sday, November 9, 2000

PORTS THE BATTALION

Cowboys still hurting Aikman's back requires more injections; Lett out

RVING (AP) — Dallas quarterk Troy Aikman practiced for the time in nearly two weeks ednesday, and was optimistic he start this week against Cincinnati. The practice came two days after kman received a second round of ections in the lower left side of his ing back

"I haven't gotten the relief I got weeks ago, but got enough to get and do what needed to be done,' man said after the two-hour rkout at an indoor facility. "I'm timistic that if it doesn't regress, l be okay.

for oppo

n lions n

Will ge

After Aikman got the first series State in Mof shots before the Oct. 29 game there is against Jacksonville, he said his back as feeling better than it had in years. vill be 86 But he was knocked out of the 23-17 lown the vertime loss with back spasms after what the being slammed to the turf by Tony ise, their Brackens in the first quarter.

Aikman did not even travel for last week's 16-13 overtime loss at Philly. journalis With Randall Cunningham sitting t practice with fluid on his knee, ikman got a full workout with the s played first team Wednesday. Third-stringer don'tknClint Stoerner also took some snaps. "He looked fine," running back t to see "Emmitt Smith said of Aikman. "I They'r hought he moved around and didn't ipate, a really grimace, nothing like that. I'm assuming that he's fine. But there's

season. No BCS bowl.

title and other goals.

to what you lost.

FORT WORTH (AP) — One unexpected loss an-

vered the questions for Texas Christian. No undefeat-

Now comes what may be an even tougher challenge

or the Horned Frogs than their attempt to reach those

ofty goals. They have to bounce back from the bitter

lisappointment of losing to try to salvage a conference

"The problem that everybody has had to deal with is

that the things they lost were rare and hard to get," said

TCU coach Dennis Franchione. "There's still a lot on

the table. The difficult thing is they seem pale compared

TCU had a 12-game winning streak, the nation's

the physical aspect of it in terms of the er this month, Jones expressed conpounding that remains to be seen."

Coach Dave Campo said no decision has been made on Aikman's status for Sunday.

"Troy looked good, he felt good and threw the ball well," Campo said. "He practiced a full practice and looked pretty good, but I have to see how he reacts overnight. That will be the determining factor.'

On the same day that Aikman returned to practice, the Cowboys lost defensive tackle Leon Lett for the season. Lett sprained his left knee during a drill on the artificial turf at the Coppell High School facility.

"We're disappointed for Leon. He was a solid contributor in our defensive front this year, and this is a dif-ficult setback," said Cowboys owner Jerry Jones.

The Cowboys had placed defensive tackle Chad Hennings on the injured reserved list earlier in the day. Hennings is out with a possibly career-ending neck injury.

"The loss of Leon and Chad is a blow in terms of experience, production and leadership on the line," Campo said. "We will probably go with Michael Myers at Leon's spot this Sunday, and then we will determine our defensive line rotation as this week progresses.

As for Aikman, who turns 34 lat-

The Horned Frogs coping with loss

making excuses,

but in a couple of

years, we've come a

long way."

cern earlier this week about whether the quarterback will return after this season

In addition to being sidelined because of his back the past two games, Aikman missed two games after a concussion suffered in the first half of the season opener.

"About four or five years ago, I realized that I'd have a tough decision to make someday. I don't know if the time is now," Aikman said. "I'm not ready to say anything is inevitable. My primary concern is to get ready for Cincinnati.'

Aikman said he will do as he does every year when evaluating his future. But he also knows how tough it was for him last weekend, when, for the first time in his 12-year career, he watched the Cowboys play from his living room.

"It was very difficult to do. I stood up most of the second half," Aikman said. "I'm hopeful that the carpet in my living room was softer than the turf in Philly."

Also Wednesday, the Cowboys placed receiver Raghib Ismail (torn right ACL) on the injured reserve list. They signed defensive end Aaron Fields, who was with the Cowboys in training camp this year, and safety Greg Myers, who had been with the Bengals

Houston approves arena bill

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HOUSTON (AP) — The Rockets will not be jettisoning to New Orleans, after all. Houston voters approved the proposed arena referendum on Tuesday to prevent the second major sports franchise from leaving their city.

With all precincts reporting, the arena issue passed 65 percent to 35 percent, ensuring Houston will keep its pro basketball team and boosting efforts to draw majorleague hockey.

The referendum asked voters to apply existing hotel and rental car taxes to construct a \$256 million home for the Houston Rockets, who say their existing home, 25-year-old Compaq Center, lacks the luxury boxes and other amenities needed to compete financially with other National Basketball Association teams. Last November, voters rejected a similar deal by 10 percentage points after months of hot debate.

After the referendum failed, Rockets owner Les Alexander explored moving the team but never found a suitable alternative. The Florida businessman's lease at Compaq Center expires in 2003. The new building would open later that year. Unlike the previous election, no well-organized anti-arena campaign surfaced, and some

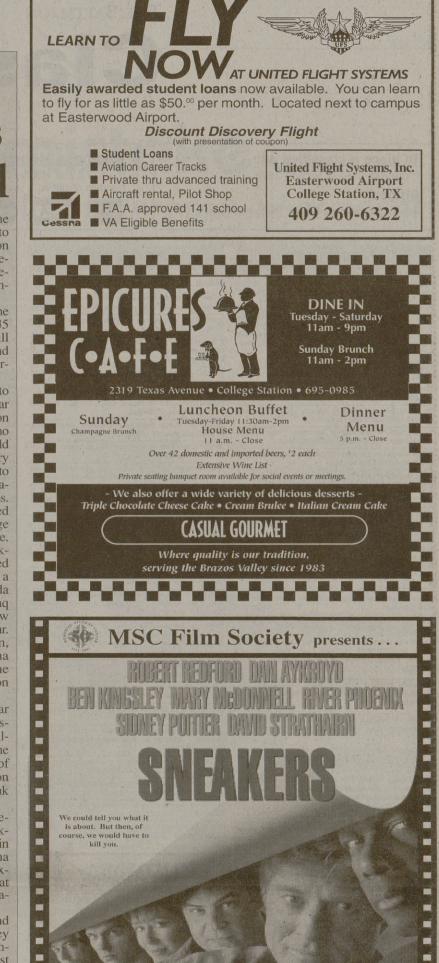
former leaders of the opposition backed the new proposal. "What a difference a year

makes," said Harris County-Houston Sports Authority chairman Billy Burge. "I think this thing came together at the right time for all of Houston. The people of Houston wanted the right deal, and I think they got it.

The main difference is the revised deal does not include a ticket surcharge, which was allowed in last year's referendum. Arena backers pushed the "no new taxes" theme in broadcasting ads that blanketed local television and ra-

"Eleven big corporations and the Rockets spent a lot of money promoting special interests downtown," said conservative activist and anti-arena leader Bruce Hotze. Under the proposal, the city

Tickets: \$3.50 at the door or



www.unitedflight.com

possible BCS bowl. Until a 27-24 loss at San Jose tate late Saturday night. "If we go 11-1 and go to a bowl

ongest, and had moved to ninth in

the BCS standings. While a long-

shot for a national title shot, the

me, that game will be with me for e rest of my life. That's how devstating it was to me," said lineacker Shannon Brazzell.

After the loss, the Frogs (7-1, 4-— LaDainian Tomlinson C) fell out of the to BCS standings, and tumbled nine spots in the AP poll just one week Ifter ending a 41-year hiatus from the top 10. No. 1 Oklahoma is now the nation's only undefeated team. 'Not really believing that we had lost, that's what it elt like," said LaDainian Tomlinson, the nation's leadng rusher (181 ypg). "It felt like a dream, and I'm hinking I'm okay, I'm going to wake up.

They can still be the first TCU team to go to three straight bowl games, though the postseason trip most likely will be back to Mobile, Ala., against a C-USA team. The Frogs beat East Carolina last year in the inaugural Mobile Bowl.

any of his players, is reminding them not to give up on the goals that are still in reach.

We can still finish ranked, we can still win a piece of the conference championship, we can still go to postseason play ... We can be the first team ever to go to three bowl games in a row," Franchione said. "So there's a lot of specialness left to achieve in the season. That's part of the challenge.

The irony is that no matter what the *People have got to* Frogs now accomplish, this season will be considered by some as a disap-Homed Frogs were getting closer to realize, and I'm not pointment.

Forget that this team was just 1-10 and lost 10 straight games in 1997, the year before Franchione arrived. Expectations were high, and talk of an undefeated record had been prominent since months before the season even began.

"People have got to realize, and I'm not making excuses, but in a couple of years, we've come a long way," Tom-

Franchione, who possibly took the loss harder than

dio stations.

will supply land near the George R. Brown Convention Center and the sports authority will use bonds supported by the hotel and rental car taxes to build the arena.

Alexander will pay about 30 percent of the total bill, according to figures from Harris County Tax Assessor-Collector Paul Bettencourt, who fought the 1999 proposal but was publicly neutral this time.

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"The key is to realize you still have a lot to play for. But it's so hard to think about it actually when you had right there in front of you.

The stakes are not as high, but still important.

The Frogs are trying to claim a share of the Western Athletic Conference title in their last season in the eague before moving to Conference USA. They are tied for second in the WAC with San Jose and Fresno State (5-3, 4-1), their opponent Saturday, and play league-leading Texas-El Paso (7-2, 6-0) the next week.

TCU running back

linson said. "There's still things you learn along the way while you are climbing. This team is still learning how to deal with things like what happened Saturday night on the road."

Even with TCU's loss, Tomlinson remains a legitimate Heisman Trophy candidate.

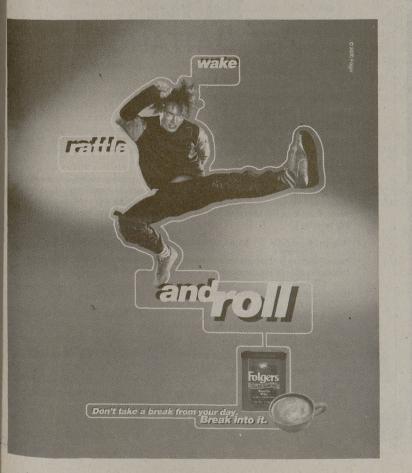
After leading the nation with 1,850 yards rushing last season, including an NCAA I-A single-game record 406 against UTEP, he leads the nation in rushing and scoring (12.8 ppg) this year. He has rushed for at least 119 yards in every game, including 155 at San Jose.

Still, Franchione expresses some concerns about the loss on Tomlinson's chance to win the Heisman.

"I don't think it helped," Franchione said. "I think some of it will deal with how we finish. There's still some time yet and he didn't have a bad game. We've always had some odds to fight in that. Maybe they're a little bigger than they were."

Chuck Watson, chairman of natural gas trading giant Dynegy Inc. and Alexander's leaseholder at Compaq Center, gave \$100,000 to the anti-arena campaign last year. But he endorsed the 2000 ballot issue after receiving assurances he might be able to bring in a National Hockey League franchise.

Watson, owner of the minorleague Houston Aeros hockey club, complained last year the deal structure gave Alexander carte blanche to establish his own NHL



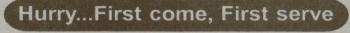
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