

Johnson quickly becoming dangerous threat for Texans

By Mark Babineck
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

HOUSTON — It's taken three games for Andre Johnson to go from intriguing rookie to the Texans' go-to guy, a playmaking receiver who demands special attention from defenses.

"He's a guy that we liked in the draft and think he has big-time talent," Jacksonville coach Jack Del Rio said Wednesday as his Jaguars prepare for their trip to Houston this weekend. "I think he's doing a nice job for them."

Del Rio wouldn't say if the Jaguars would try specifically to slow Johnson down. "How we want to attack the Texans is our business," he told Houston reporters.

But Texans' quarterback David Carr has noticed the Saints and Chiefs altered their defensive strategy even as they were blowing out Houston.

"Toward the end of the last two games (defensive backs) have kind of rolled over toward him because he's a guy that could make a big play, turn the football game around with one catch," Carr said of Johnson.

Last Sunday, when the defense and special teams running game endured severe lapses that allowed Kansas City to roll to a 42-14 victory in the Texans' home opener, Johnson consistently stayed above it all. He caught seven passes for 102 yards and made highlight films with his two touchdowns.

The first, when the Texans were still in the game, came on a perfectly thrown ball by Carr that hit Johnson in stride on a post route on which Johnson used his superior speed to beat the Chiefs' secondary. The second, a late fourth quarter score with Tony Banks quarterbacking, required Johnson's strength, agility and grit to take a ball in the flat and muscle his way into the

end zone.

Johnson is among the NFL's early receiving leaders with 249 yards on 18 catches, his name among the likes of Randy Moss and Isaac Bruce. The only other rookie in the top 10 is currently the league's No. 2 receiver, Anquan Boldin, the NFL's early out-of-nowhere success story.

Unlike fellow University of Miami pass catchers like Michael Irvin and Jeremy Shockey, Johnson is satisfied with letting his play do the talking for him.

"I think I've done pretty well," he said. "Sometimes you go out there and make mistakes, but you have to come back and watch the film and correct them. As long as you're going out and getting better and not making the same mistakes, it's a positive for you."



JOHNSON

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He'll continue to work on his route-running and his reads and make the adjustments that all rookie receivers must make. The downside to the success, Carr believes, is that Johnson might have seen some of the last soft coverage of his career just 180 minutes into it.

"Other guys are going to have to make plays," Carr said, referring to fellow receivers Corey Bradford, Jabar Gaffney and tight end Billy Miller. "When teams pay that much attention to (Johnson) — which they probably will for the next couple of games, this year and forever in his career — the other guys around him are going to get a chance to make plays."

NOTES: The Texans' injury report is as clean as it's been in a while. A variety of ailments have six players listed as probable, including Pro Bowl defensive end Gary Walker, who got his first playing time of the season Sunday as he recovers from a sore left shoulder. Walker said he was feeling even better Wednesday and hoped to make a contribution against Jacksonville, his old team.

Big 12

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eventual 49-21 loss to the Wolfpack, despite Symons's incredible performance.

Tech may lead the nation in passing offense with 493.3 yards per game, but its porous defense could be its downfall this weekend, as the team is ranked 104th in overall defense, giving up 446 yards per game.

As for the Rebels, Heisman candidate and senior quarterback Eli Manning will lead the charge.

After a week off, the Rebels should be ready to roll as Ole Miss enters the contest averaging 39 points per game, leading the Southeast Conference in passing and total offense. However, they too suffer from a suspect defense that is ranked 11th in the league, giving up a critical 26.3 points per game.

If these two teams continue to put up these kind of stats, they may need to add some extra zeros to the scoreboard in Oxford.

Iowa State hopes to avoid upset

In another intriguing non-conference matchup, the Iowa State Cyclones (2-1) will be heading into Husky territory to battle upstart Northern Illinois (3-0). The Cyclones may be overmatched in this one, coming in with a new quarterback in redshirt freshman Austin Flynn.

Although currently putting up some big numbers, Flynn will have to be in the zone to beat a tough Husky team.

Meanwhile, the No. 20 Huskies should come in on cloud nine after having beaten a ranked Maryland team to open the season, and bushwhacking Alabama at Tuscaloosa last weekend, 19-16, causing a small earthquake as Bear Bryant rolled over in his grave.

Doak Walker candidate and senior running back Michael Turner will attempt to have another field day at the expense of an opposing defense, as he is already averaging 126.7 yards per contest. Kickoff is set for 3:05 p.m. on Saturday.

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Dotson will be extradited to Texas for trial

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (AP) — Gov. Robert Ehrlich has signed a warrant calling for the extradition of Carlton Dotson from Maryland to Texas, where he faces charges of murdering his former Baylor University basketball teammate.

The paperwork was forwarded Wednesday to the sheriff's office in Kent County, where Dotson, 21, is being held, said Ehrlich spokeswoman Shareese DeLeaver. Texas authorities now have a month to pick up Dotson and return him to McLennan County, where he was indicted last month in the shooting death of Patrick Dennehy.

Before returning to Texas, Maryland prosecutors have to serve the warrant on him in court, said Aja Foster, a spokeswoman for the office of Maryland's secretary of state.

A Kent County District Court hearing had been set for Oct. 14, but that date may be moved up now that the warrant has been signed, authorities said.

A call by The Associated

Press seeking comment from Dotson's attorneys was not immediately returned on Wednesday.

Ehrlich signed the warrant Tuesday, one of the final steps in the extradition process, after receiving a recommendation this week from an assistant attorney general.

Dotson refused to return voluntarily to Texas, but neither he nor his lawyers attended the extradition hearing last week in Annapolis that he had requested.

Texas prosecutors say Dotson shot 21-year-old Dennehy in June. Dennehy's body was found in a field near a rock quarry southeast of Waco July 25. He died of two gunshot wounds to the head, according to an autopsy report.

Dotson has been held in the Kent County jail since he was arrested July 21.

The fallout at Baylor from Dennehy's death included the revelation that former basketball coach Dave Bliss had paid players' tuition and that failed drug tests were suppressed. Last month, Baylor President Robert Sloan accepted the resignations of Bliss and Athletic Director Tom Stanton and put the basketball team on two-year probation.

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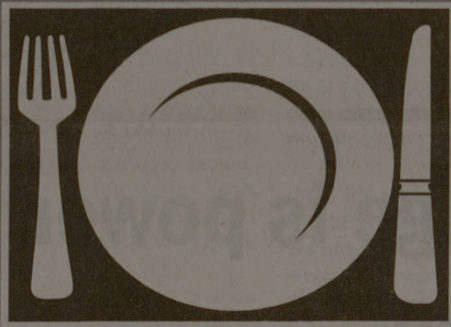
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