

# Aikman back slinging for Dallas

From staff and wire reports

AUSTIN, Texas — Troy Aikman keeps the souvenirs of his December operation in a jar.

They are bonechips, a dozen of them, that a surgeon removed from his right elbow.

The surgeon also fixed Aikman's separated right shoulder after taking out the bonechips during the off-season operation.

Two months later, the Dallas Cowboys quarterback was throwing again.

Aikman competed with those chips in his right elbow last year in the Cowboys' 7-9 season. He suffered the separated shoulder against the Philadelphia Eagles in Dallas' next to last game of the season.

Dallas lost that game and the final one to Atlanta when Aikman couldn't play, finishing one game out of the playoffs.

The Cowboys traded Steve Walsh to New Orleans earlier in the season and were forced to finish out the season with NFL journeyman Babe Laufenberg at quarterback.

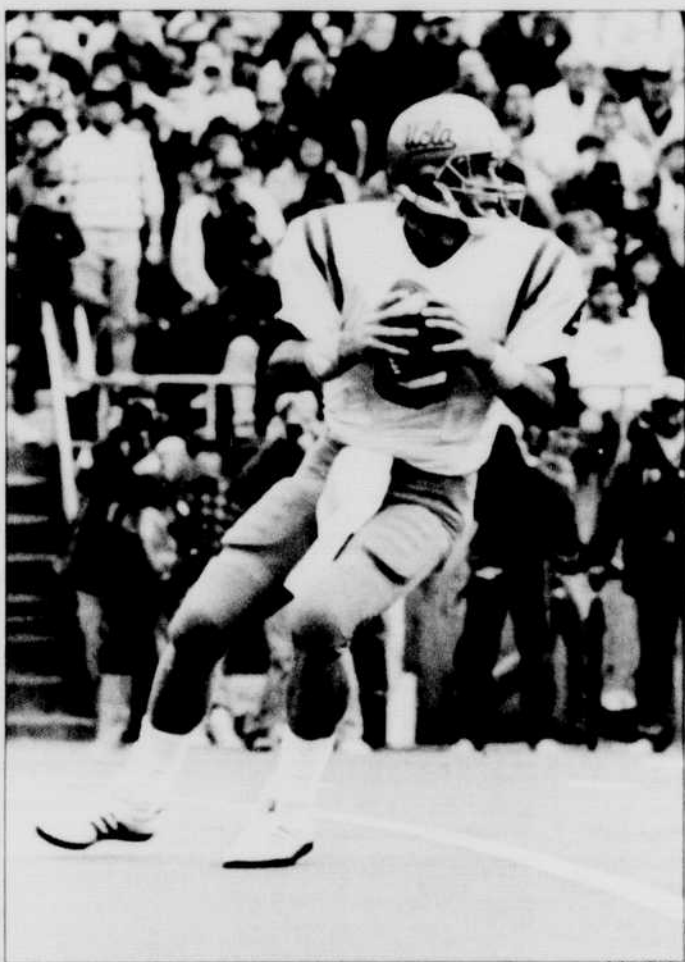
In the off-season, Dallas sought insurance for Aikman when it drafted Oregon's Bill Musgrave in the fourth round of the NFL draft. Musgrave signed a two-year, \$425,000 contract Monday and is competing with Laufenberg and another NFL veteran, Cliff Stoudt, for one of two jobs behind Aikman.

Aikman believes his arm is stronger than ever after the surgery.

"The arm hurt and I probably couldn't throw the ball as deep as I wanted," he said. "Now, my arm feels better than it has since I first went to UCLA. It feels great. I'm ready to go."

Indeed, Aikman has had a velocity on his passes during training camp at St. Edward's University that Cowboys fans have yet to witness in a regular season game.

"He'll be able to get the ball deeper this year," said Dallas coach Jimmy Johnson. "Troy never complained and competed well with the pain, but I think we'll see the real Troy



After off-season arm and shoulder surgery, Dallas Cowboys quarterback Troy Aikman feels his arm is stronger now than while he was at UCLA.

Aikman this year."

Besides his physical improvement, Aikman's mental game should be helped, too.

There was no secret that Aikman and David Shula, the Cowboys' offensive coordinator, weren't always on the same page last year.

Shula resigned when he found another job in the NFL and Johnson hired Norval Turner, a former assistant coach at Oregon, who put in the passing game for the Los Angeles Rams and Jim Everett.

"I think Turner will help our offense tremendously," Aikman said. "I like his philosophy."

Wide receiver Michael Irvin said there should be a marked improvement in Aikman because of the new offense.

"Troy is comfortable out there again," he said. "A quarterback has to be comfort-

able to play."

The Cowboys could use some offensive help.

They were 27th in the NFL last year in total offense and 26th in scoring, putting added pressure on the Cowboys defense.

"We'll use quick drops and pass to areas," said Turner, who is shortening Aikman's dropback steps. "Troy has been tremendous to work with and has caught onto the new system quickly."

Turner learned his offense under Rams offensive coordinator Ernie Zampese. In the last two years under Turner, the Rams had a 1,000-yard rusher and a 4,000-yard passer.

The short-drop passing game will lessen the pressure on Aikman, who must make quick reads and get rid of the ball. His renewed arm strength should help.

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