

Sports

NFL parity a direct result of strike-inflicted season

From the Associated Press
Some of the NFL's emerging teams are starting to emerge. Try Philadelphia, San Diego, Minnesota and New Orleans, all of whom showed real potential — as opposed to the replacement-ball potential of teams like Houston and Tampa Bay.

The Eagles' 31-27 victory over Washington Sunday avenged their only "real" loss of the season. They are 4-1 with their regulars, as opposed to 0-3 with strike irregulars, and Buddy Ryan's bravado seems a little more real these days.

"I think we beat the best team in the National Football League and that shows we can play with the big boys," Ryan said after Randall Cunningham made like John Elway, with three touchdown passes and seven carries for 80 yards, including a 45-yard scramble that set up his first TD pass. Cunningham now has 11 TD tosses in five games.

The Vikings' regulars matched the Eagles, moving to 4-1, 4-4 overall, by beating the Los Angeles Raiders 31-20. It was the fifth loss in a row for Los Angeles, its longest losing streak in 23 years.

The Chargers, 7-1, also are 4-1 with regulars. And New Orleans made itself a legitimate wild-card contender, improving to 5-3 by routing the Rams 31-14 as Los

Angeles lost for the seventh time in eight starts, the first time it has been 1-7 since 1964.

Sunday's results also left the league in a strange state of parity — or is it strike-produced parity? — as the 15-game season moved past the halfway mark.

The strangest situation was in the AFC East, where four teams were tied at 4-4 and the New York Jets were 3-4 going into Monday night's game against Seattle.

There was a three-way tie at 5-3 atop the AFC Central among Pittsburgh, Cleveland and Houston. Off non-strike form, Cleveland should be favored, but the Oilers played tough Sunday, losing 27-20 to the San Francisco 49ers at Candlestick Park.

In the AFC West, defending champion Denver was in trouble following its 21-14 loss to Buffalo. That left the Broncos behind San Diego and Seattle, 5-2, going into Monday night's game, and behind Pittsburgh, Houston and Cleveland for a wild-card berth.

Washington, Chicago and San Francisco still look like division winners in the NFC, although what's with the Bears?

For the third straight week, they had to come from behind against a mediocre team, this time beating the Packers 26-24 on a last-second field goal.

Cotton Bowl chase a four-team race Aggies must win remaining games for berth

By Hal L. Hammons
Assistant Sports Editor

Here we go again — another year, another chaotic Southwest Conference Cotton-pickin' tournament.

Arkansas' victory over Baylor made it possible to try to compute all the possibilities. The game left the Hogs with one loss in conference with only one game to play, eliminating the Bears and Texas Tech in the process.

Analysis

But the Red Raiders' victory over Texas Christian and Houston's wild and woolly win over Texas more than made up for it in creating our traditional dose of conference pandemonium.

Let's try to summarize the possibilities as coherently as possible:

- Texas A&M and Texas have the roads to Dallas with the fewest complications. If the Aggies win the rest of their games (over Arkansas, TCU and Texas) they get a Cotton Bowl berth and an outright SWC championship for the third year in a row.

- The Longhorns go if they win the rest of their games also (against TCU, Baylor and A&M). However, they have to share the title with Arkansas unless A&M beats the Razorbacks Saturday.

- Baylor and Tech were eliminated from the race with Arkansas' victory over the Bears. With three losses apiece they cannot catch the Razorbacks, who have just one conference game left.

Cotton Bowl Race			
	W	L	Games Remaining
Arkansas	5	1	A&M
Texas A&M	3	1	Arkansas, TCU, UT
Texas	3	1	TCU, Baylor, A&M
TCU	3	2	UT, A&M

• Texas and Arkansas are the only teams left in the race that can lose another game and remain alive.

The Longhorns could afford a loss to Baylor (if A&M beats Arkansas) or TCU (if A&M beats Arkansas and the Frogs). In either case there would be a tie between UT, A&M and Arkansas, and the Horns would have beaten both of the others, giving them the coveted New-Year's-Day trip to Dallas.

Arkansas' Cotton Bowl hopes wouldn't necessarily die with a loss to A&M Saturday. The Hogs would still pick Cotton if A&M, Texas and TCU all lose another game (complicated, but possible).

- The race gets extremely simple if Arkansas beats the Aggies Satur-

day. Then the race will be down to Hogs vs. Horns, with Texas getting the nod if it wins the rest of its games and Arkansas getting it if UT doesn't.

Therefore you can bet the farm that A&M will win. Whoever heard of a SWC race that didn't go down to the wire?

- After opening the season with losses to mediocre Boston College and Air Force teams, few expected TCU to figure in the SWC race. However, the Horned Frogs have come on strong and still remain in the race despite Saturday's loss to Tech.

If TCU wins its games with UT and A&M, and if the Aggies beat the Hogs, the Wacker Backers will be taking Frog Fever to Dallas on Jan. 1. The resulting tie of TCU, Arkansas and the UT/A&M winner would send the Frogs to Dallas. Each of the others have been to the Cotton Bowl since the Frogs' last trip.

"But, you ask, what if a game ends in a tie?" (Sigh)

You had to ask. OK, it goes nothing.

- If A&M ties Arkansas Saturday the Ags are out of the Cotton Bowl picture. The best they could do would be a tie for the conference with Arkansas and possibly Texas. In either case, A&M goes bowling somewhere besides Dallas.

Arkansas would stay alive, however. All they would need is a Longhorn loss or tie to clinch a Cotton Bowl trip. It would be interesting to see if Arkansas would play for a tie in such a situation.

- A&M can tie anybody else, and UT can tie anybody, and remain in the race as long as the Aggies beat Arkansas.

- If TCU ties anybody, they are out. Unusually simple, huh?

- When in doubt, remember: if the race winds up in a tie, one team automatically goes to the Cotton Bowl if it has beaten all of the other teams in the tie.

The second tiebreaker involves the time lapse between Cotton Bowl trips. If (hypothetically) — it is not actually possible — the four teams wound up in a tie, TCU would go.

So, only four teams remain in contention — A&M, UT, TCU and Arkansas. And if any one of them lose a game, they can pretty much kiss their Cotton chances goodbye.

Razorbacks post victory at Penick golf tournament

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — Fourth-ranked Arkansas held on to its first-day lead and captured the Harvey Penick Intercollegiate Invitational golf tournament, while Texas A&M finished third in the tournament that concluded with 36 holes Monday.

The Razorbacks held a three-stroke lead over Baylor, Houston and Houston Baptist after Sunday's

rain-shortened first round. They finished with an eight-over par 908, two strokes ahead of runnerup Texas.

A&M finished at 915, while Houston Baptist was fourth at 917, Baylor was fifth at 918 and Houston was sixth at 920.

The tournament was a designated meet by the Southwest Conference and will count toward the SWC regular season championship.

Glanville pleased with Oilers' performance

HOUSTON (AP) — Houston's habit of trailing opponents in the fourth quarter and then rallying to victory didn't work against San Francisco but Coach Jerry Glanville said Monday the trick almost worked.

The Oilers, 5-3, have won three games with fourth quarter rallies this season but their magic left them Sunday as Joe Montana threw three touchdown passes and the 49ers won 27-20.

"The thing we should emphasize is that we could have won the game in the fourth quarter," Glanville said. "We believed that we'd find a way to win it."

"I felt we could have won if the officials would have given us another minute."

Trailing 21-6 in the third quarter, Houston's Warren Moon threw three touchdown passes to Curtis Duncan and Ernest Givins but the

49ers kept the lead on two Ray Wersching field goals.

That set the stage for a Houston comeback that never transpired.

"Maybe this will be a lesson to us," Oiler receiver Drew Hill said. "We have to come out the first quarter and play like we do at the end of the game. We think we can always pull it out in the fourth quarter."

The Oilers didn't lose because of a lack of effort, Glanville said.

"The receivers kept competing and the defensive timing is getting closer to where it was before the sabbatical (player strike)," Glanville said. "Plus, their quarterback played extremely well."

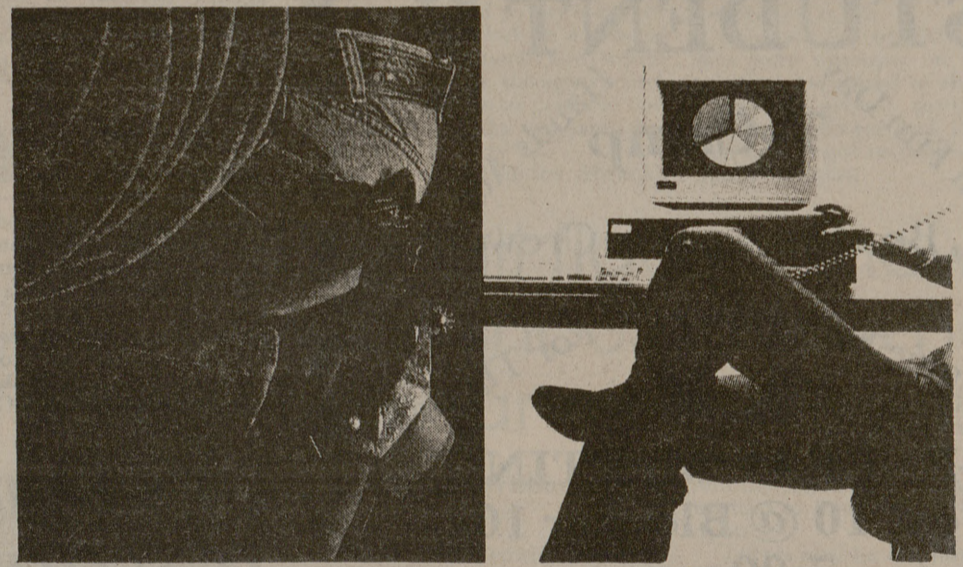
"I used to see him twice a year and now he's better than ever."

Montana completed 32 of 46 passes for 289 yards and three touchdown passes.

AIDS

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