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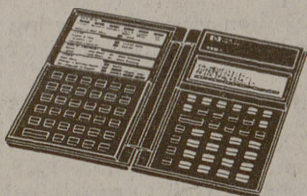
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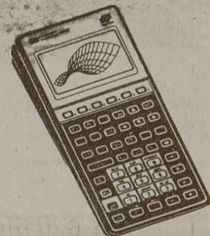
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Cowboys regroup to face 49ers

The Associated Press

IRVING — The Dallas Cowboys have a week to cure what ails them or they won't be defending their Super Bowl championship in Georgia.

"We have to play smarter, harder and better," said wide receiver Michael Irvin. "If we don't, we won't be going anywhere."

The Cowboys suffered interceptions, fumbles, penalties, and kicking game breakdowns but still managed to defeat Green Bay 27-17 on Sunday in the divisional playoffs.

The victory set up the NFC championship game the Cowboys wanted. They'll host the San Francisco 49ers at 3 p.m. Sunday in a rematch of last year's title game won 30-20 by the Cowboys. Dallas also defeated San Francisco 26-17 in October when Irvin caught 12 passes for 168 yards.

"The 49ers are a better team now than the one we beat back in October," said Dallas quarterback Troy Aikman. "A veteran team that has played in a lot of big games can be very dangerous."

It will be the first time the Cowboys have hosted the NFC championship game in 16 years.

Oilers find little consolation in seventh straight playoff appearance

The Associated Press

HOUSTON — Houston Oilers players slipped out of their practice facility early Monday, toting off large plastic bags of personal items from their lockers.

They had become the playoff homeless for the seventh year in a row, kicked out this time by Joe Montana and the Kansas City Chiefs, 28-20, on Sunday.

They were familiar with the depressing day-after process and they were anxious to slink into the off-season without further comment. They talked briefly and reluctantly.

All Pro guard Mike Munchak, who may have played his final season because of chronically in-

jured knees, spoke what the rest of the team felt.

"We should have been still playing," Munchak said. "It's hard to come over here today. This is when it starts to sink in what has happened."

This was the year they were supposed to be more than just playoff also-rans. The Oilers, after overcoming a 1-4 start, were favorites to reach the big show.

Instead, for the third straight year, they blew an early lead and lost after teasing their fans once again with visions of advancing farther than the second round of the playoffs.

They took little consolation in their streak of seven straight playoff appearances that is the longest in the NFL.

They had to play at San Francisco last January and the big worry was over the condition of the field.

"At least we won't have a field as bad as that one," Irvin said. "It helps to play at home. The 49ers will have to travel and listen to all that noise on their snap counts."

There is still concern over the condition of Emmitt Smith's shoulder, although he says he is

fine.

Smith reinjured the shoulder on Sunday trying to block Tony Bennett.

"It stung me pretty good," said Smith, who rushed for 60 yards before he left the game early in the second half.

Smith seemed more concerned over the way the team was playing than his shoulder problems. "The way we there was no

Roundup

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in the dressing room before we even went on the floor.

"We don't want the Texas game to be a fluke, and for that to be legit, we've got to take care of business with the rest of the teams in the conference."

After going undefeated in their first five games, the Lady Aggies suffered their first setback 90-69 at the hands of the

University of Oklahoma on Dec. 18 in Norman, Ok.

A&M rebounded to win their next two contests over California Irvine at G. Rollie White and over Louisiana State in Baton Rouge, where they were led by Kelly Cerny's season-high 24 points.

The victory over Texas stopped the Lady Aggies' first two-game losing streak, which included their first home loss of the year, against Oklahoma State.

Sophomore guard Lisa Branch

continues to lead the Lady Aggies, averaging 14.6 points per game, as well as leading the team in steals, free-throw percentage, three-pointers and assists, which also tops the SWC.

Along with Branch, Kelly Cerny and Martha McClelland consistently scored in double figures, averaging 12.5 and 11.6 points respectively.

Hickey said that compared to the team at this point in the season last year she sees tremendous improvement in key areas.

"(The team) listens very well,

Smith

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on fall Saturdays are the ones who earn the money and fill the stadiums. They are the ones people pay \$25 a ticket to see. Why shouldn't they reap some financial benefit from the work they do?

The problem with paying college football players lies in a workable system of payment.

If athletes were paid a salary, problems might arise where they would need to form a college football player's union. High school seniors might have to worry about contract negotiations with their prospective colleges, as well as entrance exams and finals.

Sending the college football system into the free market would kill a large number of football programs across the country. In a free economy, many of the universities that run over budget probably might have to abolish their football programs.

Another option would be similar the National Football League's system of revenue sharing where

the players are guaranteed a percentage of the gross income.

The NFL, however, has to grant a city a franchise and they choose locations where they feel the franchise can make money. There were only 28 NFL franchises this past season, but there were 106 Division I football teams in the NCAA.

Even with television revenue and gate receipts, college football would not be able to support so many programs.

Another issue raised when discussing the payment of college athletes is the effects Title IX would have on any payment system.

For example, if college football players are paid for their performance, women's basketball players, under Title IX requirements, must also be paid.

There are many sports programs on college campuses that do not earn enough revenue to pay their players with revenue sharing.

Even worse, if excess football revenue is diverted to the payment of players instead of the support of other less-profitable programs, a number of men's and

women's sports would probably cease to exist.

It has been a long standing belief in work relations that workers should be paid "a legitimate amount of money for the service they perform. Numerous strikes and riots brought about legislation providing minimum wage and worker's rights.

However, paying collegiate athletes violates the founding principles of the NCAA, in which athletes are considered amateurs and not professionals.

Solari suggested that athletes be given a monthly stipend of \$50 or \$100 to cover expenses and make life more pleasant for the players.

Some change needs to be made or some action taken to prevent a school's alumni from violating NCAA rules by improperly paying players.

Whether such a change would be making such payments acceptable or taking legal action against the boosters that give the players the money, a new system of rules must be developed.

It's the only fair solution to the players and to the school's they represent.

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