

Rookie has playoff-bound Bengals doing 'Ickey Shuffle'

HOUSTON (AP) — The Cincinnati Bengals had little reason to celebrate last season but rookie Ickey Woods has shown them how this year with a dance he calls the "Ickey Shuffle."

Woods' post-touchdown dance might never have caught on had he not scored 15 touchdowns to lead the American Football Conference. "Since he's scored quite a bit this season, it's become a part of the event," Cincinnati Coach Sam Wyche said.

Wyche, whose Bengals finished with a 4-11 record last season, was happy to provide Woods with a stage

to demonstrate after his touchdowns.

The dance has caught on and so have the Bengals, 11-3, who could clinch the AFC Central Division title Sunday if they beat the Houston Oilers in the Astrodome.

The Oilers, 9-5 after Sunday's 37-34 loss to Pittsburgh, still could win the division if they beat Cincinnati and Cleveland and Cincinnati loses to Washington.

After Woods received a penalty for excessive celebrating in the end zone against Buffalo Nov. 27, Wyche moved the "Ickey Shuffle" to the sidelines.

"I told him we'll fan out and give you the stage and you do the Ickey Shuffle right there on the sidelines," Wyche said.

Woods started doing the dance early this year despite the protestations of his mother.

"It's just something that I created and the fans here in Cincinnati love it," Woods said. "It's kind of taken off all over the nation."

Woods says he'll certainly give the Oiler fans a demonstration if he scores a touchdown Sunday.

"I'm sure if I score in Houston the fans might not like to see it but I'm going to do it anyway for the fans at

home watching on television," he said.

Woods' loose-jointed dance is not the most important part of his repertoire.

He ranks third in the AFC in rushing with 880 yards on 175 carries for a 5 yards per carry average.

"There were a lot of good running backs that came out of that draft but we decided Ickey would be the guy that fit us best in our style of offense," Wyche said.

Woods, 6-0, 235, is a smaller version of the fullbacks the Bengals have line up with in the past. But he's big enough and quicker.

"He's a big guy who can cut back, he's played so well for them that (James) Brooks is getting only 12 carries a game," Oilers Coach Jerry Glanville said.

Brooks is fifth in AFC rushing with 875 yards and he's second to Woods in scoring with 14 touchdowns. His 5.4 yards per carry leads the AFC.

Woods still is surprised by his instant success.

"I'm kind of surprised but I've always known I've had the God-given ability to run the football," Woods said. "The Bengals gave me a chance to exploit my talents."

"Now I'll try to break the 1,000-yard rushing barrier and hopefully lead the whole NFL in scoring," Woods said.

Brooks and Woods lead the Bengals' rushing game that ranks first in the NFL with 174.5 yards per game.

Woods rushed for a career high 141 yards on 19 carries in a 27-10 victory over San Diego Sunday and got to do the Ickey Shuffle twice.

Woods is pleased to see that his dance has extended even to the owner's box.

"Paul Brown does it about as well as I do," Woods said. "He's got it down pat."



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