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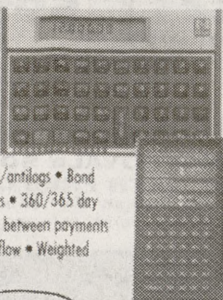
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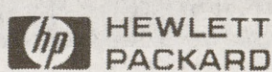


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THE BATTALION SPORTS

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Astro move will be decided this week

McLane, Lanier discuss new stadium terms

HOUSTON (AP) — Houston Astros owner Drayton McLane Jr., who says he will decide this week whether to put his team up for sale, met Wednesday with Mayor Bob Lanier.

But the mayor wouldn't reveal whether any progress in stadium talks had been made during the meeting at his home.

"It's still down to the final elements," Lanier said. "No closure has been reached. It's pretty close. We had a good meeting, really no details that I'll say anything about."

McLane didn't immediately return telephone calls from The Associated Press seeking comment. McLane, whose team is sag-

ging in its bid to reach attendance goals he set to keep the Astros in town, on Tuesday declined to say what he wanted to discuss with Lanier.

"I see this as a key week," McLane said. "We either get this done or we don't get this done."

McLane, who has skipped several ultimatums for a local stadium deal this summer, repeatedly has said he will shop the team unless he can get a good package from Harris County.

He set an Aug. 1 deadline and a Sept. 3 deadline, only to continue negotiations with Harris County Judge Robert Eckels.

Eckels, who has spent much of the year trying to negotiate a deal with McLane, didn't attend Wednesday's meeting, Eckels spokeswoman Sally Lehr said.

Eckels has proposed that the county erect a 42,000-seat,

retractable-roof ballpark, with the Astros paying as little as 15 percent of the \$250 million price tag.

The county would pay \$180 million in construction costs and the private sector other than McLane at least \$40 million, with Lanier promising the city would guarantee \$15 million in the sale of permanent seat licenses.

McLane has said if he can't strike a deal in Houston, he will resume talks with Virginia businessman Bill Collins, who last year offered a reported \$160 million for the Astros. He wants to move the team to Virginia.

McLane initially said at least 2.7 million people must attend games this season, but he revised the figure to 2.2 million, an average of 27,100 per home game.

On Tuesday, the Astros drew a season-low 12,700 fans, dropping their average to 24,482.

Houston acquires Cedeno from Tiger

HOUSTON (AP) — Houston Astros Wednesday acquired infielder Andres Cedeno from the Detroit Tigers for a player to be named.

Cedeno played for the Astros from 1990-94.

"With the nagging injury, Bill Spiers and Ricky Gutierrez, addition to Sean Berry's condition, we felt we needed insurance for the left side of the infield," Astros general manager Gerry Hunsicker said. "Andujar Cedeno gives us someone with major league experience at third base and short stop."

Cedeno, 27, began the season with San Diego before being traded to Detroit.

In 101 games in both leagues, he hit .213 with 10 home runs and 38 RBIs.

Improved Cowboy defense key to Super Bowl return

IRVING (AP) — If the Dallas Cowboys get back to another Super Bowl, the defense may have to carry the load.

Last year it was the offense that earned Dallas its third Super Bowl ring in four years. The defense was only the 16th best in the NFL.

It's not the "Doomsday Defense" like the Cowboys had in the 1970s, but it may be better than last year's Super Bowl champions.

"I've been telling everyone we have a better defense than last year," said wide receiver-cornerback Deion Sanders. "Because of all the acquisitions we've made, we're definitely better."

The early September statistics give credence to Sanders' observa-

tion. The Cowboys currently own the third best defense in the NFL.

Some of the credit goes to coordinator Dave Campo who saw linebackers Dixon Edwards and Robert Jones, tackle Russell Maryland, and cornerback Larry Brown walk through the free-agent door.

Campo has taken such newcomers as linebackers Fred Strickland and Broderick Thomas and lineman Tony Casillas and worked them into a cohesive unit that plays a more aggressive game than the 1995 Cowboys.

"We have a much more aggressive scheme this year," said Dallas coach Barry Switzer. "We are more physical and thicker inside. And we're not as predictable as we

have been in the past. We're not missing tackles and have very few mental (mistakes). With Kevin Smith back and teaming with Deion on the corners, we're getting a lot of coverage sacks."

Smith, who missed the season last year after getting hurt in the opener, has rebounded strongly with two interceptions in two games.

"Having Smith back has really helped us," Switzer said. "It has been a key to the way we are playing on defense."

Casillas has given the Cowboys depth in the solid first team defensive line featuring Tony Tolbert and Charles Haley at the ends, and Chad Hennings and

Leon Lett at tackle.

Safeties Darren Woodson and Brock Marion have been playing well. Strickland, who came from Green Bay to sign with the Cowboys, has been a big improvement over Jones in the middle of the line.

"I love this defense," Switzer said. "The front four makes the job easy. They don't allow the carrier to get to the linebackers secondary with a head of steam."

Dallas has only allowed an average rushing yards in 10 games against Chicago and New York Giants.

"The addition of Fred Broderick has made our defense much better," Marion said. "We are playing better than last year."

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