

Cowboys

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defensive.

"We'll taper off the contact maybe in December or January," Johnson said. "Once the season started last year, I was told that in professional football you don't have contact like that. So we stopped contact."

"But we lost more games than I want to think about, so at mid-season we started contact again, and our defense really started to improve. I will not make the mistake this year that I did last year in stopping contact when the season starts."

The '90 Cowboys will be a team without stars now that Ed "Too Tall" Jones has retired.

Quarterback Troy Aikman is perhaps the best known Cowboy and he has yet to win an NFL game.

Steve Walsh, who took over when Aikman broke a finger, led the Cowboys over the Redskins.

Their duel for the starting job will continue through the season but Walsh admits his starting chances probably hinge on Aikman's health.

Walsh showed what he could do when Aikman was hurt in the first period of a preseason game against the Los Angeles Raiders, throwing two touchdown passes in a 16-14 loss.

"The competition really isn't wide open," Walsh said. "But I have to be ready for any opportunity I have."

The quarterbacks will be helped by the signing of second-round draft pick Alexander Wright of Auburn, a speedster Johnson hopes will stretch enemy defenses.

On defense, the Cowboys got rid of their only marquee name, defensive back Everson Walls, who was picked up by the New York Giants in free agency. Somehow, the Cowboys need to develop a pass rush. Third round draft pick Jimmie Jones of Miami is being expected to produce one.

Offensively, top pick Emmitt Smith of Florida has been a holdout and Johnson hasn't been overwhelmed by Flagler and free agent Jimmy Smith.

Smith set a Super Bowl rushing record years ago but was let go by Washington because of a weight problem. He looked good early in training camp but has just about disappeared.

Flagler has disappointed Johnson, who bristled because Flagler was critical of the coach's scrimmage-a-minute training camp.

Lorenzo Hampton was added to the roster but the former Miami Dolphin has been less than spectacular behind Dallas' makeshift offensive line.

The schedule is easier with Tampa Bay twice, Atlanta, the New York Jets and San Diego, although the Cowboys do draw two-time defending champion San Francisco in November.



Battalion file photo by M. Mulvey

Dallas coach Jimmy Johnson hopes for a 100 percent team improvement. Two victories would pass last year's 1-15 record.

Just how good will the 1990 Cowboys be?

Owner Jerry Jones won't predict. "I learned my lesson last year," he

said. Before the season, the rookie owner said, "We'll win more games in the first quarter of the season than Tom Landry did all last year."

Brrrrrrrr! Rockets president, owner in joint venture

HOUSTON (AP) — Retirement for Houston Rockets president Ray Patterson means only that he is leaving basketball for hockey.

Patterson announced Wednesday night that he was retiring from the Rockets to devote full time to his joint venture with Rockets owner Charlie Thomas to bring a National Hockey League expansion franchise to play in The Summit.

He begins a two-year challenge Saturday.

"I always envied Dallas because they had a year to get ready for their expansion (to the NBA)," Patterson said. "I like the luxury of having time to do it right."

The World Hockey Association Houston Aeros shared the Summit with the Rockets in the late 1970s.

"I thought hockey went well the last time it was here," Patterson said. "The Aeros out-drew the Rockets. Had circumstances been different with the ownership of the club, they'd have stayed."

Patterson, 69, helped the Rockets to reach the NBA finals twice and built the franchise from the ground up in Houston.

Now he wants to do the same for hockey.

"I guess I like building the house more than maintaining it," Patterson said. "I like this stuff. I like doing it."

Patterson has been the Rockets chief operating officer for 18 years and has been in the NBA 22 years.

The 1981 and 1986 Rockets lost to Boston in the NBA finals.

Patterson turned over the duties of general manager to his son Steve, 33, last year.

"I think it was time to have Steve fully in charge of the program and I also think there could be a conflict if I started working full time on hockey," Patterson said.

Patterson built the Rockets from an attendance low of 3,855 fans per game in the 1973-74 season to a record 16,611 in the 1987-88 season. It was the first year in franchise history that the home season was sold out.

Thomas has owned the Rockets for the past eight years and is seeking to bring hockey to The Summit.

"I am looking forward to working with Ray in pursuing the new hockey franchise for Houston," Thomas said. "I feel Ray can bring the same enthusiasm to hockey as he has in all these years to basketball. I feel this is the end of one era and the beginning of another."

Patterson said the highlight of his Rockets career was winning the coin toss for Ralph Sampson in 1983.

"That was the highlight and the low point was when Ralph got hurt," Patterson said. "It set us back in marketing the Twin Towers."

Sampson missed the 196-87 season with injuries and never returned to form. He was traded to the Golden State Warriors in December 1987.

Ryan

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an option on his services for next season at a salary of \$3.3 million. He is earning \$1.4 million this season.

"I try not to get excited about what somebody else has to do," manager Bobby Valentine said. "But if he finishes strong, I'm pretty sure he'll come back. I don't have any concerns about that."

The Rangers have made it clear that they want the 43-year-old hurler to return. He is second on the team in victories with 12 and has held opponents to a league-low .198 average.

Plus there is the fan appeal.

The Rangers are likely to draw two million at home for the second consecutive season. In the fran-

chise's previous 16 seasons, all without Ryan, the Rangers never drew more than 1.76 million.

Ryan has been bothered with back problems this season, but he has pitched a no-hitter and reached his milestone 300th victory on July 31.

"I would still like to pitch in another World Series," said Ryan, who appeared with the New York Mets in the 1969 series. "That's always been a goal of mine. I think with our ballclub we're not too far from being in that type of situation."

"Some of the factors that come into play each year are how I'm holding up physically, my performance, the ballclub's attitude and my family situation, whether everybody's still enjoying it," Ryan said.

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