

LONGHORNS from page 5

this season, is one of six offensive starters returning for Texas. The 6-foot, 200-pounder holds 22 school records and has compiled a 21-7-1 record as a starter.

In the backfield behind Brown, the

Longhorns return junior running back Ricky Williams – the Big 12 pre-season offensive player of the year. Williams, who played outfield in the Philadelphia Phillies organization during the off-season, rushed for 1,272 yards last season and is the top Big 12 returning rusher.

"Ricky Williams is a stand-out player," Mackovic said. "He gives us a real work-horse-type runner and he likes to have the ball. I know a lot of people will say, 'Just run him 30 times and that will solve all of your problems.'"

AGGIES from page 5

anchors an offensive line that includes three other returning starters in center Koby Hackradt and linemen Chris Ruhman and Cameron Spikes.

"Overall, we're better at this time than

we were a year ago," Slocum said.

A&M's experience, along with an improved quarterback, should allow the Aggies to forget last season's disappointment. But more importantly, McKinney said, the Aggies hope to emerge as a serious contender for the South division title.

"Texas A&M is known for winning games," McKinney said. "Last year was a frustrating year, losing so many close games. Losing is hard, but it's over with. We know the talent we have to offer this conference. We're anxious to get started."

RED RAIDERS from page 5

have to go."

Without Hanspard to carry the offensive load this season, Dykes said the bulk of the responsibility will rest on the shoulders of quarterback Zebbie Lethridge.

"Zebbie is a great leader," Dykes said.

"Zebbie is good for us. He's just what the doctor ordered. We are going to ask him to do more than he's ever done before. If he has a good year, our chances of being competitive are enhanced."

A three-year starter for the Red Raiders, Lethridge rushed for 189 yards per game while throwing for 1,186 yards and 11

touchdowns last season.

"My role will increase a little as far as passing," Lethridge said. "Without Byron, we might be a little more balanced. Last year I didn't feel like I was involved in the offense. This year, I'll probably have more involvement than I ever wanted to have."

SOONERS from page 5

"It's good to have two quarterbacks, but in the long run, you need one to be stable," McClure said.

McClure will be the strong point of the Sooners' offensive line this fall, Blake said.

At half back, the Sooners will start

sophomore De'Mond Parker, who set a school record for freshman running backs last season with 1,184 yards. Parker, who was named the Big 12 Newcomer of the Year last season, will have the ball in his hands even more this season, Blake said.

"De'Mond is a very talented running back," Blake said. "He's not a surprise now.

He is truly talented. He's a strong young man and he runs with great confidence. The thing I'm concerned about is whether or not he can handle it mentally. I put him in a leadership role. My job is not to let the hype get to him."

Oklahoma lost its season opener to Northwestern with 24-0 on Aug. 23.

COWBOYS from page 5

freshmen.

The Cowboys have three players capable of leading the team at quarterback, Simmons said. Sophomore Chris Chaloupka, redshirt freshman Tony Lindsay

and junior college transfer Joe Phears will battle for the starting role during fall practices.

"That position is a real key," Simmons said. "We're going to have to have somebody have some success at that position. I'm not afraid to play two quarterbacks."

Playmakers Alonzo Mayes, a preseason All-American tight end, and fullbacks Brian Aikins and Kevin Brown – who both averaged around five yards per carry, are back along with offensive linemen Joshua Henson and Calvin Menephee.

BEARS from page 5

How the Bears respond to the new pass-oriented system will be a major factor in the team's success, Roberts said. Tailback Jerod Douglas and split end Derrius Thompson will be key players offensively. Douglas rushed for 667 yards on 117 attempts last

season, averaging 5.7 yards per carry. Thompson caught seven passes in seven games last season for 98 yards.

Both players, as well as the rest of the offense, had a difficult time during spring practice picking up the system, Roberts said.

"We're going to be a throwing team,"

Roberts said. "It was like a foreign language to them. But they started to pick it up the 14th or 15th day. We will have to go over the finer points during fall camp."

"We don't mention reconstruct or rebuild. Our goal is only to get players to play hard, then the offense and the defense will come."



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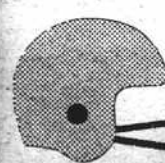
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