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Bench

from page 11

"There is no time to rebuild," Horton said. "We do have a lot of new guys, but our goals still are to win the league and defend our championship in the Las Vegas Bowl."

With this fresh look, the depth of the Rebels has become what Horton calls thin. "There are 62 guys on the team, and we are shallow on defense."

Guys who have not been looked upon in the past season to move forward with the team may have to do just that on the defensive side of the ball.

"Last year there were questions about our quarterbacks who stepped up toward the end of the year," Horton said. "This year it is the linebackers who will have to step up for us on defense."

With questions arising in the past few weeks regarding different aspects of the Rebels starting core another one was added to the mix which Horton did not expect. A couple of weeks ago, running back DeJohn Branch sprained his knee in practice and word got out that he would be gone for 3-4 weeks.

Branch was last season's hero in the win against Reno as well as the Las

Vegas Bowl trouncing of Central Michigan. In those two games, Branch lit up the opposing defenses for 286 rushing yards and scored the touchdown that delivered the Rebels the Big West Co-Championship against the Wolf-pack.

No doubt this hurts the Rebels running game, Horton explained, because once he got his act together Branch put up some big numbers. "Both (Shannon) Wilson and (Tony) Burton will have to step up to get the running game going this season."

But as always it will be the throwin' Rebels. "It's what I like to do, its excitement," Horton exclaimed. Although his receiving corps is unproven, Horton is not afraid to send the ball through the air to the young group of kids.

Last season questions ran rampant throughout the Rebel camp during the summer as well as the early going of the season. But Horton stood there calmly and said to just keep watching. We all know how that ended up.

This season questions are flying and Horton still looks to be calm and ready to face the new season.

—Michael Melissa is
the Sports Editor for
The Rebel Yell.

Title

from page 11

West Team in 1992.

The departure of NCAA record-breaker Randy Gatewood and the university's all-time leading receiver Henry Bailey to the National Football League has left the receiving corps thin. Sophomores Kwame Coleman, Mike Bell and Jason Toohey should all split time at receiver.

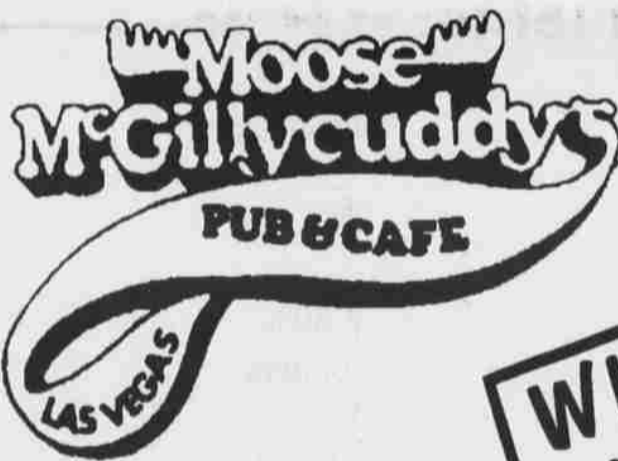
The team's best ball catcher, speedy senior Demond Thompkins, is back after a year absence due to academic problems. Thompkins had two stellar

seasons in 92 and 93. In those two years he combined for 1987 yards on 116 catches.

Despite the improved running game, Horton will look to the air with his offense.

"We should run the ball better this season but our emphasis is still on the passing game," Horton said. "We will go to the air about 35-40 times a game."

"When you are the champions, everybody plays you a little harder," Horton said. "Our only chance for success is to play hard with a lot of emotion every week," he added. "This season we are very young but I like the way our kids play."



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