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USFL gimmicks hard to believe

Now I know the USFL has to aggressively market its teams, but I find this newest gimmick a little weird.

Other than being treated to an action-packed football game, fans can expect some other entertainment goodies. Who can wait for the half-time tug of war contest or the chance to win one of the 10,000 free "Where's the Beef" bandanas?

But rather than condemn or ridicule these promotions, I think they didn't go far enough. I want more.

Why not have male and female strippers sell the hot dogs, with a five dollar cover charge.

Warming to this scenario the Assistant Sports Editor chimes in that there could be horse racing on the track surrounding the field. Imagine the chaos created by this equestrian rabble stampeding around camera crews, cheerleaders and the tug-of-war teams.

Chariot races headlining the Madman from Olympus battling the Raving Alien from Cleveland could be added attractions. Maybe a mini-series could be developed. Sort of the Dukes of Hazzard go to Rome.

Maybe the teams could bring in circus rides and a ferris wheel, kids under 12 getting two free rides after each interception by the home team.

The Gambler game sort of turned out to be a good—bad entertainment experience. The Gambler put on a good show, but decided to lose in the end.

I think one way the USFL

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could increase fan interest would be to set the score of the game before the two teams actually play it. The teams playing each other would be expected to have this pre-determined score at the end of the game.

Each team would be expected to pick their best three players of the game. The three on the winning team would be traded immediately to the Dallas Cowboys. The three best on the losing team would be traded to the San Antonio Gunslingers.

And if you ever got tired of trying to figure out any USFL game, just go home and mow the lawn.

Billy Cannon picked by Pokes in 1st round

United Press International

DALLAS — Aggie linebacker Billy Cannon Jr. hoped to hear his name called somewhere near the end of the second round of the NFL draft Tuesday.

Instead, the Texas A&M linebacker became a first-round selection of the Dallas Cowboys — who had not used their initial pick to choose a Southwest Conference player since 1961.

The early pick was somewhat of a surprise. Experts predicted Cannon to be chosen sometime in the second round. But A&M Defensive Coordinator R.C. Slocum said he wasn't too surprised.

"We get a lot of input from scouts and coaches," Slocum said, "so we knew that several teams were very interested in him."

Cannon's value increased greatly this spring when he spent the off-season months lifting weights, something he had never done before because of playing on the A&M baseball team.

Slocum said the 6-foot-4-inch Cannon now weighs about 237-pounds, up from the 220-pounds he played at this past season. And it is all muscle, Slocum said. He also said Cannon consistently runs the 40-yard dash in 4.6.

Cannon's biggest asset, Slocum said, was his toughness.

"He's a tough son-of-a-gun," Slocum said. "And that's the starting point for playing linebacker. Billy has some finesse, but he can take on some blockers and jam some people."

As for any weaknesses Cannon might have, Slocum said his inexperience at the linebacker position might be a disadvantage. Cannon only played linebacker his senior year after being switched from free safety. Slocum said Cannon did an extraordinary job this season.

"For a guy to come in to a new position, without spring training, and do the job he did is incredible," Slocum said. "If he would have played four years at linebacker, he would have been an All-America."

Even though more highly publicized linebackers were available when Dallas picked 25th in the opening round, the Cowboys snapped up a player who once thought his future was in baseball.

"He was the one we wanted," said Dallas personnel director Gil Brandt. "I wasn't all that surprised he lasted that long, but I was still worried somebody might take him. A lot of clubs were high on him."

The irony of Cannon's selection was that he became the first Texas A&M player ever taken by the Cowboys and that he was the first draft choice under the ownership of Texas A&M board of regents chairman H.R. "Bum" Bright.

"Bum got to make the first pick," joked Dallas coach Tom Landry. "It was part of the sale. When you spend \$80 million you ought to get to make the pick."

Cannon is no stranger to the public eye.

His father, Billy Cannon Sr., was the greatest football hero in

the history of Louisiana State University.

Cannon won the Heisman Trophy in 1959 and his punt return that beat the University of Mississippi that year is a major part of Louisiana football lore.

When the younger Cannon was a senior in high school, the state of Louisiana was outraged that he chose Texas A&M over his father's alma mater. He did so after choosing to abandon a career of professional baseball.

During his sophomore year at Texas A&M, Cannon gained notoriety by knocking an A&M cadet to the ground after the cadet had threatened an SMU cheerleader with a sabre.

Last year Cannon's father, a Baton Rouge orthodontist whose wealth totaled \$3 million, pleaded guilty to masterminding an inexplicable \$6 million counterfeiting scheme. The elder Cannon is now serving a five-year federal prison term.

"Billy did the greatest job in the world last year," said Brandt, referring to his ability to perform despite the personal tragedy. "Opposing players tried to bait him and he refused to react to it. He is an outstanding person in being able to handle it the way he did."

Cannon has refused all comment about his father's activities and he did so again Tuesday after the Cowboys drafted him.

"I am very surprised and very happy to be drafted by Dallas," said Cannon. "I was thinking I would be drafted in



Photo by DEAN SAITO

Billy Cannon breaks through the Rice offensive line in action this past season. Cannon was Dallas' first round pick in Tuesday's draft.

the low second round."

After producing a poor track record with first-round picks in recent years, Landry indicated the Cowboys did not go after a player with "potential." Instead, they went after a player they were positive would help them

at a position where they needed help.

"We have to have proven players coming out of training camp," said Landry. "We are not going to take chances. We are going to come out of camp with a solid set of linebackers."

Ags pick Johnson

United Press International

Associate athletic director John David Crow announced Tuesday that assistant coach Mark Johnson will succeed Tom Chandler as Texas A&M's head baseball coach at the end of the season.

Chandler, A&M's head coach for 26 years, resigned prior to the Rice series last weekend. His resignation is effective Aug. 31.

"We are extremely fortunate to have a person of Mark Johnson's ability to be able to step in for Tom Chandler and assume the direction of our baseball

program," Crow said.

Johnson was an assistant coach at Mississippi State for six years before coming to Texas A&M in 1982. He also coached at Arizona — the 1976 national champions.

"I'm extremely honored and proud to be asked to represent Texas A&M as its head baseball coach," Johnson said. "It is also an honor to succeed a man of Tom Chandler's caliber, and I will make every effort to maintain the many high standards established here by him."

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