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Team behind Shell after win Davis says of new coach: 'He is the Raiders'

EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J. (AP) — Al Davis is correcting a mistake the only way he knows how — by digging deep into the tradition of the Los Angeles Raiders.

For one night, at least, Davis' decision to replace Mike Shanahan as coach with Art Shell appeared to be working.

The Raiders, despite a shaky overall effort, beat the New York Jets 14-7 Monday night, raising their record to 26-7-1 in prime time. Shell, the NFL's first black head coach in the modern era, is off to a good start thanks to two big plays — Eddie Anderson's 87-yard interception return and Mervyn Fernandez's 73-yard TD on a pass play.

"He is going to grow," Davis said of Shell, a Hall of Fame tackle for the Raiders who has spent half his 42

years with the team. "He is our guy ... we just want to give him all the support that we can."

The players certainly seem to support Shell, who was passed over for the job after the 1987 season, when Tom Flores quit.

"He is so much of the Raiders' team, the Raiders' mystique," Howie Long said. "He is the Raiders."

"It wasn't what he said so much as what it means to be a Raider," added Bob Golic, who joined the team as a free agent this season. "He leads by example."

Shell admitted as much. He said not to expect sideline histrionics, like those of John Madden. But he made

it clear that, unlike Shanahan, an outsider hired off the Denver Broncos' staff, Art Shell understands the meaning of the Silver and Black.

He will make sure everyone is involved with the Raiders understanding it, too.

"I understood what Al was trying to do in 1988," Shell said of being passed over in favor of Shanahan. "I felt I could have done the job there but maybe I was not quite as ready as I feel I am now."

"Al felt he needed new, bright ideas brought into the system from outside the organization."

That approach didn't work with the Raiders at 1-3, dropping three straight, Davis turned to Shell.

Shell set about simplifying things, getting back to basic, man-to-man matchups.

'Fire Sale' being held in Dallas, options left in Walker's hands

IRVING (AP) — The Dallas Cowboys had an open "fire sale" on running back Herschel Walker Tuesday while NFL owners met several miles away trying to pick a new commissioner.

Agents Peter Johnson and Ralph Cindrich were considering a restructuring of Walker's \$1 million per year contract as part of the price for him leaving the Cowboys.

"The ball's in Herschel's court now," a Cowboys' source said. "It's up to him to make a deal."

The NFL trade deadline is next Tuesday. The Minnesota Vikings have dangled two No. 1 draft picks, several other high picks and two starters as trade bait.

Mike Lynn, general manager for the Minnesota Vikings, was in Dallas for the NFL meeting and also pursuing a trade with Cowboys' owner Jerry Jones.

Jones had meetings scheduled with Lynn and Walker's agents.

"It's difficult to think of the Dallas Cowboys without Herschel Walker but we can't close our eyes and ears to anything that might help the club," Jones said. "I'll be in touch with his agents today."

Coach Jimmy Johnson said the winless Cowboys would prepare for Sunday's game with the San Francisco 49ers as if Walker would be in the lineup.

"Herschel Walker is a fantastic running back and

can do what he wants to do," Johnson said. "If he wants to stay here, I want him to stay here."

Walker said he wasn't sure where he would be on Sunday.

"I've been happy in Dallas but if it happens, it happens," he said.

Johnson said he hoped the Walker trade talk didn't distract from the 49ers.

"I don't think it will be," Johnson said. "I've been around more distracting things than this. We can't use this as an excuse. We've just got to start blocking and tackling and maybe we can win some games."

Johnson added, "Just when we think things are difficult, then they get more difficult with San Francisco in town."

The Cowboys are last in the NFL in total offense and Darryl Clack, the listed backup to Walker, has yet to carry the ball this season.

"We've had a lot of problems installing our offensive and defensive schemes," Johnson said. "Also, what makes it harder is that we are trying to do it with a team that hasn't been all that successful in the past."

Johnson announced that rookie quarterback Troy Aikman, who broke a finger in his non-passing left hand two weeks ago, would begin throwing this week.

"We hope Troy will be able to join practice week after next," Johnson said.

Minnesota wants Herschel bad but he's rejected them once already

EDEN PRAIRIE, Minn. (AP) — Calling Herschel Walker unique, Minnesota Vikings general manager Mike Lynn said Monday that he will pursue a trade for the Cowboys' star runner this week when he is in Dallas for NFL meetings.

Lynn, who on Tuesday will begin meeting with other owners in an effort to select a successor to retiring commissioner Pete Rozelle, hopes to do a little dealing on the side with Dallas owner Jerry Jones and coach Jimmy Johnson.

He also said he'll be talking to other organizations in an effort to improve the Vikings before the Oct. 17 trading deadline.

Lynn considers the Vikings very close to being a Super Bowl team and agrees with Coach Jerry Burns that championship teams need overpowering running games.

Walker led the NFC with 1,514 rushing yards last year and caught 53 passes for 505 yards. He hasn't been as effective for the Cowboys this year. Dallas (0-5) is rebuilding and is going with a more pass-oriented offense under Johnson.

The Vikings and Cowboys had reportedly worked out a trade last week, but Walker said he didn't want to come to Minnesota.

What would it take for Walker to change his mind?

Lynn needs to convince Walker that Minnesota is a swell place to play and, at the same time, will have to make Walker's wallet swell.

Walker said he's "always been happy in Dallas" but wouldn't mind playing for a contender, which Minnesota is.

And though he said he wouldn't "let money tell me what to do," he'd also like a healthy raise. He's in the fourth season of a five-year, \$5 million contract.

Several players were rumored to be part of the deal, but Lynn has hinted that the offer consisted only of several high draft picks.

Burns said he would happily trade draft choices for impact players like Walker. The Vikings have been successful doing that in recent years, getting linebacker Mike Merriweather, tackle Gary Zimmerman and receiver Anthony Carter via draft trades.

"There's always a conflict between the coach and front office," Lynn said. "The coach wants to win now. So do I, but I have to be very careful about

mortgaging the future." Nevertheless, he acknowledged that a possible deal for Walker "is the kind of case that brings the coaches and front office together."

"You're talking about a guy with total yardage over 2,000 yards last year. There's very few players around that can give you that type of production," Lynn said. "This is a unique case for a unique player."

He said it was more important to win one Super Bowl than to have four 10-victory seasons and that another impact player could put the Vikings closer to that goal.

"We like to add four new starters every year, but we made the Merriweather trade last draft day, so we're not going to get four this year," Lynn said. "So you would think our draft choices would be very important to us now."

"But Herschel Walker, that's a very unique case, one that doesn't come around but once every 10 years."

"I think we've taken some risk and, so far, the deals have panned out."

Vikings backs averaged only 2.8 yards a carry in last week's 24-17 victory over winless Detroit but Burns said, "I don't like to blame it all on the running backs."

"I still think our group is solid," he said, referring to fullbacks Alfred Anderson and Rick Fenney, halfbacks D.J. Dozier and Darrin Nelson and multi-purpose back Allen Rice.

"I've often stated that I wouldn't trade our five running backs for any other five. I'm not talking about (Indianapolis' Eric) Dickerson or I'm not talking about (Detroit's Barry) Sanders or I'm not talking about the Dallas guy. What's his name?"

At first, reporters thought Burns was kidding. But he really didn't remember Walker's name.

That's pretty typical, however. Burns used to forget Fran Tarkenton's name, too. It didn't mean he didn't appreciate Tarkenton and it doesn't mean he doesn't appreciate Walker's talent.

"A great back could come in and be the catalyst, be the spark to get something going," he said. "But if our linemen don't block, if (defensive players) are in the backfield, they'll knock (down) anybody, including Herschel Walker."

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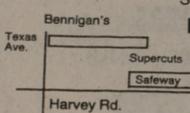
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