

Dallas wide receiver **Michael Irvin** caught seven passes for 153 yards and two touchdowns in the Cowboys 37-7 victory over Pittsburgh. The Cowboy's offense is trying to improve on the 1996 season which saw them finish 24th in total offense.

## Dallas offense no longer one dimensional unit

IRVING, Texas (AP) — Last year the Dallas Cowboys could not move when Emmitt Smith couldn't run. They showed Sunday against the Pittsburgh Steelers they have the firepower this season to make teams pay for loading up against Smith.

The off-season addition of Anthony Miller gave Troy Aikman a sure-fingered target and helped free Michael Irvin.

Between them they caught 9 passes for 196 yards and three touchdowns in the 37-7 win.

"This team is going to be very explosive," Miller said Monday. "It's really going to be fun to watch as soon as Troy and I have more time to practice together."

Miller, a five-time Pro Bowler who played for San Diego and Denver, played in only one preseason game because of a June knee operation. He got the Cowboys going with a 31-yard touchdown pass from Aikman.

Irvin, who caught 7 passes for 153 yards, caught two touchdowns as Aikman burned Pittsburgh's 8-man front.

A year ago Irvin was watching the Cowboys season opener, a 22-0 loss to Chicago, on his couch

while serving a five-game suspension for drug possession.

"I tried to down play it, but the game was important to me," Irvin said. "We showed what we can do now that we have Anthony on the other side to loosen up the defense on me."

**"This team is going to be very explosive. It's really going to be fun to watch."**

**ANTHONY MILLER**  
COWBOY'S WIDE RECEIVER

Smith said it didn't bother him that he only got 69 yards on 26 carries.

"Several times I was just one man away from breaking a long one, but that's what happens when you see 8-man fronts," he said Monday. "My day will come. Teams can't keep loading up against the run, or Troy will make them pay."

Aikman hit 19 of 30 passes for 295 yards and four touchdowns, the most productive opening day game in his career. His touchdown

pass total was one-third of his production all of last year.

"The offensive line was great. I only got knocked down one time," Aikman said. "If we can't run this year, we KNOW we can throw. I was pleased with the way we won. If we keep this kind of focus, we have a chance to accomplish our goals."

The Dallas defense, featuring an inexperienced front-seven, held up well against the Pittsburgh running game, allowing only 85 yards.

Rookie linebacker Dexter Coakley intercepted a pass as Dallas held the Steelers to 89 yards passing.

"I like this group," said defensive coordinator Dave Campo. "We have a lot of speed and that makes up for mistakes."

The Cowboys got off to a 1-3 start last year, and it was the defense that held them together for a fifth consecutive NFC East title.

The offense was 24th in the NFL.

"It's time for the offense to show what it can do," said fullback Daryl Johnston, who caught a TD pass from Aikman. "We're anxious to put last year behind us."

## Rice out for season 49ers receiver sidelined with torn ACL

SANTA CLARA, Calif. (AP) — Jerry Rice, the NFL's greatest receiver, probably will miss the rest of the year because of a knee injury in the season opener.

Rice, an offensive cornerstone of the San Francisco 49ers, underwent surgery Monday and could be sidelined for up to six months. Until now, he had never missed a game because of injury in his 12 seasons.

"Not only is Jerry Rice one of the great performers on our football team but he's one of our leaders," coach Steve Mariucci said. "That we will miss. We're going to have to pick up the pieces with somebody else."

Mariucci said an MRI showed that Rice tore the anterior cruciate and medial collateral ligaments in his left knee as well as cartilage when he was tackled during the second quarter of San Francisco's 13-6 loss at Tampa Bay on Sunday.

Team physician Dr. Michael Dillingham was operating on Rice while Mariucci spoke at a news conference. The possibility remains that another operation will be needed to complete the repairs.

"The prognosis is he'll be out four to six months and it is unlikely he will return for this season," Mariucci said.

Rice, the NFL career leader in touchdowns, receptions and receiving yardage, is an 11-time Pro Bowler.

The injury will end his streak of 189 straight regular-season, nonstrike games. He has played 176 games in a row with at least one reception.

In the same game, the 49ers saw Steve Young go down again with a concussion. He returned to play and was listed as probable for Sunday's game at St. Louis.

Young said the prospect of playing without Rice would be difficult for the 49ers.

"It's going to test our mettle," Young said. "It's going to test who we are, top to bottom. We'll be able to watch it, you'll be able to see how we do on the test."

Rice was hurt on a running play, a reverse late in the second quarter. After taking a handoff from running back Garrison Hearst, Rice ran to his left but was intercepted by Tampa Bay defensive tackle Warren Sapp, who had burst into the 49ers' backfield.

Sapp grabbed Rice, getting a hold of his facemask, and pulled him down awkwardly. Sapp was penalized on the play and said after the game the tug on the face-

mask was inadvertent.

Rice, who had weathered so many other hard shots, stayed down on the turf in agony for some five minutes before being helped off the field by doctors and trainers. He returned to the sidelines on crutches and in street clothes to watch the rest of the game.

On the plane ride home, Mariucci said Rice vowed he would be back, applying the same zeal to his rehabilitation as he did to off-season workouts that kept him in remarkable shape and injury-free for so many years.

"He said, 'Coach, it's going to be OK,'" Mariucci said. "Regardless of how long I'm going to be out, I'll be back." And he will. He's got a roster spot reserved on this football whenever he does come back."

Rice has credited a rigorous off-season conditioning program for his durability and success.

"It was clearly the most spectacular run," said teammate Brent Jones. "I'm not putting him out of the game next week, but to me what he's done is much more amazing than Cal Ripken."

"In professional football, to be a marked man for all those years, guys making late hits on him and be able to do what he has done, yeah there's a side of me that thought Jerry Rice was just never going to get hurt."

Terrell Owens, a second-year pro, will step in for Rice. Mariucci said he hopes he can continue to run a full-complement of plays for the new man.

"Terrell Owens will run what Rice ran but we don't expect him to be Jerry Rice," he said. "We're going to run pretty much the same things."

And he said the team was already looking forward to Rice's return.

"You know he will rehab and recover as quick as anybody," Mariucci said. "You know he doesn't want to go out on that note. It was a tough blow but we have to move on and get it done without him."

**"There's a side of me that thought Jerry Rice was never going to get hurt."**  
**BRENT JONES**  
49ER TIGHT END

## Big 12 names outstanding players

DALLAS (AP) — Kansas' Patrick Brown, who became the third linebacker in NCAA history to return two interceptions for touchdowns in a single game, was named the Big 12 Conference defensive player of the week on Monday.

Oklahoma State quarterback Tony Lindsay, who came off the bench Saturday to complete eleven of 15 passes for 104 yards and no interceptions, was named offensive player of the week, the conference said.

Brown, a 5-11, 210-pound junior from Westerville, Ohio, picked off two passes and scored on runbacks of 53 and 21 yards as the Jayhawks beat Alabama-Birmingham 24-0 Thursday. He also had a hand in six tackles.

Lindsay, a 6-2, 190-pound redshirt freshman from Denver, also rushed 12 times for 42 yards and a touch-

down in a 21-14 victory over Iowa State.

The Big 12 specialty player of the week was Oklahoma State punter Jason Davis.

The 6-0, 220-pound senior from Kerrville, Texas, booted six punts against Iowa State for a total of 311 yards. Davis averaged a league-best 51.8 yards.

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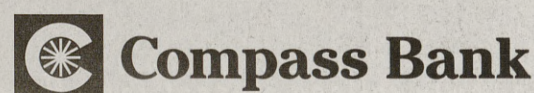
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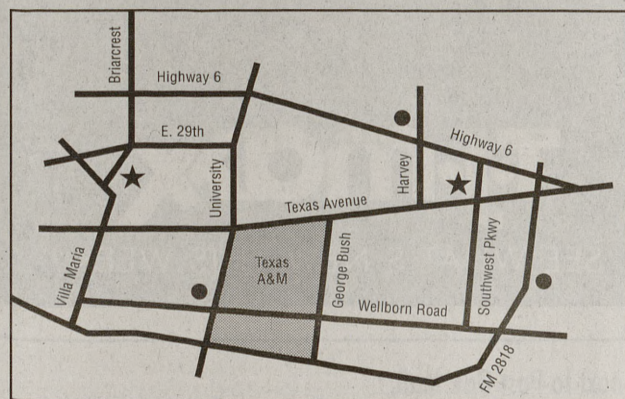
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