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by Jeff Millar & Bill Hinds



# Oilers will trim prospect list before naming new coach

Associated Press

HOUSTON — The Houston Oilers won't offer the vacant head coaching job to anyone until the list of prospects has been reduced to three and those applicants re-interviewed, General Manager Ladd Herzog said Tuesday.

"Everyone we've talked to so far, wants the job," Herzog said. "We're going to keep talking until the list of everyone we're interested in has been exhausted."

Herzog declined to name any of the prospective coaches but the Oilers reportedly have interviewed former Cleveland Coach Sam Rutigliano, San Francisco assistant coach Paul Hackett and United States Football League coaches Dick Coury of Portland and Jacksonville's Lindy Infante.

Nebraska's Tom Osborne also has

been mentioned in connection with the Oilers.

A *Houston Chronicle* source said Osborne was offered the job last week but that he had decided to remain with the Cornhuskers.

Osborne told Houston Radio Station KIKK early Tuesday "It's not true," when asked if he'd been offered the head coaching job.

In a later interview, Osborne said he was happy at Nebraska and planned to be there next season, but added he would neither confirm nor deny rumors concerning the Oilers.

"I am the coach at Nebraska and plan to be here next year," Osborne said.

"I have a five-year contract and, God willing, I'll be here another five years from now. It's the only job right now that I'm interested in."

Herzog fired head coach Hugh

Campbell with two games remaining in the 1985 season and named defensive coordinator Jerry Glanville as interim coach.

Glanville remains a candidate for the full-time position because he thinks the Oilers have the personnel to have a winning season in 1986.

Herzog started his search looking for a coach who believes the Oilers can win next season.

"Basically, all the people I've talked to say we've done an outstanding job of providing the personnel here," Herzog said. "The reception has been very good."

Herzog said he would not rush into naming a coach prior to the Senior Bowl at Mobile, Ala., Jan. 18, where unemployed coaches often find new jobs.

# Former UT coach bitter over 'sacrificial' firing

Associated Press

PORT ARTHUR — Former University of Texas assistant football coach Ronnie Thompson said four years of frustration — of having to bite his tongue, of seeing players misused, of seeing suggestions ignored — poured out after head coach Fred Akers fired him and three others last week.

He said that he was shattered that his loyalty meant nothing and that Akers would use him and the other dismissed coaches as a sacrificial offering for his own shortcomings. The former head coach of Port Arthur Jefferson High School decided to fight back.

Thompson's verbal broadside after the sackings last Friday probably ranks as the upset of the year in college football, bigger than Texas-El Paso beating Brigham Young.

Fired coaches who speak out in anger after being fired generally have their comments dismissed as sour grapes. Then they find themselves blackballed.

Thompson, who coached the running backs at Texas, said he understands all that. Nonetheless, he has no qualms about saying that Akers lied to him, that Akers made his assistants the scapegoats for a disappointing season, and that Akers limited the input of his assistants.

"Fred can only fire me once," Thompson said. "And how's he going to recommend me to anybody now that he's done that? Besides,

since this has happened, I've learned Fred is bitterly disliked by an awful lot of people. So maybe it won't hurt me. Anyway, I have no regrets."

It is possible in this particular case Thompson's taken the right approach. Many think Fred Akers is neither well liked nor respected by many football people across the state.

Akers was in Japan and could not be reached for comment.

Ever since former UT football coach Darrell Royal took away Akers' offensive responsibilities and replaced him with a high school coach named Emory Bellard back in 1968, Akers has been obsessed with proving Royal made a mistake, Thompson said.

"One of the things that really killed us this year," Thompson said, "was our inability to score touchdowns from inside the 20. We usually settled for field goals. Fred called approximately 82 percent of the plays inside the 20. I know because I kept the charts."

Ron Toman, as Texas' offensive coordinator, was little more than a figurehead, Thompson said.

"Ron and I got to call a lot of plays on third-and-8, but on first and second down it was a real circus," Thompson said. "We'd be working off the game plan charts and call what had been discussed for down and distance. Fred was always deviating from it."

"What we'd wind up with on game

day was a grab bag offense that didn't have any rhyme or reason. Sometimes I wondered why we even prepared a game plan. We wouldn't stick with anything in a game long enough for it to be successful."

Before he was officially a member of the Texas coaching staff, Thompson said, he sat with Toman in the press box during the Longhorn's 1982 Cotton Bowl game against Alabama.

With Texas trailing late in the game, he heard Toman recommend a quarterback draw. Three plays later Longhorn signal caller Robert Brewer scored the winning touchdown on a quarterback draw.

Thompson, on his way to the dressing room, bumped into a sportswriter acquaintance, who asked him who made the call. Thompson said it was Toman.

Meanwhile, in the dressing room, Akers was taking full credit, Thompson said. It didn't sit well with Akers when he learned his new assistant was quoted as saying Toman suggested the decisive play, Thompson added.

"I was new and just didn't understand how things worked," Thompson recalls. "Dating back to what happened with Darrell, Fred has a terrible complex about his offensive knowledge. He's still trying to prove Darrell made a mistake. Anything that worked needed to come off as Fred's idea."

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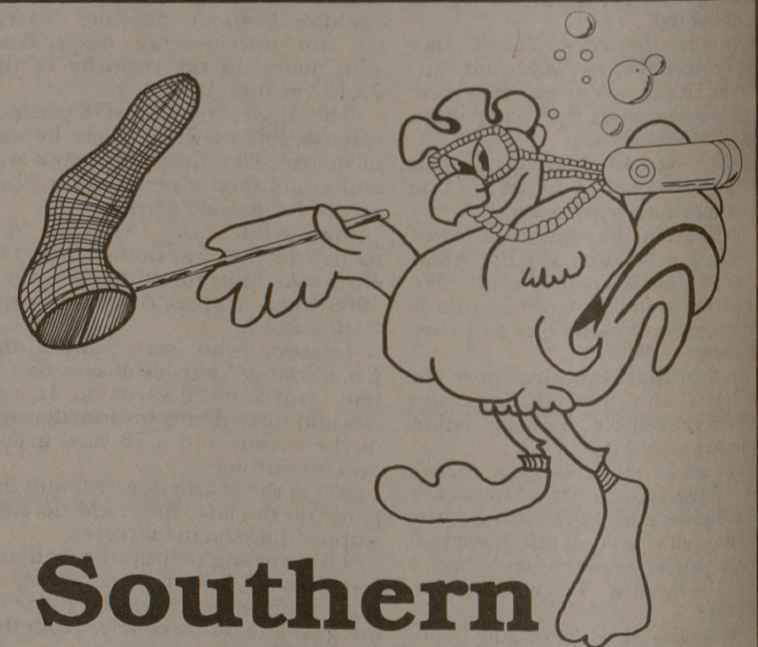
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