Another Touchdown

PHELAN M. EBENHACK/The Battalion

Aggie quarterback Bucky Richardson runs for a touchdown in A&M's 65-14 victory over BYU in the Holiday Bowl. The Ags finished the season 9-3-1, ranked 15th in the final AP poll.

Johnson named NFL's best coach

NEW YORK (AP) — Jimmy Johnson, having guided the Dallas Cowboys to a six-game improvement and into playoff contention this season, won NFL Coach of the Year honors on Tuesday.

Johnson, in his second year with the Cowboys after an illustrious career as a college coach, got 18½ votes from 80 sports writers and broadcasters in balloting conducted by The Associated Press. He edged Art Shell of the Raiders by 2½ votes.

"That's very nice. and I'm truly honored," Johnson said. "I think the voters looked at the entire year and the improvement we had made over last year."

In 1989, the Cowboys were 1-15, the worst team in the NFL and in franchise history. It was a rude debut as a pro coach for Johnson, who won the national title in 1987 at the University of Miami.

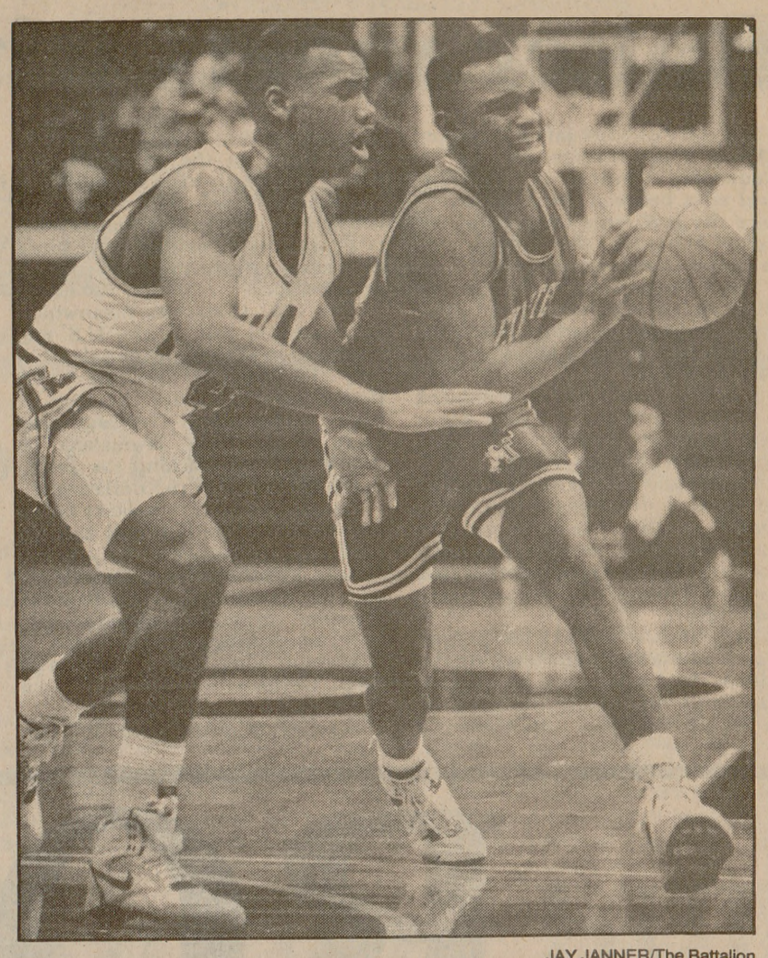
"We were a ragtag team a year ago," Johnson said. "It really gives me a good feeling, it really takes the edge off the way that we finished, to get this (award)."

This season, Dallas was 7-7 and needed a victory in either of its final two games to make the playoffs as a wild card. But quarterback Troy Aikman was injured and the Cowboys couldn't recover, losing out to New Orleans on the last weekend of the season.

Still, it was a remarkable turnaround for the Cowboys.

"I think it helps our credibility," said Johnson, who was a college teammate at Arkansas of Cowboys owner Jerry Jones. When Jones bought the Cowboys after the 1988 season, he immediately summoned Johnson to coach the team. Johnson's quick rebuilding in Dallas has helped smooth his and Jones' images after the firing of Hall of Fame coach Tom Landry.

Shell helped restore the winning tradition in Los Angeles. The Raiders returned to the playoffs for the first time in five years as their former star tackle and 1989 inductee into the Hall of Fame guided them to a 12-4 record. Since he took over for Mike Shanahan after four games in 1989, the Raiders are 19-9.



JAY JANNER/The Battalion

Texas A&M forward Rashone Lewis could not keep the Aggies from falling 77-72 to Texas Tech Saturday. A&M will play Texas Christian tonight at 7 p.m. in G. Rollie White Coliseum.

Santiago's charges dropped

SAN DIEGO (AP) — Prosecutors say they've decided not to pursue misdemeanor charges of driving while intoxicated and obstructing a police officer against San Diego Padres catcher Benito Santiago.

Santiago says he feels vindicated by Monday's decision by the District Attorney's office to drop all charges stemming from his Dec. 23 arrest by Coronado police.

"This is great news because I know I didn't do anything wrong," he said.

Santiago was arrested after he stopped his car to try to help his sister, who had been stopped near the San Diego-Coronado Bay Bridge by an officer who reportedly saw her driving erratically.

The all-star catcher, who contends he was beaten during the arrest, still may pursue a civil suit against the Coronado Police Department, said his agent and attorney, Scott Boras.

"We're continuing to evaluate the situation and we'll make a decision at a later date," Boras said.

Boras said Santiago was only trying to help his sister because she doesn't speak English when three officers wrestled him to the ground and arrested him. Eneida Santiago, 42, was released after police determined she was not intoxicated.

Rangers' Russell happy to be healthy once again

ARLINGTON (AP) — Texas Rangers reliever Jeff Russell is using the team's annual pitchers minicamp to put to rest questions about his right elbow and his work habits.

Russell has shown no effects from the elbow surgery that forced him to miss more than half of the 1990 season.

"It's good to get out here again," he said. "It's good to see the guys, kid around with everybody."

Before his surgery, Russell led the clubhouse in practical jokes.

In airports, he and Bobby Witt were notorious for tying a string to a dollar bill, dropping it in a crowded concourse, then jerking the string when someone reached for the bill.

He was always a threat to run you over with a remote-control car.

But these days Russell seems to work out more and laugh less.

"It seems like he's taken a little bit of a leadership role this winter," Rangers manager Bobby Valentine told the Dallas Times-Herald. "He's really going about his work in a professional way."

Russell, 29, saved a club-record 38 games for the Rangers in 1989. He was rewarded with a three-year, $4.5 million contract.

But last year, a slow start was traced to bone chips in his elbow, and he underwent his second surgery in four years on May 30.

He didn't return as soon as expected and his save total dropped to 10. The surgery "was worse than I thought it was," Russell said. "They did a lot more to it than my first one. There was a lot more bone taken out, a lot more shaved away."

Russell and Valentine had disagreements over his rehabilitation schedule, but they seemed to settle them while Russell made seven appearances in September, earning two saves and showing his old fastball.

"That let me go on with my life," he said. "I didn't have to walk around all winter and worry."

Russell's good health wasn't the only encouraging sign at the minicamp. The entire group seems fit, including rehab projects Jose Guzman (rotator cuff), Kevin Brown (elbow), Mike Jeffcoat (back) and Robb Nen (elbow).

"All the surprises were on the up side," Valentine said. "It seems like the guys are a little more geared up than they have been in the past."

Russell and Witt have lifted weights together all winter. Russell is happy with the results and wants to put them to use.

Akeem's injury serious; may require surgery

HOUSTON (AP) — Houston Rockets coach Don Chaney took a "circle the wagons" approach Tuesday to reports that center Akeem Olajuwon could be lost up to two months and require surgery for injuries suffered when he was elbowed in the face last week.

"We've got to hold the fort until he gets back whether it's four weeks or eight weeks," Chaney said. "We have to see where this team is and how we compete.

"If it appears we are doing okay, then we'll hang in there. If it appears we're slipping a little bit then we may have to take steps."

Olajuwon was struck on the right side of his face by Chicago center Bill Cartwright Thursday night. First reports indicated the 7-foot All-Star would miss three to four weeks and surgery likely would not be required.

In a second examination, Dr. Robert B. Wilkins told Olajuwon there was a 50-50 chance complications from the blow could necessitate surgery to prevent vision damage.

Olajuwon suffered a blowout fracture of the floor and medial walls of the bone structure that houses the right eyeball.

"He can expect to be out a lot longer than four weeks," Wilkins said. "It's quite serious. We will evaluate extensive X-rays, and I will make a decision on whether he needs to have surgery.

"At this point, I'd say it's 50-50 whether surgery will be needed. But it doesn't appear he will have any loss of vision."

The surgery cannot be performed until the swelling completely goes away, doctors say. It could be delayed until early next week.

A two-month absence from the time the injury occurred would force Olajuwon to miss 26 more games.

The Rockets' bench united behind a 29 points and 13 rebounds by Otis Thorpe and Sleepy Floyd's 22 points off the bench to beat the Indiana Pacers 112-99 Saturday night in their first game without Olajuwon.

They met the Portland Trailblazers Tuesday night in The Summit, playing against Olajuwon's former University of Houston teammate, Clyde Drexler.

"First of all, I'm concerned about his safety, having an eye injury is never an easy thing," Drexler said. "You're talking about a chance of having permanent injury to your sight so that's a serious thing.

"I hate not playing against him. It's always fun to come here and see that smile and compete against him."

Former gridders face jail

KINGSVILLE, Texas (AP) — Two former Texas A&I University football players and a former A&I student convicted last year of cocaine dealing could end up in prison because of alleged violations of probation terms.

Judge J. Manuel Banales is keeping them in jail until a Jan. 25 probation revocation hearing in the 105th District Court in Kingsville.

Court documents filed Friday allege that former football players Johnny B. Eaton and Dyas Evans, both 23, and 20-year-old Rocky Wayne Runnels all tested positive for use of illegal drugs last month.

The documents also allege that the three violated various other terms of probation, including failure to pay fines and fees and failure to report to probation officers, according to the Corpus Christi Caller-Times.

Eaton, Evans and Runnels were arrested in late April after an undercover cocaine-dealing investigation by the Kleberg County Sheriff's Department. Evans had been removed from the A&I team before his arrest. Eaton had been placed on indefinite suspension.

The three are required to serve a few weeks in jail each year as a condition of probation. They were in the Kleberg County Jail on Friday when Banales issued warrants for their arrest in connection with the alleged probation violations.

Eaton, a former defensive end, was convicted July 3 of two counts of cocaine delivery. He was sentenced to five years' probation on each charge.

The motion to revoke his probation alleges he failed to: report to his probation officer; pay court costs, restitution, attorney's fees and a $50 fee to Crime Stoppers; and "failed to avoid the unlawful use of drugs, narcotics or any other controlled substance."

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