

Sport Talk

by Ron Sykes, Sports Editor

The brand new United States Football League opened its doors for business this weekend. And whether they were a success or failure is yet to be determined.

One thing for sure is that fans were seemingly intrigued by the new boys on the block.

Nielsen ratings show that the USFL garnered a 16.5 rating in New York. That computes out to a 34 share of the TV audience in the big apple.

So, many fans were watching and what they saw drew mixed emotions.

"I thought it was great," beamed Jim Otey. "All they need is another couple weeks and they'll be ready to challenge the NFL. Then we'll see a real Super Bowl," Otey continued.

If the USFL is ever to challenge the NFL it will certainly take a little longer than two years.

"I wouldn't waste my time watching those guys," said Del Butler, a longtime NFL fan. "They're just a bunch of rejects, and it's similar to watching an old timers game. Maybe in a few years, but certainly not now."

We'll have to agree. The fans turned them on this weekend out of curiosity. But I think it'll take a wee bit more than the USFL has to offer to make fans cancel those weekend outings to watch the USFL in May, June and July.

With great media coverage the USFL is far ahead of its predecessor, the now defunct World Football League. The WFL had better athletes, but didn't get the coverage. If the USFL continues to play with no name, over the hill, NFL rejects, they too will not succeed.



Grant Coach John Stilwell hopes for an AAA boys basketball championship trophy. (Photo: Richard J. Brown)

The signing of Heisman trophy winner Herschel Walker is definitely a step in the right direction, but there are just too few Herschels to go around.

Football, to be exciting, must give the fans something to get excited about. This cannot be accomplished by fielding a bunch of players from Montana State, Cheyney State and Podunk U.

Just have to wonder what will happen when the summer heat reaches 90-100 degrees—will fans want to hit the beaches or the bleachers?

With the USFL searching for parity, one has to wonder if someone should have offered Grambling's Eddie Robinson a lead coaching job. Robinson, 63, has certainly paid his dues in the college game. At season's end he had logged some 42 years and 305 victories.

Eddie Robinson just may not have accepted a job, but with his credentials he certainly would have added a big plus to the new league. Just have to believe a southern franchise such as Birmingham or Tampa

would have been ideal for old Eddie. He definitely would have helped put fans in the stands.

Robinson's record of 305-101-13 is fourth on the all-time coaches list topped by the legendary Paul "Bear" Bryant's 323-85-17. Coach Robinson has certainly earned his spurs and it's too bad the NFL wouldn't let him ride the horse.

It's time for the AAA Boys Basketball title to be decided and after a two-year hiatus Grant Coach John Stilwell will be back in it. After becoming the matinee idol at now defunct Washington High, where he led the Colonials to two consecutive AAA appearances Stilwell journeyed to Jackson as an assistant. Again he was hit with a school closure and as fate would have it big John was given the opportunity to return to his alma mater, Grant. John's return to Grant must have brought joy to his mom, Mary, who after cheering for the Generals so very long, looked slightly out of pocket as a Washington Colonial rooster.

But Stilwell is finally home and

his 9th-ranked Generals, the PIL's top team after winning 12 out of their last 13 games are ready. The prediction here is that Grant could be the surprise of the tourney. The Metro League is by far the strongest in the state this year and could very well capture the two top spots. Bracketing has provided a possible Glencoe vs. Beaverton final. We see Grant as the dark horse and Glencoe the favorite. The upper bracket should produce winners for Parkrose (17-5) over Springfield (19-1); the Broncos enjoying their first season in the new Mount Hood League finished second to champion David Douglas. But an early injury to junior sensation Rick Osborn probably cost Parkrose the title. Osborn is probably the State's best all-around player. He and teammate Eric Russell provide a potent one-two punch. Leroy Ellis, 6-5, sophomore, is rapidly becoming a force to be reckoned with. Look for the Broncos to upset the Midwestern champion Springfield Millers. Size is lacking at Springfield and that should lead to their downfall. Except for Center Pat Reynolds at 6-6, the Millers have no other starter over 6-1. The dynamic duo of Osborn and Russell should have it all to themselves.

McMinnville 15-5 vs. Beaverton 19-4

Beaverton, probably the second best team in the state, should have little trouble with Willamette Valley champion McMinnville. Anthony Taylor at 6-4 can do it all. Taylor is a take charge type forward that likes to post up. And when he goes inside his tremendous leaping ability allows him to shoot over taller opponents. The Beavers are extremely quick and deadly shooters.

Glencoe 20-1 vs. Jefferson 14-8

Jefferson is a team many thought would never make it here. Glencoe will prove the many right. The Demos finished fourth in the PIL and their chances against the Metro League champions are slim and none. Demo coach Bobby Harris is one of the finest in the state. But lack of size and consistency will knock him out. The Crimson Tide comes in with only an opening night loss to Beaverton to spoil an otherwise outstanding season. The Tide behind all-everything guard Dave Immel should win easily. Curtis Penny, a six-foot forward, is the Demos best player. When the going gets tough, the young Demos usually look for Curtis.

The PIL's other entry is Grant (17-5).

The Generals are strong. They are blessed with great talent, size and speed. Steve Van Ness at 6-5 will work with Bruce Krausert (6-7) to control the boards. They will have 6-5 Richard Hollis to give more than a little help in rebounding. Hollis, at 6-5, plays at about 6-9. He is undoubtedly the best leaper in the tournament and perhaps the state. Eric Ross, 6-1, senior guard is a steadying influence in the backcourt. Ross and Hollis, both veterans, are coming off tremendous late season games. The Generals could surprise.

USFL games this week (TV)

Saturday, March 12th: Michigan at Tampa Bay; Chicago at Arizona.

Sunday, March 13th: New Jersey at Philadelphia; Boston at Denver; Birmingham at Oakland.

Monday Night Game: Washington at Los Angeles.

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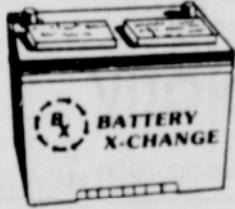
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