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Notes

Receiver spots still wide open

By Kathleen O'Brien
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SAN ANTONIO - Too many hands, not enough roster spots.

While there are many cuts to be made by the Cowboys in coming weeks, the dilemma is particularly pronounced at wide receiver. The Cowboys have 10 wide receivers in training camp, and will drop to five or six when the 53-man regular-season roster is finalized.

Three spots are all but locked up by veterans Joey Galloway and Terry Glenn, and second-year playmaker Antonio Bryant. But the other contenders have alternated as the surprise star of the day.

Randal Williams, a third-year player out of New Hampshire, is a front-runner to make the team. He has spent time with the Cowboys in each of the past two years, and his early camp performance has been impressive.

On Saturday morning, coach Bill Parcells said of Williams, "I'm anxious to see. He's a player who's going to need close evaluation."

In Saturday's scrimmage against the Texans, Williams dropped two passes from quarterback Chad Hutchinson. Flubbing receptions doesn't fit Parcells' criteria for what makes a good receiver.

"I think good hands are hands that are always together," Parcells said. "Sometimes a receiver's problem is they don't hold their hands close together enough. They want to grab the ball. But with that position, I've always felt that it doesn't make any difference if you can identify the problem, if you can't create a solution as well."

The other six receivers in the mix are Ken-Yon Rambo, Reggie Swinton, and DeVeren Johnson and rookies Aaron Boone, Zuriel Smith and Gary Lusk.

"If you want to play football Bill's way, you're going to be around," Swinton said. "If not, you're not."

Rambo, who played collegiately at Ohio State -- as did Galloway and Glenn -- played in 13 games for the Cowboys in 2002. Swinton played in 15 games last year, and his biggest advantage is his ability to contribute on special teams.

Of the rookies, Boone had a strong showing in the opening day conditioning tests. Smith was the second-leading receiver in the scrimmage against the Texans, with two catches for 32 yards. Johnson and Lusk might be the longest shots.

"I don't think I'm one of the most talented guys," Boone said, "so I have to work a little harder than everyone else. I would hate to miss out on my dream just because I'm out of shape."

Hambrick happy at No. 1

One player who doesn't miss running back Emmitt Smith too much is Troy Hambrick.

Hambrick, a 6-foot-1, 233-pound player in his fourth NFL season, figures to take over Smith's spot as the go-to rusher on the team. In 2002, he carried 79 times for 317 yards and caught 21 passes for 99 yards.



STAR-TELEGRAM/KHAMPHA BOUAPHANH
Cowboys running back ReShard Lee ran for 68 yards on 10 carries, including a 42-yard gain, in Saturday's scrimmage against the Texans.

After Saturday's scrimmage, Hambrick said, "It feels good to come out with the first unit for a change."

This season, Hambrick came into camp in better shape than a year ago when he says he weighed 245 or 250. His slimmer frame has helped his conditioning greatly.

Along with leading the Cowboys' running game, Hambrick hopes to be a threat as a receiver.

"I can catch the ball," he said, "and I feel good with my capabilities."

Cowboys rack up sacks

One solid number for the Cowboys in their scrimmage against the Texans was their sack total.

The Cowboys had eight sacks for 47 yards on Saturday. Ends Colston Weatherington and Ebenezer Ekuban each recorded two sacks, Weatherington for 14 yards and Ekuban for six.

"Of course, our first priority is stopping the run," Ekuban said. "But you always want to be aggressive."

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