

1984 NFL Preseason Roundup

Quarterbacks battle for No. 1 job

Dallas begins critical season

United Press International
THOUSAND OAKS, Calif. — Over the past 20 years the Dallas Cowboys have produced an almost flawless record when it comes to making the proper turn at critical crossroads.

This is the year when another turn is required and Tex Schramm, perhaps more than any other, is currently sweating out the team's ultimate direction.

"We've been in this position before," said the Cowboys' president and general manager. "It always makes the adrenalin flow a little more."

But are there times when Schramm wonders whether the team's long string of successes might finally be coming to an end?

"You'd better believe it," he said. The current crisis point began last December when the Cowboys were run down by the Washington Redskins in their showdown for the NFC east title.

Disappointed in that big game, the Cowboys promptly folded. They were first crushed in the regular season finale by San Francisco and were then ousted from the playoffs by the Los Angeles Rams.

It marked the first time in the team's history it had lost the last three games of a season.

Then came a rash of retirements — offensive tackle Pat Donovan, defensive end Harvey Martin, tight end Billy Joe DuPree, fullback Robert Newhouse and wide receiver Drew Pearson. With the trade of receiver Butch Johnson to Houston, the Cowboys have lost 62 years of pro football experience.

In addition the Cowboys changed hands. Clint Murchison, in failing health and wanting to settle his estate, sold the club for \$80 million to an assortment of businessmen headed by Texas A&M board of regents chairman H.R. "Bum" Bright.



Gary Hogeboom



Danny White

A Dallas newspaper polled the club's players during the offseason and a majority of them, under the cloak of anonymity, said they thought Hogeboom should be the Cowboys' quarterback.

With all of that as a background, the Cowboys reconvened on the campus of California Lutheran College in hopes of once again fighting off the inevitable.

It is their 25th anniversary season and for the last 19 of those years they have had a winning record. And in 18 of those 19 years Dallas has been in the playoffs.

But is it all coming to an end? "It is certainly a very important year for us," said Schramm. "But you would like to come through this year because it is in situations like this that everybody questions you. We would like to answer those questions in a positive manner."

The man chiefly responsible for keeping the Cowboys a winner has approached this year's training camp in a relaxed manner, at least relatively speaking. Coach Tom Landry, it seems, thrives under adversity.

"I sense the same determination in Tom he had in 1980," said Schramm. "That was the year Roger (Staubach) retired and a lot of people were saying we would drop

down. He rises to the challenge like a lot of people do. He enjoys it.

"It seems in the most stressful times he displays a certain looseness. I think I see some of those signs now."

"As long as he sees it as a challenge he will want to continue to coach and this year will be a challenge."

It has been a trying year for Schramm. He supervised the sale of the club, insuring the survival of the unique structure of the Cowboys — in which the owner spends the money and stays out of the way.

"This year has taken a certain toll," he said. "When you have been doing business with someone for 24 years and have to change and go through all of this, well, it's not easy."

It is times like these that brings out the historian in Schramm. He likes to recount history, naturally, because history has been kind to his efforts.

"This all reminds me of 1980," he said. "We had seen the end of the era with Staubach gone. We had lost in the playoffs to the Rams in 1979, but we had a lot of enthusiasm and there was a challenge in that camp."

"We played well, but the loss to San Francisco (in the NFC title game) was very disappointing."

"I'm not sure that 1975 isn't a better parallel. We didn't make the playoffs the year before and we had the 12 rookies who made that squad. They seemed to bring new enthusiasm."

"I hope that is the case this year because there will be a lot of rookies make this team."

"And there was 1970, after we had lost to Cleveland in two straight playoffs. But we came back to make it to the Super Bowl."

At the core of this training camp is the White-Hogeboom decision, which Landry must ultimately make.

Again there are history lessons from which to draw.

"It will be a critical decision. We have had that kind of decision twice before and, strangely enough, they took different courses."

"And both decisions led to great years."

"There was the Morton-Meredith situation in 1965 and he (Landry) decided to go with Meredith. We made the playoffs the next year for the first time."

"Then there was the Staubach-Morton situation which was about as difficult as it could be. But Landry decided for Staubach. The first time he went with experience, the second time he went with youth."

"So which way does he think Landry will lean this year?"

"I don't know," said Schramm, "and I wouldn't say if I did. But a lot of people underestimate what White has done for this team. Hogeboom hasn't done it under pressure yet."

It is not difficult to imagine a down year for Dallas in 1984. The Cowboys pulled off some amazing victories during the first half of last season and without those comebacks they might well have been looking at a breakeven record.

And what would fan reaction be if the Cowboys do finally tumble.

"That's the way it is when people are used to winning. They tend to make very critical statements about a team because it hurts them when they lose."

"Of course we dug our own hole with our success. But that's a lot better than having it the other way."

Saints sing the QB blues again in '84

United Press International
HOUSTON (UPI) — Before the New Orleans Saints' season opener against Atlanta, Bum Phillips has to decide who will be his starting quarterback.

Judging from the performances of his three candidates for the job — Ken Stabler, Richard Todd and Dave Wilson — the coach is in a no-lose situation when he does make up his mind.

But for now, if he does have ideas about who will start that first regular game, he's keeping quiet to keep the heat on.

"It's hard to tell. They all three play real well. It's going to be a hard decision to make," Phillips said after New Orleans' 31-19 preseason win over Houston in the Astrodome Aug. 18.

Ken Stabler, in his 15th NFL season, started the game, as he has all of the Saints' preseason games. He was 5 of 14 for 67 yards and threw a 30-yard touchdown pass to Jeff Groh in his audition. It was vintage Stabler, with the 30-yard completion his longest pass. Most of his passes attempted were in the 8- to 12-yard range.

Regardless of Phillips' decision on the starter, Stabler believes the battle for quarterback is strengthening the Saints.

"Whatever decision Bum makes, we'll all do whatever we have to do to contribute to the team. The most important thing to do is to win and it's not important who gets it done as long as we get it done," Stabler said.

"Depth can't be anything but good. Competition makes us better players and makes us a better team," he said.

Like Stabler, Todd is a product of Alabama. He is beginning his ninth season in the NFL and his first in New Orleans, coming from the New York Jets in an offseason trade.

He started his series in the second quarter with a fumble but led the Saints to two touchdowns in the third quarter. Statistically, he was the most impressive, completing 14 of his 17 passes for 173 yards, including a 44-yarder to Eugene Goodlow.



Saints' Coach Bum Phillips

The depth at his position on the team can only be the sign of a good football team, Todd said.

"I think everybody's played well," he said. "We may all play during the year. The team has confidence in all the guys behind the center and that's good for the team."

Wilson, as a three-year veteran, must be considered the longshot in the race. But though he played only a quarter, he still had two scoring drives, one ending on Hokie Gajan's 37-yard run. He was 5 of 5 passing for 82 yards.

He doesn't envy Phillips' decision. "I wouldn't want to have to make that decision. I think we're all showing we can do the job," he said.

Warren Moon quarterbacked the Oilers for more than three quarters, hitting 50 percent of his 28 passes for 241 yards. Mike Holston, one of 10 receivers trying to make the club, grabbed a deflected pass on the first play of the fourth quarter for Houston's only touchdown.

The 13-year play moved Houston back to within two points at 21-19.

"I started to get a feel for what the Saints were doing out there in the last series and we moved the ball pretty well," said Moon.



NICKEL COPY CENTER

INSTANT COPIES - BINDING

- Self-Serve Copiers
- Volume Discounts
- Superior Reproductions
- Enlargements * Reductions
- Photographs Copied
- Free Pick-Up & Delivery

693-1884

This coupon is good for -
 ONE FREE
 ENLARGEMENT OR REDUCTION
 valid thru Oct. 31
 1984

This coupon is good for -
 ONE OFF
 ALL BINDING
 valid thru Oct. 31
 1984

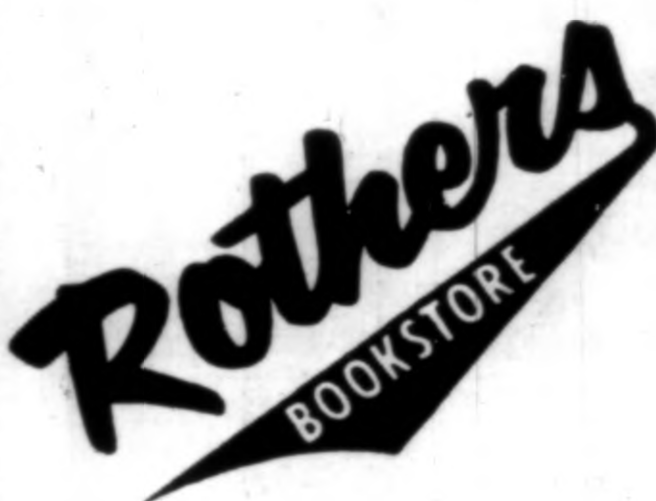
Texas Ave.

Anderson

Kyle Field Wellborn Rd.

NICKEL COPY CENTER

330 Jersey - At The Southgate
 NEXT TO ROTHERS BOOKSTORE



- now presenting -

ROTHERS WOODSTONE

901 Harvey Rd.

- * GROUP DISCOUNTS
- * TEAM DISCOUNTS
- * GREEK
- * NOVELTIES
- * CORPS
- * TEAM SALES
- * BOOKS
- * CUSTOM CAPS
- * SUPPLIES



Check our low prices on custom shirts, caps!

HUGE SUPPLY OF USED BOOKS!

ROTHERS BOOKSTORE 330 Jersey * at the Southgate *
 ROTHERS WOODSTONE 901 Harvey Rd. * next to Malibu Beach *

OPEN LATE DURING BOOK RUSH WITH PLENTY OF HASSLE-FREE PARKING