

"Hunkie" Cooper, UNLV's all-around star

by Billy Naftaly
Staff Reporter

Attention: Football player needed who can play quarterback, running back, flanker, and kick returner. Please apply at UNLV.

The versatile athlete who has heeded this call, is "Hunkie" Cooper, a junior transfer from Navarro Junior College in Texas.

In five games this season, the 5'9" 178 lb. Cooper has thrown for 110 yards and has compiled a total of 819 in all-purpose yards.

"At junior college, I was playing more quarterback, now I'm out at wide-out, slot-back, and returns," he said. "It's really not a change, it's all offensive positions and I feel the coach has put me there because he figured I can help the team in the positions he put me in."

Cooper is quite happy with his choice of coming here and playing at UNLV. He had the opportunities to play at bigger schools like Oklahoma, West Virginia, and universities in Texas.

"I came here to UNLV, so I could get an opportunity to play football right now," he explained. "I made a decision to come here because I had two years to play and I didn't want to get lost in the rotation."

While some professional teams are rattled by huge quarterback controversies, UNLV is bothered by a little one. Junior quarterback Derek Stott and Cooper have watched each other play from the sidelines, but Cooper has taken it all in stride.

"Splitting time hasn't really

affected me," Cooper said. "In junior college, I was splitting time with another quarterback in passing situations."

"It's not that I can't pass, it's because it's better for me to get in on the option game and run the corners. I don't really feel there is a problem."

With a 2-3 record so far this season, the Rebels have shown that they can be a good team and a bad team; sometimes, in the same game.

"We learn from our mistakes like any other team and if we can put together a decent two halves of football, we'll have a pretty good outing the rest of the season," he said.

Cooper has much respect for first year head coach Jim Strong and feels that he'll do very well with the program in the years to come.

"Coach Strong is a great coach!" Cooper exclaimed. "He knew that there was going to be difficulties and adversities, but he's never let up."

"I figure by his second or third year, he'll have this program on the right track."

Being able to play many positions on the football field, proves what an excellent athlete Cooper is, but he excels on the basketball court as well.

Coming out of Westwood High School, Cooper was named All-State in basketball.

"I had ankle surgery coming out of high school and the doctor said it wouldn't be wise for me to get back on the basketball court," explained Cooper. "I still love the



Yell Photo / Lisa Sutherland

Break Away - "Hunkie" breaks away from a tackler to complete a pass during one of UNLV's home games.

sport and plan on playing it again, but right now it's football."

When one looks up Cooper in the Rebel football program, you won't find his first name. Instead, you'll find him listed under his nickname "Hunkie."

"I got the nickname 'Hunkie' from my sister when I was small and a little bit chubby," he said. "My sister called me 'Hunk' and eventually put on the 'ie' on there and it's stuck with me ever since."

One thing is for sure, "Hunkie" Cooper and Deion "Primetime" Sanders, of the Atlanta Falcons, have unique nicknames, but Cooper feels that they have

another thing in common.

"My favorite player is Deion Sanders because he's a versatile player, like myself," he said. "He can play offense and defense and contribute to his team."

Cooper has come here to UNLV to be the best that he can be, to help his team win football games, and to graduate with a degree in criminal justice.

As for playing in the professional ranks, Cooper feels that he can make it to the NFL, but if he doesn't, it's o.k.

"Right now, I didn't come here with the intention of going to the pros, but being versatile, I feel I

have a better chance at playing in the professional league.

"I figure if I don't make it in football, I'll go home and work with juveniles and in my spare time, I'll do a little umping and coaching just to stay around the sport that made me what I am today."

There seems to be an influx of great players in the NFL who have nicknames such as "Primetime," "Ickey," and "Refrigerator." So, why not one more great athlete, that goes by the name of "Hunkie"?

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AP TOP 10

School	Record	LW
1. Notre Dame	(3-0)	1
2. Florida State	(4-0)	2
3. Michigan	(2-1)	6
4. Virginia	(5-0)	7
5. Auburn	(2-0-1)	3
6. Tennessee	(3-0-2)	5
7. Oklahoma	(4-0)	9
8. Nebraska	(4-0)	8
9. Miami (Fla.)	(2-1)	10
10. Florida	(4-0)	-

LW - Last week

BIG WEST CONFERENCE

	Conference			Overall		
	W	L	T	W	L	T
Fresno State	2	0	0	5	0	0
San Jose State	2	0	0	3	1	1
Utah State	1	0	0	1	2	0
UNLV	1	1	0	2	3	0
Long Beach State	1	1	0	2	3	0
Cal St. Fullerton	0	1	0	1	4	0
New Mexico St.	0	1	0	0	4	0
Pacific	0	3	0	1	4	0

Saturday, Oct. 6

Cal State Fullerton at UNLV.
Fresno State at Northern Illinois.
San Jose State at California.
New Mexico State at Long Beach State.
Utah State at Oregon.
Pacific is idle.