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UTEP rises from cellar

EL PASO (AP) — By at least one yardstick, Bob Stull was a success his first season as football coach at Texas-El Paso: The Miners finished only second-to-last in the Western Athletic Conference.

At many colleges, UTEP's 4-8 record could be cause for a coach's firing, but the mark was the Miners' best since 1974, when they went 4-7. UTEP joined the WAC in 1968 and has been at the bottom of the league 13 times and next-to-last twice, including this season.

Stull, who came to UTEP from the University of Massachusetts in January to replace the fired Bill Yung, led the Miners to two conference wins this year, helping them finish ahead of the cellar-dwelling Utah Utes.

It was a modest but promising improvement for a traditional underdog in college football.

"The first year is the hardest because nobody understands exactly what you want, including the coaches," Stull said.

Stull also helped several players shine, most noticeably quarterback Sammy Garza, a 6-1, 185-pound senior from Harlingen who threw for 3,140 yards and had a completion mark of 62.9 percent.

Garza ranked 18th in the nation in passing efficiency with 134.9 rating points. The leader in that category this year was Heisman winner Vinny Testaverde of Miami with 165.8 points.

After UTEP's season-ending 55-45 win over Utah, Garza was named the WAC's offensive player of the week.

Despite a grueling schedule that included five straight road games, a home game against San Diego State, and then another two on the road, Stull's leadership has given the Miners a much-needed lift, Garza said.

"There were a lot of games that were very close games," he said. "Lots of games that last year we wouldn't have even been in — Air Force, for example."

UTEP lost at home to Air Force 23-21 when Mike Johnson kicked a 44-yard field goal with one second left.

Garza said he is interested in a career in the National Football League, but would consider playing in Canada.

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Cheating marathon runner caught on video cameras

NEW YORK (AP) — The 24 people who took shortcuts in last month's New York City marathon probably didn't think about the video cameras recording the race.

The runners were caught, and officials from the three biggest marathons said Wednesday that cameras and vigilance are increasingly needed to combat the cheaters.

It was the disqualification of John Bell, winner of the Master Division for runners over 40, that led New York race officials to review their videotape from the race and disqualify 23 other runners. Officials estimate that the 44-year-old Bell, of Marion, Ind., took a 10-mile shortcut for his time of 2 hours, 25 minutes and 15 seconds.

Three of the 24 runners were among the top 100 finishers. Bell was the 69th runner to cross the finish line out of 19,689 people who finished the 26.2-mile race on Nov. 2.

Bob Glover, a fitness coach and author of "The Runner's Hand-

book," originally raised questions about Bell's time. He had been giving Bell training advice for seven years, he said.

"I ran into him a couple of days before the race and he said he had just done the Ironman Triathlon and was confident of breaking 2:30 in New York," Glover said. "I said, 'no way.' He said, 'Oh, yeah.' That definitely registered."

The triathlon includes a 100-mile bike ride, a two-mile swim and a marathon.

When Glover heard Bell won the Master Division, he asked marathon officials to check their videotapes, which were recorded by cameras along the route. Bell and the others hadn't passed some checkpoints, and race director Fred Lebow announced the disqualifications Tuesday.

"Bell probably did pretty much what Rosie Ruiz did," Lebow said. "We don't know — subway or car, or he may have run all the way into

Manhattan and cut across street."

Ruiz was the apparent winner of the women's division of the Boston Marathon but was disqualified for cheating. It was also determined that Ruiz had taken the way in the 1979 New York City Marathon.

The cameras, which have been used in New York since 1980, were inspired by Rosie Ruiz, a 39-year-old woman who won the 1980 Boston Marathon.

Boston had been using checkpoints but the system only track the top 50 of 40,000 runners, said Marja Bakker of the Boston Athletic Association. Two runners were disqualified last year.

Twelve runners were disqualified from this year's Chicago marathon in which about 9,000 runners finished, said Bright.

"I don't think anyone was surprised at cheating in marathons," said Bright. "People cheat on their wives, on their income tax, on their SATs, on everything."

NFL playoff picture still muddy as season enters final two weeks

(AP) — The race for the NFL's 10 playoff spots moved into its final two weeks Monday with the AFC in a mad scramble that could go down to the final game of the season.

Kansas City's 37-10 upset of Denver and Cincinnati's 31-7 win over New England meant no new teams were added Sunday to the three that had already clinched playoff berths — the Chicago Bears, New York Giants and Washington Redskins. But the Broncos clinched the AFC West championship Monday night when Seattle beat the Los Angeles Raiders 37-0.

But the Giants' 24-14 victory over the Redskins moved them a small step away from the NFC East title and the Los Angeles Rams' 29-10 win over Dallas left them equally close to the NFC West championship and the Cowboys near elimination.

The Indianapolis Colts, meanwhile, may have jeopardized their

shot at Heisman Trophy winner Vinny Testaverde by beating Atlanta 28-23. That left Indianapolis at 1-13 to 2-12 for Tampa Bay, with the Colts facing a decent shot at another win this week at home against Buffalo.

If Indianapolis and Tampa Bay tied for the worst record in the league at 2-14, the first pick would go to the team with the easier schedule. Tampa Bay's opponents are currently 73-78-3 to 86-79-2 for Indianapolis, giving the Bucs the edge for Testaverde in the event of a tie.

As for playoff berths, here's the way the AFC breaks down: New England and the New York Jets, both losers Sunday, remain tied for the lead in the East at 10-4.

The Jets can clinch a wild-card berth with one more win — either at home Saturday against Pittsburgh or the following week in Cincinnati.

The Patriots, who are at home to

San Francisco and at Miami on the final Monday night, could clinch a wild card with a win and a loss by either the Raiders and Cincinnati.

Miami, 7-7, needed an unlikely combination of circumstances to avoid missing the playoffs for the first time since 1980.

If the Patriots and Jets win their final two games, New England would win the division title because it would have a 7-1 record in the division to a 6-2 mark for the Jets. If each loses the final two, the Jets would win the title by virtue of having a better conference record.

The Central title may be decided Sunday when Cleveland, 10-4, visits Cincinnati, 9-5. If the Browns win, they clinch. If the Bengals win, Cincinnati would have the edge in the tiebreaker because of having beaten the Browns twice. The loser remains in wild-card contention.

Tide outlasts Razorbacks 87-76

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (AP) — Forward Jim Farmer scored 30 points and guard James Jackson added 20 points to lead 18th-ranked Alabama to an 87-76 victory over No. 20 Arkansas Wednesday night.

The Crimson Tide, 3-1, opened a 13-point lead in the first half on the outside shooting of Farmer and the inside work of center Derrick McKey, who finished with 17 points.

Alabama scored six unanswered points to open the second half, in-

cluding two layups by Farmer, to take a 48-31 lead. The Crimson Tide maintained a 16-point advantage for most of the half, taking a 19-point lead with four minutes, 45 seconds to go on an offensive rebound by forward Michael Ansley, who finished with 10 rebounds.

Arkansas, 4-1, made only four field goals during a nine-minute stretch in the second half, although the Razorbacks managed six free throws during the drought.

The Razorbacks mounted a comeback late in the game on the shooting of guard Tim Scott, who finished with 27 points.

Arkansas forward Mike Ratliff hit a jumper to make it 81-70 and Scott followed with another three-point shot with 40 seconds to go to trim the margin to 81-73.

But Farmer sank four free throws and Jackson made two in the stretch to seal the victory for Alabama.

Dallas wins on Aguirre 12-foot shot

DALLAS (AP) — Aguirre hit a 12-foot around jumper with five seconds left Wednesday night to lead Dallas Mavericks to a 130-127 victory over the Portland Trail Blazers.

Dallas, now 13-6, had an eighth victory in the last 10 games. The loss snapped the game winning streak in Portland, 12-10.

The Mavericks, who had an early in the game through the third period, had a 7-14 remaining in the game with 7:14 remaining in the third period.

Aguirre led the Mavericks 27 points, but Portland's Vandeweghe, who figured in Trail Blazers in their second charge, led all scorers with 27 points.

Dallas lost guard Blackman late in the third when he was assessed two foul calls and ejected from the game for disputing a call by official Jack Madden. Blackman scored 16 points.

During the last four games the lead changed hands 12 times. Portland led 129-127. Jerome Kersey made one free throw with 35 seconds to go.

Dallas forward Sam Perkins made one of two free throws to cut the lead to 129-128. Aguirre's 12-foot shot with 1.2 seconds left before Dallas' the winning shot after the Trail Blazers had thrown the ball.

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