middle linebacker Doug Carr would be a natural for the special teams.

After the wholesale changes that took place before the Tech game, it now looks like the starting lineup has settled down. The only change expected would be if cornerback Greg Williams can't play because of an injury. Also, Bernie Simon is being looked at for a backup role somewhere in the secondary.

Sizing up Houston as far as talent, Wilson pointed out the Cougar defense is dominated by two outstanding tackles in seniors Leonard Mitchell (6-7, 271) and Hosea Taylor (6-5, 265). The Cougars are also blessed with some speed in their secondary.

Offensively, Houston Head Coach Bill Yeoman is faithfully sticking with the veer formation. Wilson said quarterback Brent Chinn, who has taken over from the injured Terry Elston (Elston has a broken wrist), is small, but quick.

He added the Cougar backfield also has two outstanding running backs in Terald Clark and David Barrett.

There had been some question as to when the Aggies would play Hous-

ton in the Dome since the kickoff hinged on whether the Astros would make the National League playoffs.

That question has apparently solved itself and the Aggies will likely face Houston at 10:30 p.m. Saturday, unless the Astros lose three straight games to the Phillies, or vice versa.

Even so, Wilson doesn't think the kickoff time will pose any monumental problems. "Playing that late doesn't bother me and I don't think it'll hurt our team since it's ready to play. The people really affected by all this are the fans. I can imagine the mess it'll be for them."

That's the exact opposite of the situation at Texas A&M. The Aggie offense never looked better and Wilson said quarterback David Beal certainly deserved a lot of the credit for that. However, there were others whose play he felt had helped the Ags turn the corner offensively.

One of the biggest differences was that our line performed much more solidly in the past. There was much better protection of the passer.

Thought David Bandy did well at center. He's very intelligent and gives great effort as far as blocking.

Wilson said he thought Tommy Thompson had done a good job in his first start at quick tackle and general run blocker for the entire line. He also credited fullback David Hill with making "a bunch of good blocks" which helped free Aggie runners for several good gains.

Asked why Tech defenders seemed to be unable to contain Beal in his scoring runs, Wilson said the nature of the Red Raider defense had a lot to do with it.

"Tech depends to a great extent on the blitz," said Wilson. At the same time, they were also trying to stop our sweep with the linebackers. Once the Tech line committed itself to the blitz, there was no one to back it up. So all David had to do was get by their front line and he had clear running from there."

The Aggie boss also said he was pleased with the play of tailback Early to use best Jackson. Wilson said Jackson added quite a bit to the offense especially after starter Johnny Hector got wounded.

Defensively, Wilson said the difference in the squad's performance was it put more pressure on the passer and it showed up in four interceptions, three of which were made by strong safety Leandrew Brown. Wilson was of course pleased with Brown's heads-up play but also singled out weakside linebacker Mike Little for praise.

"I think it might have gone unnoticed that Mike Little played an outstanding game. He is playing very well at the new position (Little had been shifted from strongside linebacker) and has done a good job of adapting."

The kicking game and special teams were one area whose progress Wilson was especially pleased with. One major change he had made was

to replace sophomore David Hardy with freshman Alan Smith on not only kickoffs but field goals and extra points as well. Smith responded by hitting both his field goal attempts from 46 and 35 yards.

"I thought Alan added a lot to our kicking game. The two field goals he made came at very good times when we needed a little extra on the board. They certainly were not chip shots either."

As for the punting, Wilson said while his two punters (Kyle Stuard and Rock King) didn't put on a show, at least there was no breakdown similar to what happened in the Georgia and Penn State games.

He added Stuard came in during the middle of the game and made two good punts. Wilson said he feels Stuard now has a better idea of what the coaches want from him as far as kicking the ball.

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CO-OP OPPORTUNITY IN CANCER RESEARCH

On Wednesday afternoon, October 8, and Thursday morning, October 9, representatives from the Stehlin Cancer Research Foundation (Associated with St. Joseph's Hospital in Houston), will interview students interested in beginning Co-op in January. They want to interview students majoring in any of the sciences (including ANSC), pre-med, and BIMS, or BE, and plan to hire 3-6 co-op students for the Spring work term. The pay is \$850 per month for the first work term, and the positions are in Houston.

You must see your College Co-op Coordinator for an orientation and to receive an application before you interview. Call the Director of Cooperative Education, Mr. Steve Yates (845-7725) for further information.

NOTE: in the past, the Stehlin Cancer Research Foundation only employed summer students. All students who worked for them were accepted into medical school. They are now changing their student employment program to a formal Cooperative Education Program and hope to attract quality students.

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