

PORTLAND STATE PREVIEW

Read is back in charge of new-look Viks

Usually around this time of the year, the ever-lovable Mouse Davis can be found casually strolling at a Portland State practice, cranking up his run-and-shoot offense while entertaining sports writers with his rapier wit.

This fall, the run-and-shoot is but an echo around the Park Blocks. Davis has left for California and the Pac-10. Even his protege, Neil Lomax, is gone, playing pro ball in St. Louis.

In their places step new head coach Don Read, quarterback Lloyd Lafrance and a pro formation offense. Hardly the same flash to Viking fans at this point, but the bottom line is still winning.

With seven starters returning on offense and eight back on defense, Read says he is shooting for a winning season. He doesn't even mention a word about 1981 being a rebuilding year.

'All I ask from people is to judge me as myself and not against Neil.'

— Lloyd Lafrance, PSU quarterback

The biggest question mark, obviously, is Lomax's heir apparent, Lafrance. Read describes him as a rollout quarterback with strength, touch and intelligence.

But who can replace a Lomax? The same people who ask that probably thought June Jones was irreplaceable.

Lafrance, a junior, goes 6-2, 185 pounds, and had a good, if untouted, prep record at Tillamook High School. He has impressed Read with the range and variety of his passes, but the Viking coach admits, "He hasn't been seen under fire."

Lafrance concedes there is "a little" pressure playing in the Lomax shadow, but says "All I ask from people is to judge me as myself and not against Neil. What happened to Neil is a storybook think that doesn't happen every day."

Read will install a tight end, something unheard of in the run-and-shoot vernacular. In addition, he plans to use a "conventional" passing attack and more running of the football.

"We'll run more than in the past, but the pass will still be No. 1," says Read.

Read has moved Ken Johnson from his slotback position and Kevin Leonard from defensive back to running back spots.

Also back from last season's 8-3 team is place kicker John Kincheloe, whom Read calls "one of the top two or three in the nation."

Thanks to wins like PSU's 105-0 romp over Delaware State last year, Kincheloe holds a string of collegiate records for extra points.

Another area that has Read smiling is the backup position for quarterback. He can pick between two of the best prep tossers in Oregon last season — Roggy Pflug (Beaverton) and Terry Summerfield (Gresham).

The defense is built around Fred Nordgren, whom Read calls a 240-pound football player with the agility of a gymnast. He runs a 4.6 40-yard dash and can squat press 720 pounds. He led the Viks in sacks last season and should have a shot at the pros after this year.

"He is one of the few nose guards who can play both the pass and the run," Read says.

Other key players in the defense are linebacker Doug Wright and tackle Doug Davis. Linebacker Mark Petersen, a top tackler last season, has skipped his senior year to join a religious mission.

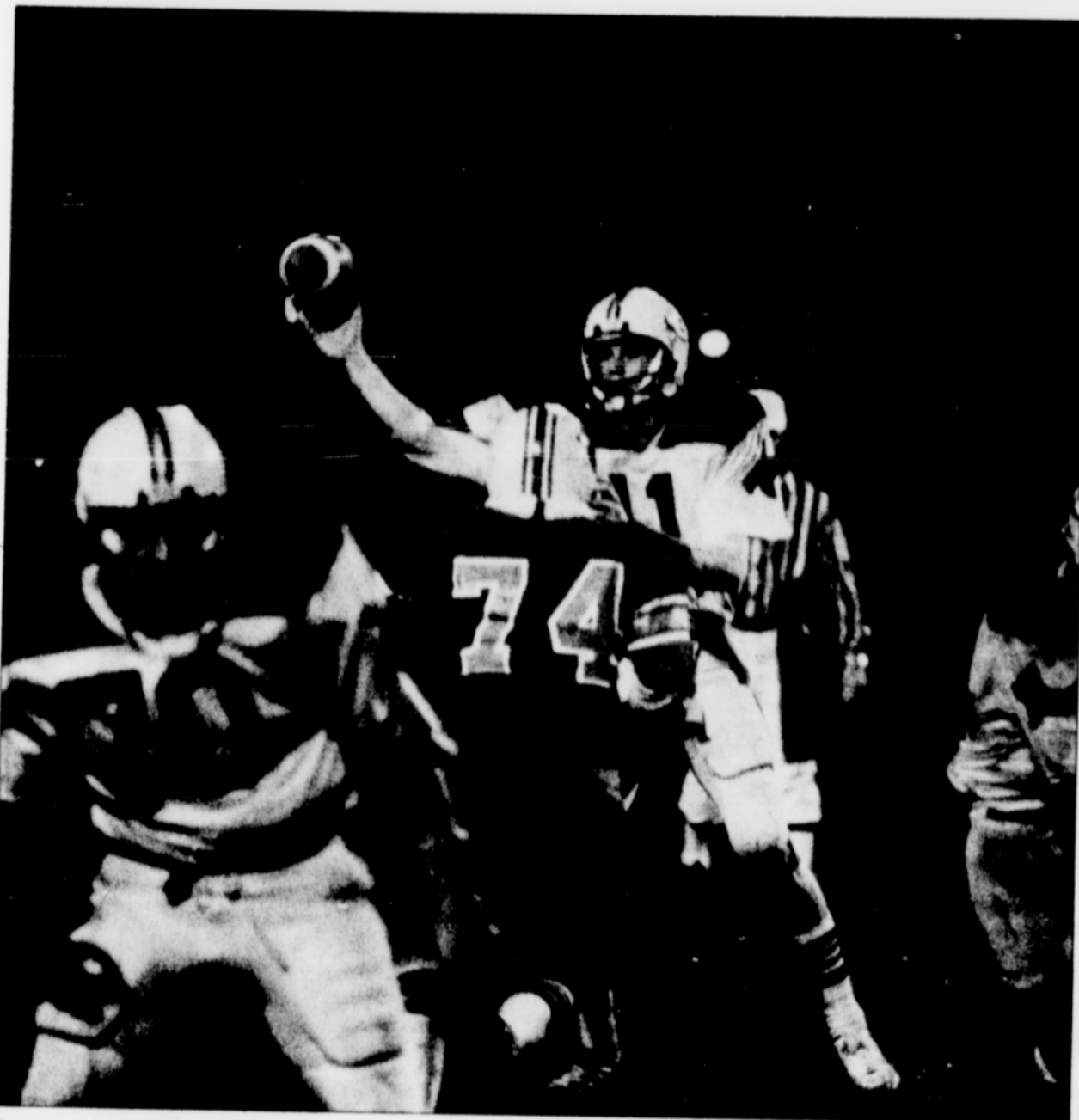
Read himself is no stranger to PSU. He served as coach of the Vikings from 1968-71 and had a record of 21-19.

"There was a bit of confusion in the spring when Read came on, but I don't see anything that shouldn't make the change work," Lafrance says. "He is trying his darnedest to put a good program together."

"The difference between the two coaches is like night and day. Davis was one of the guys while Read is more of a father figure. But everyone has to be different if this world is going to be interesting."

And so Viking fans will find out that even without Mouse and the record-breaking arm of Neil Lomax, life goes on.

BOB LEUNG



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