

Cowboys like Wright's stuff

AUSTIN (AP) — Wide receiver Alexander Wright picked up Monday where he left off in Sunday night's 24-6 scrimmage victory over the Houston Oilers, grabbing a 29-yard touchdown during a two-minute drill to highlight the Dallas Cowboys' afternoon practice.

The second-year player had four catches for 102 yards Sunday, including a 46-yard touchdown. Both the touchdown pass and total yardage represented personal NFL bests for Wright, whose rookie year was a virtual bust.

"If I'm catching the ball better, it's because I'm more confident and comfortable with each and every day," Wright said. "This is what I want to do and

this is what I need to do." Wright missed all of last year's camp in a contract hold-out, then caught only 11 passes during the season. During the off-season, he began to make strides toward becoming a competent NFL receiver.

"This isn't a surprise to us," coach Jimmy Johnson said. "He's caught the ball like that during all of off-season work and in the early part of training camp."

No one has ever questioned Wright's speed. A college sprinter at Auburn, he was timed during the off-season under 4.1 seconds in the 40-yard dash.

Johnson proves cornerback skill; Boosts Oiler defense

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — After his 1990 performance, Houston Oilers cornerback Richard Johnson could have said, "I told you so."

But he didn't. It was enough to get out of former coach Jerry Glanville's doghouse and prove he could play in the NFL.

"I don't look at it like 'I told you so,' it's just a matter of going out and taking advantage of the opportunity," Johnson said. "I wouldn't say I was surprised. I knew I could excel in this league. It was just a matter of getting the chance to show it."

"It's just unfortunate that I had to wait five years to get a chance to get out there."

Johnson was the Oilers' first-round selection in 1985 but missed his rookie training camp because of a contract dispute. Johnson was never able to impress Glanville and spent five years languishing on special teams with an occasional start.

New coach Jack Pardee took a fresh look at Johnson and gave him a fulltime chance at cornerback to demonstrate his skills. The results have been pleasing, team officials say.

Johnson started all 16 regular season games and led the AFC with eight interceptions, returning one 30 yards for a touchdown against Cincinnati.

Laufenberg released

AUSTIN (AP) — Babe Laufenberg, a fan favorite who lost his appeal with the coaches when he failed in the final season game against Atlanta last year, was released by the Dallas Cowboys on Tuesday, the eighth time he has been cut in his NFL career.

Laufenberg hadn't taken a snap in two scrimmages against the Houston Oilers in training camp and said last week "you'd have to be a blind man not seeing the handwriting on the wall."

Coach Jimmy Johnson said veteran Cliff Stoudt is the front-runner over rookie Bill Musgrave in the competition for the role as Troy Aikman's backup. Johnson has said he may keep only two quarterbacks this season.

Johnson said he released Laufenberg, whose only Cowboys start was a 26-7 thrashing by the Atlanta Falcons in Dallas' final game of the 1990 regular season, because Laufenberg had no chance of making the team.

"We felt it would be in Babe's best interest, because he wasn't getting a lot of work," Johnson said. "This gives him an opportunity to catch on with another club if there's an opening around the league. I didn't think it was fair to Babe to have him here in camp not working just for insurance purposes."

Johnson said the backup job is Stoudt's to lose.

"It wasn't anything that Babe

didn't do," Johnson said. "In final analysis, it was the performance of Cliff Stoudt."

Stoudt completed 11 of 13 passes for 134 yards and two touchdowns in last Thursday's 30 scrimmage tie against the Houston Oilers.

Laufenberg said it became a parent early in camp that he was the odd man out.

"This is just a formality," Laufenberg said as he prepared to leave the Cowboys' camp at Edward's University. "I was getting time in practices and scrimmages. I wasn't competing for a job so maybe it's just well."

Laufenberg has been with different teams since he was drafted by the Washington Redskins in the sixth round of the 1983 draft.

Stoudt was signed by Dallas the close of the 1990 season as emergency quarterback after Aikman went down with a separate shoulder.

He dressed as Laufenberg's backup in the finale against Atlanta as Laufenberg struggled through a 10-of-24 afternoon, a defeat was a crippling blow to Dallas' hopes for a wild card playoff spot.

"I think the coaches lost confidence in me after that," Laufenberg said. "I just wish I'd had more of a chance."



Troy Aikman, starting quarterback for the Dallas Cowboys, threw for three touchdowns in Sunday's scrimmage against the Houston Oilers in San Antonio.



Cowboys safety Ray Horton (20) leaps over the Oilers' Alex Johnson after Johnson missed a diving catch during the Dallas-Houston scrimmage Sunday.

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Ryan's status questionable

ARLINGTON (AP) — The Texas Rangers said they plan to decide Wednesday whether to place Nolan Ryan on the disabled list for the second time this season because of a shoulder injury.

Ryan will miss at least one start and may throw only twice in the first two weeks of August because of muscle spasms in his right shoulder, the Rangers said Tuesday.

"He has not been placed on the disabled list. He will be re-evaluated when he gets to Chicago," said Rangers spokesman Larry Kelly. "At that time, if there's no improvement in his status, it's unlikely that he will pitch on the current road trip."

The Rangers closed out a two-game series Tuesday with Boston and will play at Chicago on Wednesday.

Manager Bobby Valentine has decided not to use Ryan in the pitcher's next scheduled start Friday at Milwaukee. Valentine said he wants Ryan to pitch next Monday and again Aug. 12, the first and last days of the upcoming homestand.

"A determination will be made tomorrow on whether he will be placed on the disabled list or how long he will be out of action," Kelly said Tuesday.

"He will sit down and talk with the trainers, and be examined," Kelly said. "He will talk with Valentine about it."

Baseball's all-time strikeout leader has been bothered by the injury most of the season. Ryan walked away from Sunday's start against Detroit after 5 1/3 innings because of stiffness in his shoulder.

The pitcher's condition showed little improvement during his weight-lifting session Monday in Arlington.

"It could've been better," Ryan said. "Maybe it'll be better, but with the way it felt today (Monday), I don't know."

The Rangers also report that reliever Jeff Russell has tendinitis in his right elbow, but will try to pitch through the condition. They said Bobby Witt will return to the rotation Thursday for a start against Chicago.

Sidekicks might have new investors

DALLAS (AP) — A second investors group is courting the Dallas Sidekicks soccer franchise, an official with the team said Tuesday.

The group of three to five investors, most from the Dallas area, scheduled a 2 p.m. meeting Tuesday with partners of Events Inc., which would run the team.

The Sidekicks, which folded in April after a poor season and sagging attendance, have until Thursday to post a \$350,000 letter of credit, the Major Soccer League said.

"We will know later this afternoon how it's going," said Michael Halbrooks, partner of Dallas-based Events. "We are hopeful that this group will step forward and help us."

He said he could not name the group's members.

"I haven't met all of them yet," he said. "I don't know who all of them are."

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