

## **Inaugural Lone Star Conference Fall Football Festival Overwhelming Success (Sept. 18, 2011)**

*By Bo Carter (Scarater5@twu.edu)*

ARLINGTON, Texas – *I Chose Division II* is a theme adopted by the members of this NCAA grouping several years ago.

And football student-athletes and fans saw the slogan take on new meaning last Saturday when six nationally-renowned DII universities played the first contests from this division at Cowboys Stadium in the inaugural Lone Star Football Festival sponsored by the Lone Star Conference, State Farm Insurance and the Dallas Cowboys.

Most satisfying to conference and school officials as well as the fans was the record 24,837 in attendance. The quality of football and recruiting advantages of exposure in the Metroplex were no small plus factors well.

In the tripleheader Midwestern State topped Texas A&M-Commerce 63-17 in the annual Harvey Martin Classic for Game One. No. 4 nationally at kickoff North Alabama (coached by SEC legend Terry Bowden) edged Abilene Christian (coached by former Southwest Conference baseball home run champion Chris Thomsen) 23-17 in Game Two before No. 23 nationally West Texas A&M soared past Texas A&M-Kingsville 42-21 in the high-scoring nightcap.

For the LSC, the chance to play a pair of league games at the sparkling facility, plus give Abilene Christian ample regional and national exposure against UNA, was a dream come true.

“We knew going in this was going to be one of the biggest events in LSC history,” said commissioner Stan Wagnon, who presides over the conference competing in its 80th season of football. “The Cowboys, AT&T Cotton Bowl, Herbstreit National Football Series, LSU, and Oregon gave us a chance to review our operations at the

stadium and devise a game-day plan that seemed to work perfectly.”

LSC assistant commissioner Jay Poerner, who played in his share of nationally-acclaimed and televised events as a SMU basketball standout, was equally impressed.

“Gosh, this place has been tremendous,” he noted at a midpoint between Games One and Two. “The crowds, the enthusiasm, the noise level, and the massive size of Cowboys Stadium just left everyone almost breathless. We hope to get back here next year.”

Midwestern assistant director of athletics Bill Powers, who has worked on Arkansas and Arkansas State telecasts, media relations at Stephen F. Austin and over 20 AT&T Cotton Bowls in and around his broadcast and marketing posts at MSU, shared first impressions and the smiles of the 12 hours of football.

“This is just tremendous,” he grinned. “The broadcast positions and replays are outstanding, we were very pleased with our turnout from MSU, and our kids and fans had one of the best football experiences ever.”

Those playing and attending took in the ambience of one of the world’s largest and state-of-the-art facilities and rose the occasion with all-time performances, imaginative signs, tailgating, and even memorable bands, mascots, cheerleaders, and other spirit groups’ headlines.

Jimmy Pipkin motored for 106 rushing yards, QB Brandon Kelsey was 14-of-20 passing, and Nick Bourgeois provided a key interception as MSU scored the impressive opening triumph. Coach Bill Maskill’s Mustangs now have scored 104 points in their first two contests and are 2-0 after two weeks for the sixth consecutive year. TAMUC, guided by former Kentucky and Baylor head coach and NFL standout Guy Morriss, had 334 passing yards (183 by QB Yogi Gallegos).

In the middle contest, it literally was the Christians (Abilene) vs. the Lions (UNA) with almost as much intrigue as First Century Rome.

North Alabama built a 16-0 lead and then held on for dear life as the Wildcats made several forays into Lions' territory and had two touchdowns negated by penalties. RBS Antwan Ivey (67 yards) and Wes Holland combined for 125 yards for UNA while QB Lee Chapple was 23-of-37 passing for 240 yards and one TD to lead the charge. ACU received equally-inspired showings from QB Mitchell Gale (33-of-59 passing for 390 yards and a team total offense balance of 493 yards) and WR Taylor Gabriel (8 catches for 135 yards and both TD receptions).

West Texas A&M also pulled away from TAMUK in the second half behind the passing of QB Dustin Vaughan (24-of-41 for 384 yards and a trio of TDs) and catching of Brittan Golden (seven snares for 131 yards). The 22-point outburst in the final half broke open a 20-7 doozy at intermission and helped the Buffaloes win their conference lidlifter. Javelinas QB Nate Poppell provided equal punch on offense with a 26-for-42 evening, 306 yards and two TDs.

One beaming fan from WT summed it up perfectly after the tantalizing tri-bill. "Man, it just doesn't get any better than this," he noted. "How can you walk away from a place like this and see the kinds of games we just watched and not just be in football heaven."

That is just why both student-athletes and attendees were glad they chose Division II football on a sunny Saturday at Cowboys Stadium Sept. 17.