

Cowboys' Lett suspended for seven games

IRVING (AP) — Dallas Cowboys defensive tackle Lett will miss the next seven games as punishment for his fifth violation of the NFL's substance abuse policy.

Lett, 30, had been suspended indefinitely since June 4 and missed the team's opening win at Washington on Sunday.

The NFL's ruling, announced today, will allow the former Pro Bowler to rejoin the Cowboys for the Nov. 4 home game against Green Bay — if he has no further violations.

"We're disappointed, but I'm glad we have a definitive time we can expect him back," Cowboys owner Jerry Jones said. "We're disappointed we don't have him now."

Commissioner Paul Tagliabue also told Lett he will be suspended for at least one year should he violate the substance-abuse policy again.

Currently banned from the team's workouts and premises, Lett is allowed to return Nov. 9.

Lett's absence Sunday contributed to a defensive breakdown that allowed the Redskins to score 32 straight points. The Cowboys won in overtime 41-35.

Jones said Tagliabue took his time weighing several factors in a decision that could set a precedent for other players who reach this stage in the league's after-care program.

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— JERRY JONES
COWBOYS OWNER



The commissioner could have given Lett up to a lifetime ban but instead opted to double the penalty he gave the previous five-time violator, Clayton Holmes.

The precedent "was not set" with Holmes, Jones said. Lett was not immediately available for comment. His agent, Jim Steiner of St. Louis, said he was sur-

prised that Jones made the announcement and declined further comment until he had spoken with Lett or Jones.

This is the fourth season in the last five that Lett has missed games because of suspensions.

He missed four games in 1995 after testing positive for marijuana, then the last three games of 1996 and the first 13 of 1997 after testing positive for cocaine. Dallas has gone 11-9 without him.

When he plays, the 6-foot-6, 300-pound Lett remains a dominant force. He has made the Pro Bowl in his last two full seasons, 1994 and 1998.

Last year, he had 51 tackles, four sacks, 20 quarterback pressures and a team-high seven tackles for losses.

Confidentiality rules prohibit the NFL from commenting on specific cases. However, according to the league's substance abuse policy, a player would have to violate the rules five times to be treated the way Lett has been.

Because the first two violations do not result in suspensions, they are not publicized. The third violation is a four-game suspension and the fourth violation draws a ban of at least one year. Punishment for the

fifth violation is at the commissioner's discretion.

Tagliabue considered several factors, including how many tests Lett has passed since he was reinstated in November 1997 and how cooperative he's been with the process. Lett has been tested up to 10 times a month for the last two years.

The Cowboys made Lett a seventh-round draft pick out of Emporia State in 1991. He quickly blossomed into a key player in their defensive line rotation and was part of the Super Bowl champion teams in 1992, '93 and '95.

Lett also is remembered for two on-field gaffes.

In the 1993 Super Bowl, Lett set a record for returning a fumble 64 yards — but he needed 65 for a touchdown. Thinking he would score easily, Lett was raising the ball in celebration when Buffalo's Don Beebe swatted it away from behind at the goal line.

The following November, in a snowy Thanksgiving Day game against the Miami Dolphins, Lett mistakenly tried picking up a missed field goal instead of letting it become a dead ball. He ended up knocking it to a Dolphin, setting up Miami's successful second chance kick for the victory.

Steele, Bears still reeling

WACO (AP) — Joe Jackson is trying to avoid contact with football fans this week, but that's not because he is afraid of being gouted about Baylor's two last-second losses.



STEELE

Instead, Jackson said he and the Bears fear something much worse than ridicule — pity.

"You get tired of being consoled," the sophomore center said. "You hear 'get 'em next time' a lot, but that's not something that you want to hear."

People are finding it easier than ever to feel sorry for Baylor after Saturday's bizarre 27-24 loss to UNLV. With less than 20 seconds to play, Baylor had a three-point lead and the ball inside the Rebels' 10-yard line.

But instead of having his quarterback take a knee and run out the clock, first-year coach Kevin Steele

elected to go for one more score by calling a running play. The Bears paid the price when Darrel Bush fumbled into the end zone and UNLV's Kevin Thomas returned it for a game-winning touchdown.

"It was kind of weird to hear 30,000 jaws drop at the same time," Jackson said. "That was really tough."

Baylor kicker Kyle Atteberry, who missed an extra point on the last play of overtime in the Bears' opening-week loss to Boston College, said it has taken several days for the reality of the sudden UNLV loss to sink in.

"Everybody was just shocked," Atteberry said. "You've got to go through some personal time of mourning, but you've only got a short while to think about it because we play again this week."

Now, the Bears are trying to pick up the pieces in time to salvage what they insist can still be a successful season. Players and coaches all said that process starts with forgetting about the past two weeks, even though questions

about the losses are sure to follow them for the rest of the year.

Steele, who took full responsibility for the defeat Saturday and called it "a stupid mistake on my part," said Tuesday he no longer will talk with the media about the final play of the UNLV game.

"We have rectified it as a team," Steele said. "We've challenged each other, it's been a great bonding experience and it's over with."

Although Steele has received criticism from the public about his decision to run the ball on the last play, he has received nothing but support from the Baylor players and assistant coaches.

Even defensive coordinator Brick Haley, whose unit was not on the field when the game-winning touchdown occurred, said he agreed with Steele's call.

"If you question what happened on that last play, that's like taking the sword out of these guys' hands," Haley said. "We say we want to build an attitude, and you can't do that by taking a knee."

Tech RB Williams may sit out another week

LUBBOCK (AP) — Texas Tech coach Spike Dykes would need an especially clear crystal ball to discern the fate of star running back Ricky Williams.

As the team heads into its third game of the season, Williams is still nursing the sprained left knee that forced him to sit out this weekend's 17-17 victory over Louisiana-Lafayette.

If Williams were in Lubbock, team doctors could take a simple MRI and determine whether he is ready to trot back out on the field Saturday.

But Williams has been in Dallas since Sunday with his ailing mother. He has not undergone a medical exam since last week. As of late afternoon yesterday, the team was uncertain when or if he will play again this season.

"I'm no doctor, so I don't like to step out on a limb and try to say whether I think he is going to come back when," Dykes said. "We have to let the doctors look

at him and until he gets back from Dallas, we don't know when that's going to happen."

Williams has played every game at Tech (1-1) the past two seasons, rushing for 1,582 yards and 13 touchdowns last year. He also was on pace to eclipse the all-time rushing record held by Texas' former running back of the same name.

Tech's Williams injured his knee in the first half of the season opener against Arizona State University. When the ASU defense collapsed the Tech offensive line on top of Williams, he simply banded his left knee and returned to play minutes later.

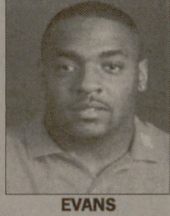
In the second half, he told trainers he felt the knee give out and was helped off the field.

The prospect of playing without Williams has the team worried.

"You always wish you had your best option available and on the field," quarterback Rob Peters said. "We don't know for sure what we are capable of without him. But we've got to play football and win, not worry about people who aren't on the field."

Cornhusker Evans quits team

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Nebraska's football team has a new look, with running back DeAngelo Evans quitting the squad and coach Frank Solich going with a new quarterback.



EVANS

Evans, off to a slow start in his junior season with the No. 4 Cornhuskers, missed practice and a team meeting Monday.

"DeAngelo Evans has decided to quit playing football," Solich said yesterday at a news conference.

It was a difficult decision for Evans and for the team, Solich said. He said he did not think Evans had plans to transfer to another school.

Solich also said yesterday

sophomore Eric Crouch will start at quarterback against Southern Mississippi on Saturday, and junior Bobby Newcombe will start as a receiver and return punts.

Solich said he wants both players, who have vied for the starting spot at quarterback, to be on the field for the Cornhuskers.

The 5-foot-10, 215-pound Evans has had numerous injuries limiting his playing career at Nebraska. He carried 148 times and gained 776 yards as a true freshman in 1996. But he missed 1997 with a pelvic injury.

His 1998 season also was cut short. He missed the first three games with a knee injury.

When he returned to action, he carried the ball 38 times for 218 yards and four touchdowns in three games. But he sat out the

rest of the year with an injured big toe and bruised tailbone.

Evans had knee surgery after the 1998 season and had hoped to return to full speed this fall and regain his starting position.

He regained the starting spot, but in two games this season, he carried just 19 times for 74 yards and no touchdowns.

Evans' decision comes after other players' rumbling over playing time.

Two weeks ago, Solich visited backup quarterback Eric Crouch in Omaha after the sophomore reportedly became upset when junior Bobby Newcombe was named the starter.

Last week, backup I-back Correll Buckhalter, the team's leading rusher last season, left practice for three days, apparently upset over the lack of playing time.

Former Bruins charged in scandal

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Chicago Bears quarterback Cade McNown and Washington Redskins running back Skip Hicks were among five men charged Monday with illegally possessing handicapped parking placards while they played football at UCLA.

The misdemeanor charges filed by the City Attorney's Office brought to 19 the number of current and former Bruins alleged to be part of the handicapped parking scam.

Also named in the new charges were Larry Atkins, Odadele Ayanbadejo and Eric Whitfield.

The five were scheduled for arraignment yesterday morning in Los Angeles Municipal Court, along with five other defendants named in charges filed July 8.

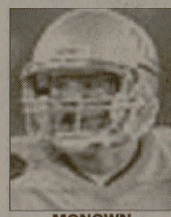
On July 28, nine defendants pleaded guilty to the misdemeanor charge of illegally possessing a handicapped placard.

Municipal Court Judge Sam Ohta ordered each to pay \$14,485 in fines and perform 200 hours of community service.

McNown, Hicks and Whitfield were alleged to have

illegally obtained the handicapped parking placards in 1996; and Ayanbadejo and Atkins in 1997.

Hicks had spoken of the situation at the start of training camp in July.



MENOWN



— SKIP HICKS
REDSKINS RUNNING BACK

"I was young. You do some things you regret when you're young...I shouldn't have had one in the first place."

"I was young. You do some things you regret when you're young. Yes, I had one. I never parked in a handicapped spot, but I guess that doesn't matter. I shouldn't have had one in the first place," he said. "...It's one of those things where you've got to say I'm sorry, learn from your mistakes and move on."

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