

Sports

Dallas looking for defense Pokes want big-play linebacker

IRVING (AP) — The Dallas Cowboys, receiving a dubious fringe benefit from their losing 1986 season, get the 12th pick in today's NFL draft with their eye on defensive help.

"Defense is where we need athletes," Dallas Coach Tom Landry said. "We need youth and power in the defensive line. We need playmakers at linebacker. We need tough, aggressive tacklers in the secondary. We've got the weapons to score points. Our big improvement this year must come on defense."

The Cowboys covet help in every position but running back to bolster a team that lost seven of its last eight games last year.

This will be the highest the Cowboys have drafted with their own choice since 1966. Brandt said the Cowboys should get some excellent help.

"I think we will get some very

good players out of this draft, particularly in the first round," Brandt said. "There are a lot of good linebackers, and offensive linemen and some defensive linemen who can play."

The forced departure of place-kicker Rafael Septien, who pleaded guilty to indecency with a 10-year-old girl, means Dallas might draft University of Texas placekicker Jeff Ward in later rounds.

"He is an excellent kicker," Brandt said of Ward. "Of course, he will have to make the transition of kicking from a tee to kicking from the ground, but we believe he can do it."

The Cowboys last year drafted wide receiver Mike Sherrard, who was barely edged out in rookie-of-the-year balloting.

"We want to find more competitive people like Sherrard in the draft," Brandt said.

"I'd like to see us get a first-class defensive lineman," said defensive line Coach Ernie Stautner. "You have some good athletes out there."

The Cowboys' defensive line showed signs of age in a 7-9 season in which the club faded badly after a 6-2 start.

Brandt said even if the Cowboys draft a linebacker or defensive lineman in the first round there could still be a good offensive lineman around in the second round.

"That's another area where there are a lot of good athletes," Brandt said.

"Everybody will say, 'take an offensive lineman,' Landry said. "We would love to have a tackle like Pat Donovan or Rayfield Wright again, somebody who could anchor your line. And that's what we lack, the one big guy who goes to the Pro Bowl every year."

Houston hoping to rebuild with 4 out of first 36 picks

HOUSTON (AP) — The Houston Oilers, who have spent the past six seasons trying to rebuild their team with draft choices, will have four picks among the first 36 picks in today's NFL draft.

Houston and San Francisco are the only teams with two selections in the first round and the Oilers have more selections among the first 36 picks than any of the other 27 NFL teams.

The Oilers have five players from the 1986 draft on the roster and 10 players from 1985 made the team.

Houston picks eighth and 20th in the first round.

The Oilers earned the eighth

pick by finishing 5-11 last season, their second straight 5-11 record.

They received the 20th pick from the Los Angeles Rams in exchange for quarterback Jim Everett. The Oilers made Everett their No. 1 pick in 1986 but failed to sign him and instead traded him to the Rams.

Oilers Coach Jerry Glanville's shopping list includes additional help at the skill positions, a pass-rushing defensive lineman and possibly the top rated linebacker in the draft.

The Oilers would like to be able to choose Alabama linebacker Cornelius Bennett, rated by many scouts as the best linebacker prospect since New York's

Lawrence Taylor.

After starting out last season featuring a ground-oriented attack, the Oilers shifted to a passing attack and won four of their last eight games for a 5-11 record.

The Oilers had the fourth most productive pass receiving tandem in the league with 2,174 combined yards on 126 receptions and eight touchdowns.

Bennett, 6-2, 235, would fit Glanville's blitzing style of defense and the Oilers also could use Washington defense end Reggie Rogers, 6-5, 265.

The Oilers have drafted three defensive linemen in the first two rounds in the past two seasons but there's room for more.

Testaverde sure No. 1 choice

NEW YORK (AP) — The only sure thing in the first round of today's NFL draft is the first pick — the Tampa Bay Bucs will take Vinny Testaverde, the Miami quarterback and Heisman Trophy winner.

Testaverde has already been signed to a \$8.2 million, six-year contract by the Bucs.

The draft begins at 7 a.m. CDT at New York's Marriott Marquis Hotel, and there's been a lot of trade talk.

The consensus is that there are perhaps 10 players available who can have an immediate impact. That leaves the good teams to supply the bad teams with excess players and multiple draft picks in return for that one blue-chipper.

Then come the Indianapolis Colts, who until Saturday night were also a sure thing. They were going to take Alabama linebacker Cornelius Bennett, who is advertised as the second coming of Lawrence Taylor.

They are still likely to take Bennett, but when Randy McMillan was hit by a car in Maryland Saturday

night and suffered a broken leg, it left the Colts without their principal running back.

That left an opening for the San Diego Chargers, who pick fifth, to exchange choices with Indianapolis, take Bennett, and leave the Colts to choose one of two running backs — Brent Fullwood of Auburn or Alonzo Highsmith of Miami.

The third pick belongs to the Buffalo Bills, who would love to have Shane Conlan, the Penn State linebacker who comes from nearby Frewsburg, N.Y. Conlan is likely to be available lower, and the Bills might trade with Houston, which picks eighth, getting an additional pick and still getting their man.

"Are we willing to trade the pick?" asks Buffalo Coach Marv Levy. "The answer is yes, if the trade is right. We have to feel unequivocally that we've helped ourselves."

Then on to the other blue-chippers — defensive back Rod Wood-

son of Purdue; defensive linemen Reggie Rogers of Washington and Jerome Brown of Miami, and running backs Fullwood, Highsmith and D.J. Dozier.

Behind them come such potential first rounders as quarterbacks Kelly Stouffer of Colorado State and Chike Miller of Oregon; linebacker Mike Junkin of Duke; defensive linemen Shawn Knight and Jason Buck of Brigham Young, Danny Noonan of Nebraska, John Bosa of Boston College and Tony Woods of Pitt; offensive linemen Harris Barton of North Carolina and John Clay of Missouri and wide receivers Haywood Jeffries (pronounced Jeffries) of North Carolina State, Mark Ingram of Michigan State and Ricky Nattiel of Florida; running backs Paul Palmer of Temple, Roger Vick of Texas A&M and Kenny Flowers of Clemson, and tight end Rod Bernstine of Texas A&M.

Many of those players are trade targets.

Sonics to take on Mavs on new home court as NBA first-round playoffs resume tonight

From the Associated Press

The Seattle SuperSonics won't be going home to a familiar setting, but at least it won't be a hostile one.

The Sonics upset the Dallas Mavericks 112-110 at Reunion Arena on Saturday to even their best-of-5 series at a game apiece.

The next two games today and Thursday night will be played at the University of Washington's 8,700-seat arena because of previous commitments at the Seattle Center Arena and the Kingdome.

"It should be interesting," Seattle Coach Bernie Bickerstaff said. "We have to play in the University of Washington gymnasium, which isn't real big. But it should be real loud."

Seattle guard Dale Ellis had some 17,000 fans against him on Saturday when he hit two free throws with two seconds left to beat the team that traded him in the offseason.

"This is what I had dreamed of, coming into this building and doing something like this," said Ellis, who finished with 32 points.

In playoff games Sunday, Detroit crushed Washington 128-85, Boston defeated Chicago 105-96, Philadelphia beat Milwaukee 125-122 in overtime, Portland tripped Houston 111-98 and Atlanta edged Indiana 94-93.

Also on Saturday, the Los Angeles Lakers beat Denver 139-127 and Utah edged Golden State 103-100.

The Lakers, Celtics, Jazz, Hawks and Pistons lead their series 2-0, while Philadelphia-Milwaukee and Portland-Houston are tied 1-1.

Today, Boston is at Chicago and Portland is at Houston along with Dallas at Seattle.

Wednesday's games have Milwaukee at Philadelphia, Detroit at Washington, Atlanta at Indiana, the

Lakers at Denver and Utah at Golden State.

The Celtics defused some talk that they were worn out during the regular season when they pulled away from Chicago in the final minutes on Sunday.

The Bulls, trailing by 11 early in the second half, came back to lead 87-85 midway through the fourth period. But Danny Ainge scored six points during a 10-2 run that put the Celtics ahead to stay.

"That's a lot of bull," Celtics President Red Auerbach said recently when asked if the Celtics were overworked in the regular season. "I'm sick of hearing it. When I sign them to a contract, I don't say, 'Hey, I'm signing you to play 15 minutes a game, or 30.' That contract is for 48 minutes a game."

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