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Cannon turns love of sports into career

A&M Sports Information Director began as baseball walk-on

By Jeff Osborne

ASSISTANT SPORTS EDITOR

Alan Cannon has turned a lifelong love of sports into a career. Beginning with childhood dreams of becoming a baseball star to his appointment as Sports News Director at Texas A&M, athletics have played a big role in his life.

Cannon started as a walk-on baseball player for the Aggies in 1980. He served as a student assistant in the sports news department for three years, and as a graduate assistant for one year. In 1985, Cannon

Profile:
Alan Cannon

was promoted to sports news assistant. In February, he was named director of the department.

Cannon was named sports news director to replace John Keith when John David Crow and R.C. Slocum replaced Jackie Sherrill in the capacities of athletic director and head football coach. Keith left A&M for a position with the Houston Oilers when A&M did not renew his contract.

As a result of Keith's departure, Cannon said, "we more or less lost a person in the department, and I don't believe we will get a replacement." Keith specialized in football

publicity, and now this responsibility belongs to Cannon.

"I look forward to coming in to the office each day," Cannon said. "It's not your average nine to five job. I have friends I went to school with who work in banks and they dread going to work each morning. It's not that way for me.

Sometimes I put in a 16 or 20 hour day with the baseball regional," he said.

Although the work Cannon does is time consuming, he said he enjoys it.

"We're on call," he said, mentioning a time when a newspaper editor from San Angelo called him at home one evening at eight o'clock to confirm a story. "It's part of my job," he said. "I may be sitting at home but for five to 10 minutes be at my job."

He got his first experience in sports information when he was a senior in high school at Dallas Skyline. During this time, he worked for the sports information office at Southern Methodist University. Bob Condron, now the director of the United States Olympic Committee, was director of the department.

Condron, along with his assistant Maxie Parrish, now director of sports information at Baylor University, helped influence Cannon to stay with sports information as a career.

Cannon said that Robert Carpenter of Texas A&M, who "is a member of the Sports Information

Directors' Hall of Fame and one of the most respected guys in the business," along with Bill Little, who publicized baseball and serves as sports information director for the University of Texas at Austin, also had an influence on him.

"Sports information has gotten into my blood, and that's the area I want to pursue," Cannon said.

The highlight of his job, he said, are the close relationships that develop between him and the players and coaches. "It's hard for me to describe the feeling I have for members of the baseball team, from coaches and players right on down the line to the Diamond Darlings," he said, adding that there is a family atmosphere.

He described the role of the sports news department as the liaison between the athletic department and the media. "We publish individual statistics in a positive manner. We also have a historian role," he said, mentioning that the department was publicizing the 50th anniversary of Texas A&M's 1939 National Championship in football.

"Now, we're working on the football press guide," Cannon said, "which is pretty in depth. We put out guides and programs for all the sports at A&M."

He said that one of the worst aspects of his job is not being able to show emotion to the media. "Being in our position, you're not allowed

the highs and lows. Like the media, you have to be objective. I may be hurting very much inside after a tough loss, but cannot show that outwardly. I still have to do my job."

Cannon attended the College Sports Information Directors of America conference workshop in Washington July 1-6.

He said one of his objectives was to seek out people who have publicized information on Heisman Trophy contenders, like the sports information director for Notre Dame.

"I want to see how they handled the media pressure revolving around a Heisman Trophy candidate. We have a legitimate candidate in Darren Lewis. I will be making sure that everyone on a national scale who votes (for the Heisman winner) is on the mailing list and is informed of Lewis' accomplishments.

We will be putting out fliers and brochures, and Lewis will be displayed prominently in the media guide. On Sunday morning, I will put information about him in the mail and schedule interviews for maximum exposure. I'm just there to help, but Darren has to put up the numbers on the field."

Members of the sports news department develop a close relationship with coaches and other members of the athletic department,

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Oregon becomes 1st state to approve lottery contest for NFL point spreads

SALEM, Ore. (AP) — The Oregon Lottery Commission approved rules for a new game Monday that makes Oregon the only state with a lottery contest based on NFL point spreads.

The commission on a 5-0 vote endorsed the game despite the objections of an NFL attorney, who said the action would harm the integrity of professional football.

No further approval is needed for the lottery, and ticket sales are to begin Sept. 6 for the NFL's first week of games on Sept. 10.

Proceeds from the game, called "Sports Action," are to go to Oregon college and university intercollegiate sports programs, which now receive no state funding.

In the football lottery, a \$1 investment will allow players to predict the outcome of some or all of the 14 weekly NFL games against the point spreads set by Nevada oddsmakers.

Under rules of the game, players will try to predict the outcome of four to 14 games against the point spreads. The more games they bet, the more money they could win, from about \$8 for a perfect four-game card to about \$8,000 for a perfect 14-game card.

NFL attorney Jim Noel told the commission the game would create a situation in which fans are more interested in point spreads than how their favorite teams fare.

Noel said the league is concerned that Oregon "is on the brink of triggering a nationwide trend."

"The entire nation is watching," he said. "Lottery officials in other states have stated publicly that if Oregon does this successfully, they will try it, too."

Noel also said the NFL would consider legal action to block the contest.

"We didn't come out here to threaten anyone," he said. But,

he added, "There are some very viable legal issues here that we're going to evaluate."

The NFL took Delaware to court when that state tried a football betting game, but the lawsuit became moot after Delaware gave up its game after one season in 1974 because it lost money.

In approving the new game, Lottery Commission members noted that betting on professional sports already is widespread in Oregon and around the country.

They said many people take part in office football pools or bet on games through bookmakers, either illegally or through operations in Nevada, the only state that allows gambling on team sports.

Commission member Mike Schwartz of Eugene said he thinks the NFL should embrace the idea as an opportunity to market professional football to new audiences.

"It will make people more excited about NFL football," Schwartz said.

Noel rejected that argument, and said the NFL does not want to see an expansion of gambling on professional sports.

"The net effect of the Oregon Lottery game will be to increase the overall volume of betting on NFL football," the league attorney said.

The 1989 Oregon Legislature approved a bill calling on the Lottery Commission to create a sports-oriented game to generate money for college sports. Davey and the lottery staff put together the specifics of the NFL contest.

Davey estimates the game will generate between \$4 million and \$9 million each year for Oregon intercollegiate sports.

Athletic directors at the University of Oregon and Oregon State University say state aid is essential if the two schools are to remain in the Pacific 10 Conference.

Staubach not seeking commissioner's job

DALLAS (AP) — Former Dallas Cowboys' quarterback Roger Staubach said on Monday he didn't wish to be nominated to fill the NFL's soon-to-be vacant commissioner's post and Tex Schramm repeated that he didn't think he would be a "viable candidate."

The Los Angeles Times reported that Schramm, who headed the Cowboys for 29 years, and Staubach, a 1970s Dallas quarterback named to the Hall of Fame, will be nominated this week to the post being vacated by Pete Rozelle.

"I have a great deal of gratitude and respect for the NFL and it's an

attractive thought to be considered for commissioner," Staubach said.

"However, at this time my life is consumed with building my real estate company on a national basis and I am committed to this goal. I like the challenge of the real estate business and I am enjoying it. I will have to say 'no' to the nomination for commissioner."

Schramm said, "I still feel that over the long haul my age (69) wouldn't make it practical to name me. It's also hard to put stock in rumors the principle has no knowledge of what's going on."

Schramm did say that if the NFL

came to an impasse he might bail them out for a year or so.

"I've been in the NFL 39 years and it's been the better part of my life and if I could help I would, although presently I'm very interested in bringing professional football to the rest of the world," Schramm said. "However, nobody has talked to me."

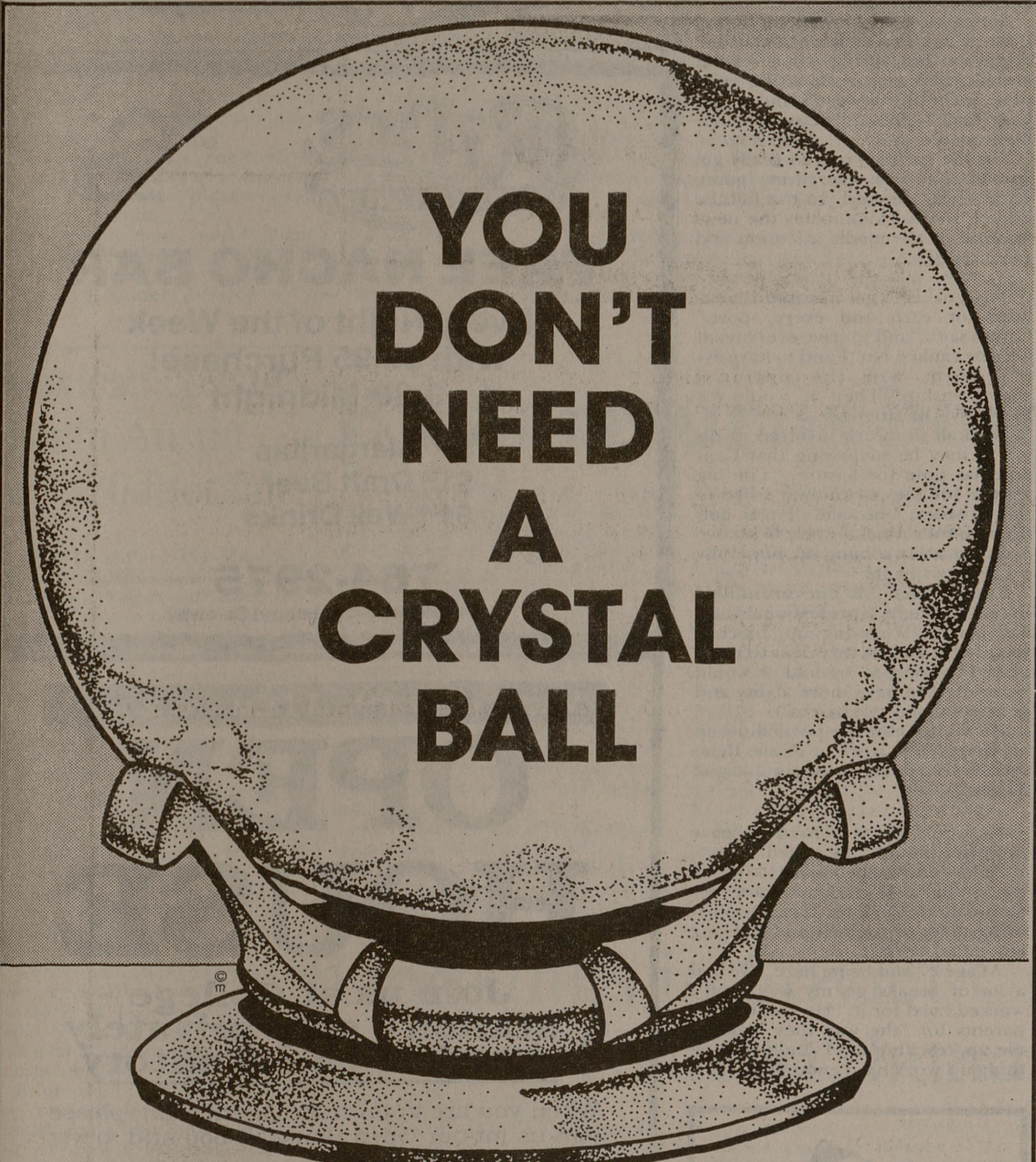
Schramm heads the NFL's proposed international league, called the Worldwide League of American Football.

New Orleans Saints executive Jim Finks was nominated by the league's search committee to fill the post be-

ing vacated by Pete Rozelle, but Finks' appointment was blocked by a dissident minority of 11 team owners, a faction now numbering 12.

"I wish you wouldn't call us minority owners," said Mike Lynn, president of the Minnesota Vikings and one of the dozen. "It's the six-man (search committee) that's in the minority. They didn't give the 22 (other owners) any information."

Staubach appeals to several owners because of his success as a businessman, according to anonymous league sources cited by the newspaper.



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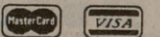
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