

Horns look for winning year after slumping in '88

AUSTIN (AP) — Last year Texas Longhorn football fans were dreaming about the Cotton Bowl.

This year they're just praying for a winning season.

Even with the marvelous moves of Eric Metcalf, a great runner and receiver, Texas slumped to 4-7 in 1988, its worst football record in 32 years.

Now, with Metcalf off to the pros, a bowl game seems out of the question, even though third-year Coach David McWilliams has had two excellent recruiting years and has brought in two top assistants—Lynn Amedee as offensive coordinator and Leon Fuller as defensive coordinator.

McWilliams acknowledges, however, that a team that gets more raves about its assistant coaches than its players could be in trouble.

"There are not a lot of names listed on our squad as preseason picks for various (all-star) teams," McWilliams, 47, said.

He said wide receiver Tony Jones, who set a school record with 838 yards on 42 pass receptions last year, and punter Bobby Liljedahl, No. 6 nationally, are great players.

"But (overall) we don't have those proven, experienced guys that have been out there and done it," McWilliams said.

Other veterans to watch, he said, include offensive tackle Ed Cunn-



The starter, sophomore Mark Murdock, is "smart, tough, has a strong arm and reads (defenses) well," McWilliams said. "But he doesn't have quick feet."

He mentioned as possible upcoming stars linebackers Anthony Curl, Mical Padgett and Brian Jones, a UCLA transfer; as well as defensive end Tommy Jeter; defensive tackle Todd Hunt and safety Lance Gunn.

A possible weak link at center has been filled by walk-on junior Todd Smith, and McWilliams said he is looking for a scholarship for Smith.

Three backs—juniors Chris Samuels and Deon Cockrell and redshirt freshman Adrian Walker—will try to fill the gap left by Metcalf.

"They were very impressive (in the spring) catching the ball and running, but nothing like Metcalf," McWilliams said.

In addition to a Southwest Conference schedule that takes Texas on the road against defending champion Arkansas, Houston and Texas A&M, the Longhorns play non-conference games against Colorado, Penn State and Oklahoma.

Is, indeed, an SWC title and the Cotton Bowl out of the question?

"I think it's hard when you look at our inexperienced players," McWilliams said. "To go to the Cotton Bowl, you've got to avoid injuries and have a lot of juniors and seniors. We don't have them."

Jackson amazed at route options Oiler receivers have before snap

SAN MARCOS (AP) — Kenny Jackson isn't surprised opposing defensive backs don't know what Houston Oiler wide receivers are going to do.

Jackson is an Oilers wide receiver and even he doesn't know what he's going to do until the play starts.

"When you watch film on most people, you can just about decide what they are going to do," Jackson said. "Here, there's no way in the world you're going to know because I don't know."

Jackson, a former Philadelphia Eagles first-round pick, came out of retirement to seek a spot on the Oilers' roster, already filled with outstanding receivers.

He's amazed at the options that Oiler receivers have once a play starts in their four-wideout alignments.

"This system is so complex you think you're a quarterback," Jackson said. "Everybody has an option to do something. In most places, you don't have a chance to truly show your talent."

"I've learned a lot more in two or three weeks with Houston than I've learned in a long time in pro football from a receiving standpoint."

"Most places, they call a play and that's what you do. Other places, maybe one receiver has a



choice. Here three receivers had the choice."

Jackson had to make a choice in May 1988 whether or not to do double duty as a restaurateur and football player. He elected to retire after four seasons with the Eagles.

"I knew I wanted to play football again but I wanted to do it when everything was fine with the restaurant," Jackson said. "I respected Buddy (Eagles coach Buddy Ryan) too much not to be there (mentally)."

Jackson was a first-round pick of the Eagles from Penn State in 1984 and made nine starts his rookie season.

In his last full season in 1987, he started all 12 non-strike games and was the second-leading receiver on the team.

When Eagles receiver Mike Quick suffered a broken leg

against the Oilers last Oct. 2, Jackson back to play for the Eagles.

He played in the final seven games of the season, helping out mostly on special teams.

Jackson was left unprotected by the Eagles and signed with the Oilers as a Plan B free agent.

"I had a choice and sometimes you don't get that chance in life, especially in pro football," Jackson said. "I felt with Houston I would not be the center of attention but I'm past that stage of my career anyway."

"I just wanted to be with a team that would use everyone and have a chance to go to the playoffs," he said.

Jackson comes from a team that has emphasized running, to one that likes to pass.

"Buddy would stack up his offense with running backs and carry four or five receivers," Jackson said. "Here, 90 percent of the time they throw the ball. If you lose a receiver here, you lose a valuable part of your offense."

Jackson expects to fit in as a backup.

"When I do catch a pass here it's no big deal because they've got guys who have been catching passes for three, four years and doing it extremely well," Jackson said.

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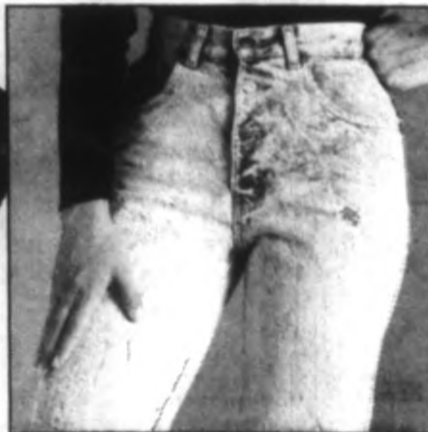
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