

Smith places emphasis on winning Super Bowl

Third rushing title eludes running back

IRVING, (AP) — He's 199 yards behind with four games to go. Emmitt Smith needs a 50-yard difference per game to win his fourth consecutive NFL rushing title.

"If it's meant to be, fine," Smith said. "If not, I'll take another Super Bowl ring."

Smith is chasing the one runner he might not be able to catch, Barry Sanders of the Detroit Lions.

"My job is to try to win games right now, not another rushing title," said Smith, who has been bothered this year by pulled hamstrings and sore shoulders.

He adds that, "I'd be lying if I said I'm not looking at what (Sanders) does. Sure I look at the man. He's the only one ahead of me. But I'm really not worrying about it."

What could hurt Smith's bid to join Jim Brown as the only rusher to win four consecutive titles is the Lions playoff chances.

The Dallas Cowboys suspect that if Detroit gets bounced out of the playoffs, the Lions will feed the ball to Sanders on an above normal basis.

"Barry may get the ball 50 times a game if they lose another game or two," offensive tackle Nate Newton said. "If they've got no playoff goals then they'll go with their star looking for individual goals."

Newton said Smith's primary concern is getting his team in position for another Super Bowl run.

"Barry could go down as the greatest of all time but he'll have no Super Bowl rings," Newton said. "Emmitt may get me into the Hall of Fame with all the rings he's helped this franchise win."

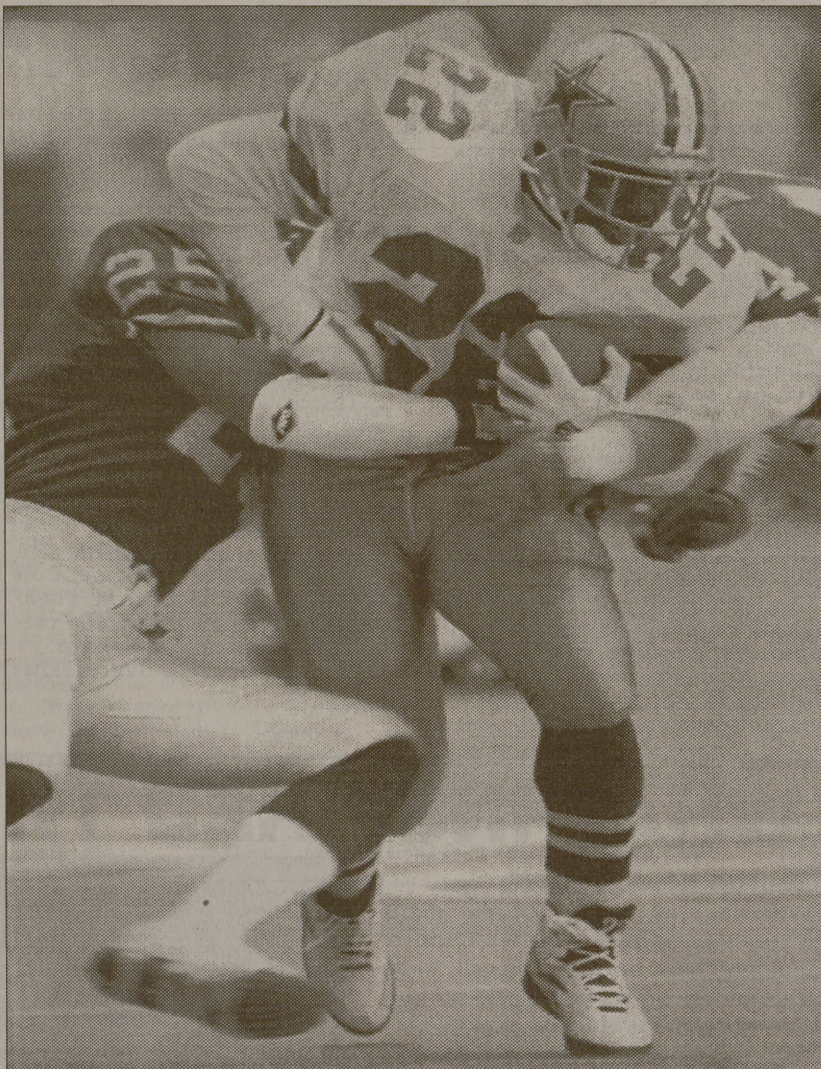
Smith is still going strong, but not as strong as last year. He has 1,207 yards but is averaging only 4.1 yards per carry. Last year he rushed for 1,486 yards and averaged 5.3 yards per carry, his best season average in his five-year career.

"It's been a tough physical year," Smith said. "It seems like something is always hurting."

Newton said some teams have been out to hurt Smith. "He's been taking some shots, some of them a little on the late side," Newton said. "I see some of these guys jump up and down like Butkus after they make a tackle. They're trying to hurt Emmitt."

Smith always likes to see the Philadelphia Eagles on the schedule. In the last five games, he's rushed 134 times for 792 yards against Philadelphia for a 5.9 average. His biggest game against them was for 237 yards last year on Halloween.

"Philly will be pumped up and play hard against us," Smith said. "Their fans make it a very difficult place to play. They'll be all riled up."



Dallas Cowboys' running back Emmitt Smith is 199 yards behind Detroit's Barry Sanders in the NFL rushing title race.

Williams signs contract

"Wild Thing" returns to baseball as Angel

ANAHEIM, Calif. (AP) — Reliever Mitch Williams is getting a new life in baseball with the California Angels.

Williams hasn't pitched since a disappointing stint with the Houston Astros ended in his release May 31. He was 1-4 with six saves and a 7.65 ERA in 25 appearances last season.

The Angels said Wednesday that Williams agreed to a non-guaranteed contract. It calls for a base salary of \$500,000, with \$2 million in performance bonuses. Under his previous 3-year deal, he made \$2.5 million in 1994.

"My time with the Astros was very demoralizing and took all of the fun out of the game for me," Williams said from his home in Hico, Texas. "I had time at home to clear my head and decided I wanted to pitch. The Angels were the most persistent team after I got home."

"I wasn't going to go back and pitch the rest of the year. I knew I had to clear my head. I knew I wasn't mentally right in Houston. Basically, I was just lied to. I'll do whatever job they brought me in to do, but don't tell me my job is one thing and use me in another thing."

Williams said the Angels have made no promises to him.

"Of course, I'd like to close," he said. "Whatever decision they make, I feel Lach (Angels manager Marcel Lachemann) will be honest with me. If he tells me I'm a setup guy, I'm a setup guy."

Williams, 30, is best known for allowing a three-run, game-winning home run by Toronto's

Joe Carter in the sixth and final game of the 1993 World Series while pitching for the Philadelphia Phillies.

It was his last pitch for the Phillies, the team he helped win the NL East championship and league playoffs in 1993 with 43 saves. He was traded to the Astros in the offseason.

Williams has a career big-league record of 44-55 in 592 appearances, three of them starts, with 192 saves and a

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Angels' reliever, Mitch Williams

3.51 ERA. He started his career with the Texas Rangers in 1986 and pitched three years for them before joining the Chicago Cubs in 1989.

"I'm real excited," Williams said. "It's a new start. I'm fine, I'm healthy as heck, healthy as I've been. I had knee surgery last spring. Everything now I think is healed up."

The Angels are without a proven stopper in their bullpen, but reportedly are pursuing career saves leader Lee Smith, who had a major league-leading 33 saves in the strike-shortened 1994 season.

NHL season in jeopardy

Hockey schedule cut down to 60 games

(AP) NHL negotiators meet in Chicago starting Thursday in what could be a last attempt at salvaging the hockey season.

"It's getting to the point where they are going to have to make a decision (on the collective bargaining agreement)," a management source told The Associated Press on Wednesday.

"Time is of the urgency," said Troy Loney, player representative of the New York Islanders.

NHL commissioner Gary Bettman, reached at his New York office, remained noncommittal on the eve of the latest talks.

"We're trying to move this process along, we're trying to make a deal," he said. "That has been our No. 1 priority right along since Day 1."

The source said the NHL and NHL Players Association have booked hotel space for three days in hopes of resolving the dispute that has sidelined the league for 61 days.

Players are expected to present the owners with their thoughts on such major issues as the rookie salary cap, free

agency and salary arbitration.

The contentious luxury tax issue is another story, however.

"If the tax is on the table, there's trouble," Loney said.

Until now, the owners have insisted on a tax of team payrolls that go over the average team salary in the NHL and give the money to teams under the prescribed limit. The players have been against such a tax, believing it has the same effect as a salary cap. Players reportedly would accept a diminished version of the payroll tax if owners share the burden by taxing gate receipts.

So far, the owners' lockout has resulted in 341 games called off in the longest work stoppage in NHL history. The schedule is already down to 60 games, following the cancellation of 24 for each team. Owners have said they will accept no less than a 50-game schedule.

One source told the AP that the players are not happy with what they've already conceded.

"Players feel they've been given away the farm," he said.

Winder

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