Cougars ready for game with Sun Devils

HOUSTON (AP) — The Houston Cougars played one game and then have had back-to-back open dates but they still belong among the top ranked teams in the nation, Coach Jack Pardee said.

"We're one of the better teams in the country," Pardee said. "I don't know exactly where we fall in that category with the better teams but we've got to be mentioned in there."

The Cougars, who ranked No. 17 in The Associated Press poll, beat Nevada-Las Vegas 69-0 Sept. 2 and jumped into the national lead in total offense with 619 yards per game average and passing offense with a 493 yards per game average.

Quarterback Andre Ware is the No. 2 passer in the nation, and junior college transfer Verlond Brown is the No. 2 receiver.

The Cougars resume their schedule against Arizona State, 2-0, Saturday night in Tempe, Ariz., hoping they haven't lost any effectiveness.

Houston coach Jack Pardee welcomed the extra time.

"We have so many rookies, backup freshmen players, who are trying to develop their technique," Pardee said. "We spent the first two weeks just getting ready for the season.

"We spent more time on individual drills instead of team timing drills."

The time also gave middle linebacker Lamar Lathon, a primary defensive force, opportunity to heal from a broken sternum suffered in a late summer auto accident.

"We certainly didn't slack off," strong safety and team captain Alton Montgomery said. "It did kind of drag and I hope we don't have any more long open dates like that but we practiced hard."

The Cougar defense would like to record "five or six" shutouts this year, Montgomery said.

"We set a goal to shut out Nevada-Las Vegas and we'd like to shut out Arizona State too," he said. "We don't want anyone to score on us."

While the Cougars' explosive run-and-shoot offense continues to get most of the attention, the Cougars defense doesn't feel slighted, Montgomery said.

"Everybody knows about our offense but last year our defense showed that it could play too," Montgomery said. "We got our share of the recognition."

The Cougar defense has learned to cope with the quick-striking Houston offense. The defenders spent 36 minutes on the field in the season opener.

Houston has won six straight regular season games and eight straight regular season road games.

The Cougars lost to Washington State in the 1988 Aloha Bowl. They don't play their first home game until Sept. 30 in the Astrodome against Temple, coached by former Rice coach Jerry Berndt.

Fading Astros shut out by lowly Braves; Houston's chances at division title wane

ATLANTA (AP) — Right-hander Tommy Greene held Houston to three hits and Lonnie Smith drove in all three runs with a homer and a single, leading the Atlanta Braves to a 3-0 victory over the Astros Thursday night.

Although the loss was only the Astros' second in eight games, it was their second in three days in Atlanta. They began this series needing a sweep to have much of a chance of overtaking San Francisco in the National League West race. The third-place Astros began the night six games behind the Giants.

Greene, 1-1, making his third major league start, struck out seven and walked two. The only hits he gave up were singles by Craig Biggio in the first and Ken Caminiti in the fifth and eighth innings.

Smith hit his home run off Jim Deshaies, 13-10, in the fourth inning. His run-scoring single chased by Bob Forsch in the sixth.

Neither team had advanced a runner passed first when Mark Lenmke doubled with two outs in the fourth. Smith then connected on the first pitch from Deshaies, sending a drive over the left field fence for his 21st home run of the year.

Jeff Blauser led off the Atlanta sixth with a double and Lemke followed with a walk.

Bucky

(Continued from page 7)

in 1987, and later on that same year when he scored the winning touchdown in the fourth quarter against Texas.

That 20-13 victory over Texas sent the Aggies to the Cotton Bowl, where they defeated Notre Dame 35-10. It's the last time Notre Dame has lost a game, and Richardson was named Offensive Most Valuable Player of the Game.

But those big plays have come slowly so far in 1989. With the new pass-oriented offense, preseason Heisman Trophy candidate Darren Lewis has had trouble rushing the ball. The nation's top-returning rusher from 1988 has gained only 152 yards in three games.

"I just think defenses are so prepared to stop Darren that there isn't anywhere to run," Richardson said. "That just puts our backs to the wall. You can either run the ball or you can't, and we have the line to do it."

A&M has the team chemistry in 1989 needed to make a return trip to the Cotton Bowl, Richardson said.

"We definitely have the weapons to be real good," he said. "I think the team unity's good. Everybody likes the coaches and the coaches like all the players, so there's definitely a chemistry to be real good."

It's still unknown whether Slocum will bring Richardson back this year to paly. If Pavlas continues to perform consistently, Richardson probably will not see action until 1990. If that's so, A&M will miss one of its more inspirational leaders on offense.

"I like to think of myself as a good quarterback," Richardson said. "I'm not great, but I try to be a team leader and I try to run the offense when I'm out there. The players respect that of any quarterback. I go out there and try to get the best out of the players that are on the field."

Still, Richardson said he wants no part of a quarterback controversy whenever he returns to action — whether that's later this season or at spring practices.

"I'm just going to have to keep doing what I'm doing, go out there in the spring and do the best I can," he said. "I'm a team player first and I don't want any big controversy about it. It's up to the coaches and whoever they think deserves it, deserves it.

"If they don't think I deserve it, then obviously I'm not doing something as good as the other guy, so it puts it back on my shoulders and I just have to get better."

So, Richardson waits. As his knee slowly returns to full strength, A&M fans wonder if he'll be the same player when he comes back. His reckless playing style, though enormously successful, flirted with danger every time he touched the ball.

However, Richardson said he'd be the same type of quarterback when he comes back. You don't mess with something that you know already works.

"Everybody has their own personality and their own playing style, and just because I'm hurt I can't really see myself changing anything from what I've done in the past," he said.

"I have a certain playing style and I'm going to stay with it. It's been good to me so far, so I might as well keep it up."

Lady Aggie tennis team opens fall season today: top teams vie with Ags

FROM STAFF & WIRE REPORTS

The Texas A&M women's tennis team starts its fall season today in the Pier 1 Imports Duke Women's Tennis Invitational. The tournament lasts through Sunday.

Other teams competing in the tournament are the host school, Duke University, Miami, Mississippi State, North Carolina, North Carolina State, Wake Forest and Wisconsin.

A&M, along with Duke, Mississippi State and Wisconsin, finished in the Top 25 in 1989. Miami finished in the Top Ten.

The tournament will feature four flights with odd and even number singles paired in each bracket. Each player is guaranteed to play four matches in the tournament.

"We're excited about opening the fall season," Coach Bobby Kleinecke said. "We've had three hard weeks of practice and conditioning, and now we're just anxious to compete against someone other than ourselves."

The Lady Aggies' lineup for the weekend tournament is as follows:

Singles

1. Susan Williams (Jr., 12-8 in 1989)
2. Lynn Staley (So., 17-11 in 1989)
3. Cindy Churchwell (Jr., 17-8 in 1989)
4. Traci Nix (Jr., 5-7in 1989)
5. Tami Agassi (Jr., junior college transfer)
6. Jenifer Jones (Sr., 11-3 in 1989)
7. Derryn Haygarth (Jr., 1-10 in 1989)
8. Joanne Maki (So., 1-4 in 1989)

Doubles

1. Churchwell/Staley (14-7 in 1989)
2. Williams/Haygarth (11-3 in 1989)
3. Agassi/Nix (0-0 in 1989)
4. Jones/Maki (0-0 in 1989)

The Lady Aggies will travel to Austin next weekend to take part in the Westwood Invitational.

NFC hopes for continued AFC dominance

ASSOCIATED PRESS

A couple of years ago, after Washington beat Denver 42-10 in the Super Bowl, Jim Finks was asked why the NFC had been so dominant.

"It's the swing of the pendulum," said the president of the New Orleans Saints and the commissioner-in-waiting. "In the '70s it was the AFC. It may go back the other way in the '90s.

Not the way 1989 is starting.

Not only has the NFC now won six straight Super Bowls, but it's clearly become the dominant conference from top to bottom, unlike in the past, where the bottom of the NFC contained the NFL's weakest teams. They are one reason the AFC has won the season series seven straight years, including 30-22 last season.

But two weeks into 1989, the NFC has won all six games against the AFC, outscoring its rivals 171-93.

In fact, it could be argued that only the Cincinnati Bengals (who lost 17-14 at Chicago in its intraconference game) measure up in personnel to the top six or seven NFC teams — the Bears, 49ers, Vikings, Eagles, Rams, Giants and even the 0-2 Redskins.

Some indicators.

Where a couple of years ago, the AFC was the conference of young quarterbacks, the NFC has caught up.

Yes, John Elway, Dan Marino, Bernie Kosar and Boomer Esiason are still around and still in their primes.

But the designated quarterback of the '90s is Philadelphia's Randall Cunningham and the top seven QB ratings in the NFL belong to NFC players — Cunningham leads, followed by Jim Everett of the Rams, Washington's Mark Rypien, Phil Simms of the Giants, Bobby Hebert of New Orleans, Gary Hogeboom of Phoenix and Chris Miller of Atlanta.

Everett, who threw for 368 yards against the Colts Sunday, is close to Cunningham in potential and Rypien and Miller might be. Simms, at 33, is a solid, clutch veteran who's among the league's top ten quarterbacks.

And that doesn't even count Joe Montana, who has only won three Super Bowls.

But it goes beyond quarterbacks.

With the exception of Cincinnati, Buffalo and Cleveland, the best-run, best-drafting teams are in the NFC.

San Francisco has won three Super Bowls this decade while turning over its personnel almost 100 percent; Chicago has remained a power while infusing 18 new players the past two years; the Giants (six solid draft choices this season) are staying competitive while rebuilding, and Buddy Ryan in Philadelphia and Finks and Jim Mora in New Orleans have put together good teams from very little. Only 10 Eagles remain from before the Ryan era, which began in 1986.

Then there are the Rams, who have seven players on their roster from the Eric Dickerson trade. All but Greg Bell were obtained with draft picks from the two AFC teams involved.

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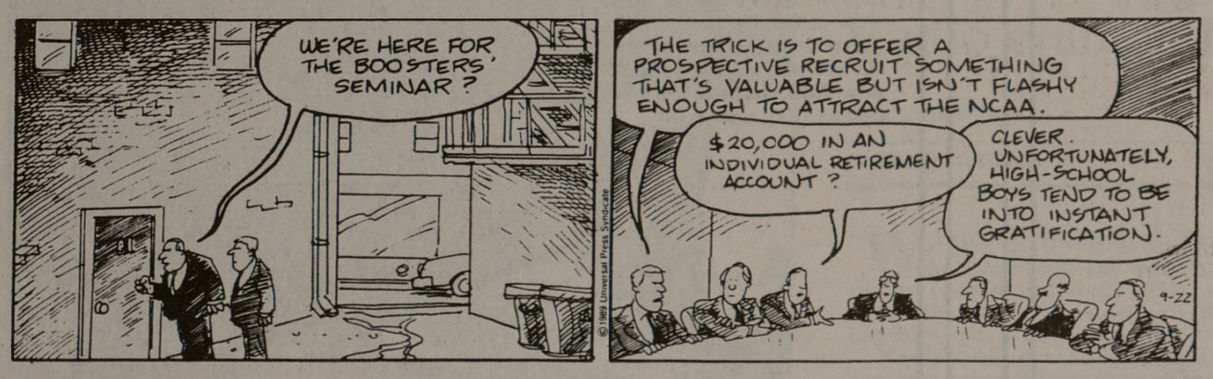

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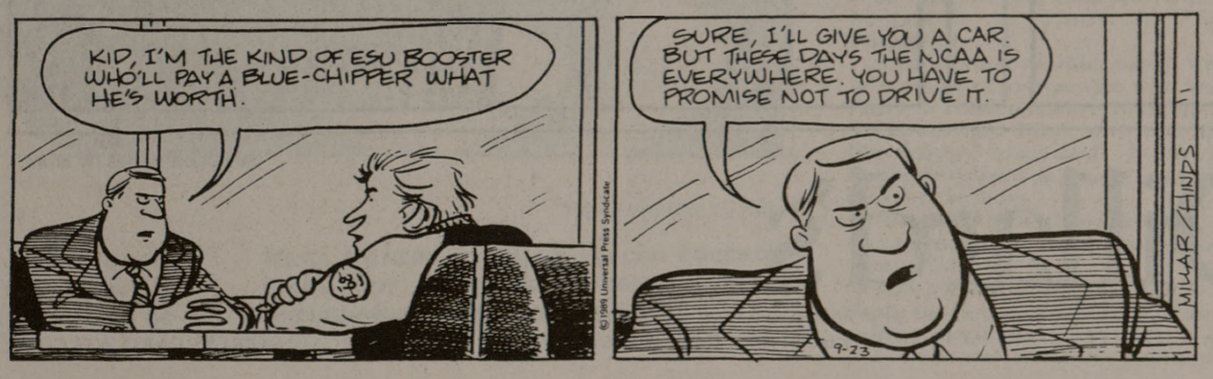

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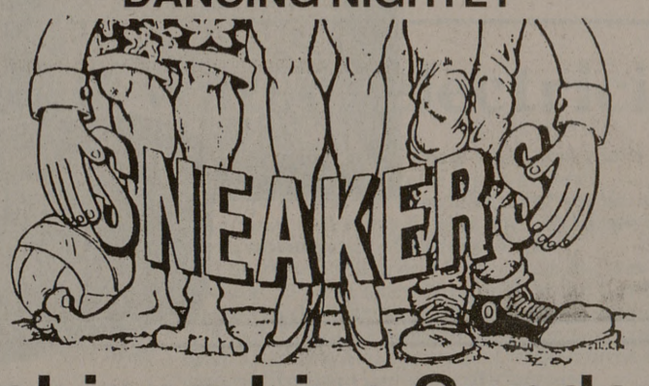

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