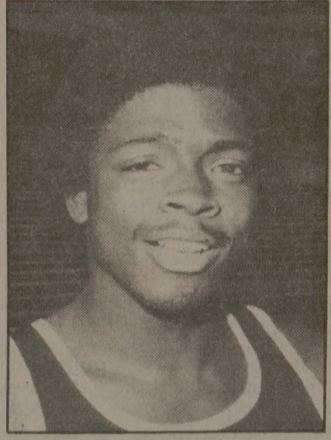


sports

Rod Richardson

NCAA 60-yard dash champ still in spotlight

by John Wagner



Rod Richardson

When Rod Richardson crossed the finish line in front of the rest of the 60-yard dash field at the March 13 in Pontiac, Mich., he wasn't just winning an ordinary race.

With his index finger raised high in a number one salute, Richardson broke the tape and became the 1982 NCAA Indoor 60-yard dash champion, beating such sprinters as Houston's Stanley Floyd and Georgia's Julie Roof 6-3.

With that victory, Richardson's life has changed. Considerably.

It's been three weeks since Richardson's success in the Silandez-Landry dome, and he admits that his life is just now getting back to normal.

"Things were moving real fast the week after I won," he said. "But they're settling down a little now."

Fast indeed. Richardson became the focal point of a media blitz, appearing in *Sports Illustrated* and several newspapers around the state. Richardson said he didn't mind all the publicity.

"I wasn't accustomed to receiving all that attention, but here's nothing wrong with it," he laughed.

Not all the publicity was favorable, however. Several articles dwelt on the fact that Richardson had decided to play

Shreveport, La., said his victory was a case of putting everything together at the right time.

"I didn't train differently or harder or anything," Richardson said. "In fact, I can't remember doing anything differently. When I was in the blocks, I felt real sharp — real confident. I didn't feel like an underdog."

"I think I just came together at the right time. I just won at the right moment."

Richardson said he decided that track was the sport for him at the end of his high school senior year. After a dual career as a running back and sprinter at Fair Park High School in Shreveport, Richardson had to make a choice.

"After my senior year, I had to choose between football and track because the recruiters were wanting me to sign," he said. "At the time, I didn't think my body was mature enough to play football in college. I thought about it a lot, and I chose track," he said.

Coming to Texas A&M was an easy decision for the 5-10 sprinter.

"When I came here, the people treated me real well," Richardson said. "Everyone I met was real nice. They showed a genuine interest in me, not only as an athlete, but as a student also. I figured the athletic part would take care of itself if I tried my best, but I was really impressed with how they treated me as a student."

Although winning the 60-yard dash in the NCAA Indoor Meet is the highlight of Richardson's young career, he was not an unknown when he went to Pontiac. He placed second in the 100-meter dash at the Southwest Conference Outdoor Meet as a freshman, and had a 6.11 time to his credit in the 60-yard dash.

Earlier this year, Richardson

won the SWC 60-yard dash with a time of 6.12. He cut that mark to 6.07 in the NCAA competition, and although he missed Stanley Floyd's world record by .03 seconds, his time was good enough for a new meet record.

Richardson said he feels he can improve on his times.

"I can get better," he said. "I need to get a consistent string of victories going, because that would help my confidence. If I can stay healthy, I can get better."

When he returned from Pontiac, Richardson won the 100-meter dash at the College Station Relays. But his string was broken at two when he was disqualified for a false start during the finals of the 100-meter dash at the Texas Relays Saturday.

Richardson said it wasn't a case of getting over-enthusiastic.

"I think it was more a mental letdown," he said. "I think there are days when you just fail to concentrate, and that was one of them."

Although Richardson is concentrating on track now, he is considering going out for football in the fall, probably as a kick returner and receiver. He is quick to point out, however, that track season isn't over yet.

"As far as I'm concerned, I just run track right now," he said.

The biggest change so far, Richardson said, is that now he is the favorite going into a race, and that puts more pressure on him.

"The pressure really hasn't bothered me that much yet, and I think I can shake it off when I run," he said. "But people expect more of me now. I'm not expected to lose. There was a time when I could lose and it wasn't that big of a deal. Losing now might bother other people more than it would me."

Ryan, Forsch start tonight in Houston

United Press International HOUSTON — Ace Astro pitcher Nolan Ryan faces Bob Forsch in a pitcher's paradise, the Astrodome, tonight to open the season for Houston and the St. Louis Cardinals.

Ryan, 11-5 last year with a National League leading 1.69 ERA, starts his second season with the Astros with an almost intact team that won the second championship last year and then lost to the Dodgers in a five-game Western Division playoff.

Forsch, 10-5 last year with a 1.91 ERA, is backed up by one of the National League's toughest relievers, Bruce Sutter. The Cardinals were second in both halves of the season last year while compiling the best winning percentage in the Eastern Division.

Tonight's contest opens a three-game series. The Cardinals return to St. Louis for a home opener Saturday against Pittsburgh.

On the expansive playing field of the Astrodome last year, the Houston club put together a 10-21 record primarily on solid starting pitching by Ryan, Joe Niekro, Don Sutton, Bob Knepper, and Vern Ruhle. Ryan made history by tossing his fifth no-hitter there Sept. 26 against the Los Angeles Dodgers.

Hits will be at a premium in the opening series. Two Cardinals starters, third baseman Ken

Oberkfell and catcher Gene Tenace, are injured. They will be replaced in the opening series by Steve Braun and Darrell Porter.

The Astros will field a light-hitting lineup. Houston added right-handed hitting Ray Knight, but did not improve itself at the plate over the winter. Last year the Astros hit only .257.

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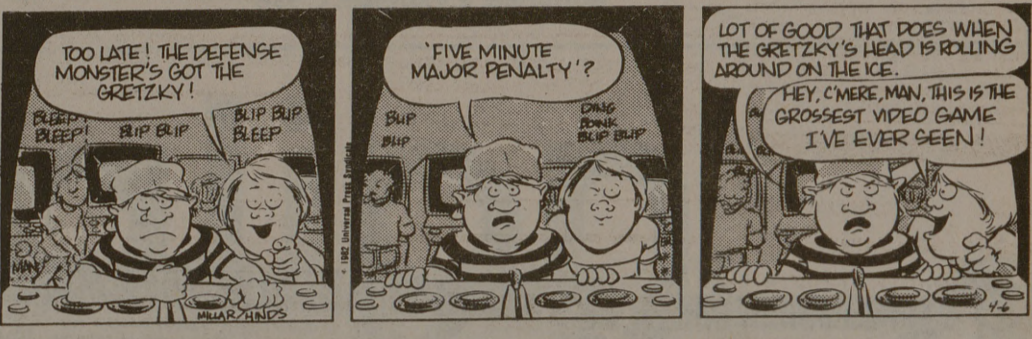
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Tanana to pitch against NY

Rangers begin 1982 with 11 new players

United Press International NEW YORK — The Texas Rangers open their season today against the New York Yankees with a new-look lineup and their same old optimism.

Eleven members of the current Texas roster — including the club's opening-day pitcher and six of the nine players who will fill out today's batting lineup — were not with the Rangers when the strike-shortened 1981 season came to a close.

The Rangers had already made several changes before two major trades late in spring training caused the club to take on an even more different look.

Among the newcomers is Frank Tanana — acquired in the free agent market after he played out his option at Boston. Tanana, who posted a lackluster 4-10 record with the Red Sox last year, will be on the mound today against the Yankees.

New York will counter with Ron Guidry, who has lost only one game to the Rangers in his four-year major league career.

New faces in the starting lineup will include first baseman

Lamar Johnson (free agent from the Chicago White Sox), second baseman Doug Flynn (traded from the Mets), left fielder Lee Mazzilli (also from the Mets), rookie center fielder George Wright, right fielder Larry Parrish (traded from Montreal) and rookie designated hitter Mike Richardt.

The only players starting today for Texas who were with the club last year are third baseman Buddy Bell, shortstop Mark Wagner and catcher Jim Sundberg.

In the past weeks the Rangers have traded away designated hitter Al Oliver and second baseman Bump Wills — both of whom wanted to be somewhere else. There is more speed on the team than ever and the Rangers' front office feels they have the strongest defensive infield and the best overall pitching staff in the American league.

Now all they have to do is win, something they have done little of during the course of their first decade in Texas.

"This is a better team than the one we opened the spring with,"

said executive vice president Eddie Robinson.

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