

SPORTS

Ags under sports news microscope again



Texas A&M Head Football Coach Jackie Sherrill gets a lift from the Houston Oilers' 1985 No. 1 draft pick, Ray Childress (left) and Sammy O'Brient (90) after the Aggies'

victory over Texas last season in Austin's Memorial Stadium. Sherrill hopes this happy scene will be repeated with great frequency during the upcoming '85-'86 season.

Battalion File Photo

By ED CASSAVOY
Sports Writer

Football, you bet — even in July.

After spending the past few days following the trials and tribulations of Texas A&M football, past and present, I can't say that I've got a lot to show for it.

Ray Childress, the erstwhile construction worker and former All-America and All-Southwest Conference defensive end for A&M, sat down for serious negotiations Wednesday with his agents and the Houston Oilers. Childress remains unsigned at the time of this column.

Childress, the third player taken in the 1985 National Football League draft, said he wasn't too thrilled with the money offered him and might consider working in a lucrative position in the construction business, rather than play football for the Oilers.

But it appears that Childress tried on the old hard hat and found that his football helmet (with the accompanying contract) fit a lot snuggler. I predict he'll be suited up at the Oilers' training camp in San Angelo by the end of the week.

Matt Darwin, a fifth-round '85 pick of the Dallas Cowboys, will probably be applying for the construction job Childress dumped.

Darwin, a second team All-SWC center at A&M last season, seems worlds apart with the Cowboys. And Darwin probably won't be inking his name on any Pokes' contract in the near future.

But Darwin doesn't exactly have the leverage Childress has.

Fifth-round picks are an endangered species at most NFL training camps. Typically, they're on the borderline between mak-

ing the cut or taking a walk.

The Cowboys reportedly offered salaries of \$70,000, \$85,000 and \$100,000 with an option to Darwin. On top of that, Gil Brandt, the Cowboys' personnel director, said the \$55,000 signing bonus Darwin was offered will be reduced by \$2,500 each day he misses camp.

Brandt seems to feel that Darwin won't be playing in the NFL in 1985.

Darwin's options, if he doesn't play, include signing with a United States Football League team for the league's upcoming fall season, or heading to the cooler climate of the Canadian Football League.

That's assuming that the Cowboys don't trade his draft rights to another team.

The future for Darwin, who played every position on the Aggies' offensive line at one time or other, appears somewhat cloudy when compared to Childress, who will be an immediate starter for the Oilers.

Jimmy Teal, a graduate of last season's Aggie wide-receiver corps, has come to terms with the Buffalo Bills. Although Teal also was a fifth-round choice, he's getting a fair bit of attention from the Bills. Teal's chances of making the cut look good.

The Bills acquired quarterback Vince Ferragamo from the Los Angeles Rams during the off-season and Teal's speed and soft hands could be just what the QB ordered.

But Childress, Darwin and Teal aren't the only Aggies in the sports spotlight. Even the fortune of the 1985-'86 Aggies has already been predicted in a number of sports publications.

A&M Head Football Coach Jackie Sherrill can't even escape

the questions about his future in College Station long enough to enjoy a nice glass of ice tea.

The *Sporting News College Football 1985 Yearbook* didn't have high hopes for the Aggies. A&M was listed as finishing seventh in the Southwest Conference in the coming season, ahead of only Texas Tech and Rice.

Admittedly the fourth year of Sherrill's command is the critical year (isn't every year?) for his future. After trouncing the Texas Longhorns last year, Sherrill appears to be in a no-win situation.

Expectations are high that Sherrill has to win, and fairly quickly, to keep the cries for his coach's whistle down to a dull roar.

The Aggies' opener is against Alabama. A tough battle against two teams and coaches who desperately need a win to gain some early season momentum.

Alabama Head Coach Ray Perkins is starting his fourth year as well and is looking to erase memories of the Crimson Tide's dismal '84 season.

The game promises to be a Birmingham barn burner.

So here's how it totals up in my note pad.

- Childress will be able to afford all the nails he wants in 1985.

- Darwin will probably be hitting his.

- Teal will need snow tires put on his car for those lovely winters in Buffalo.

- And Jackie Sherrill will probably wish he could beat the Longhorns every week.

Fast receivers fill Oilers' draft order

Associated Press

SAN ANGELO — They started appearing on the Houston Oilers roster during the off-season — short, muscular men with a common ingredient designed to add more punch to the team's passing attack.

Herkie Walls, a seventh-round draft pick in 1983, was the prototype of what Oilers head coach Hugh Campbell has been seeking to complement the silky smooth moves of wide receiver Tim Smith.

The Oilers seemed determined to swarm opposing secondaries.

"If they (opposing defenses) can't look at a Tim Smith and be concerned only with double teaming him, we're that much better off," Campbell said.

"We'd like to put as many offensive weapons on the field as possible."

The Oilers obtained Drew Hill, 5-foot-9, 170-pounds, from the Los Angeles Rams; drafted Hawaii's Mike Akiu, 5-9, 175, in the seventh round and Willie Drewery, 5-7, 158, in the 11th round; and signed former University of Houston sprinter Stanley Floyd as free agent.

"We've got receivers in the other category that we can count on,"

Campbell said. "We'd like to get to where they have to be concerned about all of our receivers."

Adding speed to the receiving corps was a primary goal of the Oilers in the 1985 draft.

The Oilers had a chance in the first round to get a speed receiver with Miami's Eddie Brown still on the board, but they used the pick to choose Richard Johnson, a cornerback from Wisconsin.

"Coming here, I don't see myself playing right off," Hill said. "I'm the kind of guy who likes to give the other receivers the respect they deserve. They've been here longer than me."

Hill received few opportunities as a receiver with the run-oriented Rams last season.

"When a ball came to me I'd better catch it because I wasn't going to get another one," he said.

Floyd, a world class sprinter and easily the fastest man in camp, says he's learning to control his speed.

"I have to remember my assignments on each play but it's getting more automatic each time," said Floyd, who earlier had a tryout with the Atlanta Falcons. "When it all becomes automatic, you'll see I'm a lot faster."

Walls caught 18 passes last season with the Oilers and had one touchdown reception.



Cowboys Camp Lattany feels good as Olympic gold with Pokes

Associated Press

THOUSAND OAKS, Calif. — World class sprinter Mel Lattany gave up a career that earned him \$150,000 last year to try to make the Dallas Cowboys as a wide receiver.

"I was making good money in track and field," Lattany said, "but I had lost my competitive edge in track. I got backing from my wife so I decided to try professional football."

The Cowboys need receiver help and, although Lattany hadn't played football since he was in high school at Brunswick, Ga., the team decided to sign him to a free-agent contract. Lattany was a safety in prep school.

Lattany's speed was something too juicy for the Cowboys not to try out. He holds the world record for the 100-meter run at sea level.

His time of 9.96 seconds translates to an 8.8 in the 100-yard dash. Lattany, who made the 1980 United States Olympic team that boycotted Moscow, is the fastest Dallas player since Bob Hayes.

The 26-year-old hopeful made a big impression on Coach Tom Landry Tuesday by blazing past the Los Angeles Raiders secondary to catch a 53-yard pass during a rookie scrimmage.

"It was a big play and the kind of thing we are looking for," Landry said.

Lattany said of the catch: "I never had an Olympic gold medal, but this must be what it feels like to get one. It felt great."

Lattany also got a taste of National Football League roughness on the play as a Raider piled on.

"I like getting hit — it's fun," said Lattany, who is quickly developing a reputation for toughness.

No coach or player is tougher on Lattany than Lattany. He even grades himself on a 1 through 10 scale on various categories.

"Right now I'm still about a four on catching passes but improving fast," he said. "Learning the game, I'm about a six. Learning how to wear a football uniform again, I'm about a two. I think I rate myself harder than the coaches do."

Lattany knows he is facing longshot odds. "I'm just trying to stay close to the other receivers right now," he said. "I'm trying to give all of my body to football."

Veteran defensive back Dennis Thurman, who is also working as a coach during rookie camp, told Lattany, "Use your speed to the best advantage."

Dorsett not expected to meet camp deadline

Associated Press

THOUSAND OAKS, Calif. — Dallas Cowboys' fullback Ron Springs believes Tony Dorsett, whose having problems with the Internal Revenue Service, won't make it to training camp by the Thursday evening deadline.

"Tony is upset with his contract," Springs said. "Last week he saw what Danny White and Randy White are making and he figures he deserves more. I don't think he will be here. I've talked to him a lot in two weeks."

The financially troubled Dorsett, who missed practice for a third day Tuesday, will make \$400,000 this season.

Dorsett was hit in Dallas with a \$400,000 back tax notice by the IRS, which seized two of his houses. He also has made several bad investments, a source close to the Cowboys said.

Dorsett was divorced in February and his wife received a settlement

reaching \$250,000 and also lost some \$50,000 in an oil deal that went sour, the source said.

"Tony is struggling right now," the source said. "He's trying to overcome some setbacks."

Dallas Coach Tom Landry said Dorsett has until Thursday to report to camp without being fined \$1,000 per day.

"You have to recognize that Dorsett would be here unless there was something of much concern bothering him," Landry said.

Dorsett is the only Cowboys' veteran running back not in training camp.

"Tex Schramm is talking to Dorsett and I'm not involved," Landry said. "The veterans have been invited here early, but they don't have to come until Thursday night."

Schramm, the club president, said he is talking "to a third party" involved in Dorsett's financial affairs.

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