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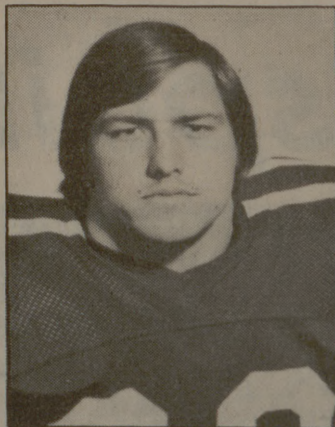
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NFL suits former Aggie Dennard

By CHAREAN WILLIAMS
Sports Writer

He competed on four winning A&M teams and in three Bowl games. After being drafted by Miami in '78, he played on five winning Dolphins' teams and in the '82 Super Bowl. Now, Mark Dennard plays center for the Philadelphia Eagles — a team going nowhere fast.



Eagles' Mark Dennard

"We're going through some rough times," Dennard said of the Eagles who currently sport a 4-4 record. "I wish we were winning more, but we'll turn it around."

Dennard, who played with the Aggies from '75-'78, earned academic All-American honors as a junior and was All-Southwest Conference as a senior. In addition, he was voted to the second team All-SWC squad for the decade of 1970-80.

Dennard was a 10th round draft choice of Miami, but spent his first season on the injured reserve list with broken and dislocated fingers suffered during a preseason game.

In '79, Dennard took over as the starting center, replacing Jim Langer and earned NFL rookie honors. He started 35 consecutive games before being sidelined in '81 with torn calf muscles.

Since then, even more injuries have affected Dennard's football career.

Dennard broke his arm in the first preseason game of '82 and saw action in only seven regular season games. Last season, he was used primarily as a center in shotgun situations before being placed on Miami's injured reserve with a shoulder injury. The 29-year-old Bay City native said his injury problems are history now.

Dennard said he wanted to be traded to a team where he could start.

"I asked them (Miami) about trade possibilities after the season was over and they accommodated me," Dennard said.

On March 7, Dennard was traded to the Eagles for an undisclosed 1985 draft choice.

"We had scouted Mark on film and liked what we saw," said Eagles'

Head Coach Marion Campbell. "Mark wanted to go some place where he would have a chance to challenge for a starting position."

Dennard, who is the ninth Aggie to play for the Eagles, said the move to Philadelphia has been smooth.

"As far as football, I have not had to make many adjustments," he said. "The blocking schemes are the same. The terminology is basically the only thing that's different."

Dennard, who is married and has two children, still lives in Bryan during the off-season. He graduated from Texas A&M with a marketing degree and has worked as a loan officer at First National Bank during the summer months.

Dennard said he doesn't know how much longer he will play football in the NFL.

"I will take them (the games) one at a time," he said. "We'll have to go from game to game."

Eagles executive director of player personnel Lynn Stiles and Miami Head Coach Don Shula praised Dennard's ability.

"His forte is quickness," Stiles said. "He is particularly strong against the pass rush."

"The thing that comes to mind about Mark is toughness, both mental and physical," Shula said. "He'll do anything to get the job done."

Houston proves 3-0 start no fluke

United Press International

HOUSTON — All the signs of decay had set in at the University of Houston this year.

There were grumbles from the fans, the media was showing little interest and the Cougars suffered an early major disappointment against an intersectional foe it was expected to beat.

But over the course of three weeks the Houston Cougars have made a remarkable recovery, reaching a peak last Saturday with a shocking 29-20 victory over then seventh-ranked SMU — a team that had previously lost just one regular season game over three seasons.

"I think," said Houston coach Bill Yeoman, "that most people feel, and I think it is an accurate assessment, that it was one of our best wins in the last few years. It was major league football. SMU has great ability, but our kids played real hard and very well."

As a result, Yeoman was named UPI national coach of the week.

Going into this week's meeting with Arkansas, Houston has a 3-0 record and is alone atop the Southwest Conference.

This is in marked contrast to last year, when the Cougars suffered through their first losing season since joining the SWC in 1976.

Yeoman made it clear he was disappointed with the effort of his players last year. For one reason or another 30 members of the Houston roster who were eligible to play this year are not on the team.

Because of that house cleaning,

Razorbacks face uphill SWC battle

United Press International

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. — Arkansas' Southwest Conference game with Houston Saturday at the Astrodome has no added significance to the Razorbacks, even though the Cougars are alone atop the SWC standings, head coach Ken Hatfield said Wednesday.

Hatfield said in a telephone hookup from Fayetteville that the Cougars, 4-2 overall but 3-0 in the conference, present a different challenge from the Hogs' first three league foes.

"There's a new challenge every week," Hatfield said. "It's a tough, difficult task. You have to play your best all the time. Every game at that time is very critical to the program. I don't look at any one game down the line as being any bigger."

Hatfield acknowledged, though,

and because he had an experienced, talented quarterback in Gerald Landry, Yeoman was expecting sharp improvement this year. After splitting the first two games of the season, however, Houston was surprised by Louisville in the Astrodome.

That was a low point for the Cougars. Only two representatives of the Houston media showed up for a press luncheon with Yeoman the next Tuesday (as opposed to 17 after the SMU win).

The Cougars rebounded, however, to beat Baylor in the rain at Waco and knock off Texas A&M at home before upsetting SMU. The Houston veer offense operated at a level not seen since Houston last won the league title in 1979.

"Actually, there was no great key to anything," said Yeoman. "Our defense kept good pressure on SMU, which we had to do. They broke three big plays, but you are not going to keep that bunch under wraps indefinitely."

"Our guys got some turnovers, though, and we capitalized on them."

"Then, when SMU started to comeback (getting to within six points in the fourth quarter), we drove the ball 87 yards and got a field goal which took the edge off their momentum."

"To win the championship in this league you have to win every week and that is what everybody wants to do. But for us to do it, in the expression of football, we have to get after it every week. That's what we did against SMU."

that a Hog victory could put Arkansas back into the title chase despite two conference losses.

"This week if something could happen to the two undefeated teams (Houston and Texas), everybody would be back into a scramble," he said.

Cougar coach Bill Yeoman, named the UPI national coach of the week after directing UH to a 29-20 upset of SMU last week, said he could not remember when Houston last played a Wishbone team. Houston athletic officials later said Oklahoma's 40-14 win in the 1981 Sun Bowl was the last Wishbone attack used against the Cougars.

"All you have to do is look at a film of Arkansas," Yeoman said. "If that doesn't sober you up, nothing will."

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