

# Saturday's football season opener should see the pigskin take to sky

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The sky will be filled with flying pigskins Saturday, as the University opens its Western Athletic Conference season against the University of Texas-El Paso in Robert L. Rice Stadium. Kickoff is set for 1:30 p.m.

The game is the regular season opener for both teams, and each comes off a first-of-the-year win last Saturday. UTEP pulled out a 21-20 squeaker over New Mexico State, while the Utes surprised many of their critics with a convincing 44-25 victory over Washington State.

If the ball isn't thrown in this affair, it never will be. Both squads boast a top passing quarterback; Utah has Don "Brownie" Van Galder, and UTEP's pride is Gary Keithley. Van Galder is 16th in the nation in total offense, while Keithley is fourth nationally in both total offense and passing.

In Western Athletic stats, Keithley is leading in total offense, with Van Galder second. Keithley has averaged 233 yards a game, and 6.3 yards per play; while Van Galder has accounted for 189 yards a contest, with an average gain per play of seven yards.

Keithley also leads the WAC in average yards per completion, with a whopping 17.3 per catch. Van Galder is fourth with 11.3, but Brownie has passed for 5 touchdowns to Keithley's 4.

Greg Taylor is Keithley's favorite target, having snagged 24 passes in three games, for an average of eight catches per game, all league-leading totals. Taylor's teammate, Lon Crittendon, is fifth in the con-

ference, followed by numbers seven and eight from Utah, Willie Armstead and Lance Robbins. In the UTEP vs. Lamar Tech game, Taylor really went wild and caught 12 passes for 197 yards.

So, it's plain to see that neither team has the slightest hesitation to put the ball in the air. To Keithley's dismay, Utah boasts the WAC's top pass interceptor in Larry Eldracher. Eldracher has four steals in three games, and is tenacious on pass defense.

Most of the running Saturday will be done after passes are caught as neither squad has any top rusher. UTEP has the number seven

along with reserves Mike Conway and Ike Spencer pose a possible threat for the Miners.

Utah's speedy Steve Odom is second in league stats in scoring with five touchdowns in three games, and he is third nationally in all purpose running, only behind the more renowned Woody Green of Arizona State and Johnny Rodgers of Nebraska. Odom is a 9.4 sprinter, and a very exciting one to watch no matter what he's doing, whether its running an end-around, returning kicks, or running pass routes. Needless to say, once he catches the ball, he knows what to do.



Utah tight end Willie Armstead (45) catches another tough one in a crowd. Here, Willie is triple teamed, but managed to hold ball anyway.

and 13 rushers in the conference, nothing to brag about, but Utah doesn't have a single running back in the top 15. This is highly unusual considering how highly touted running backs Gene Belczyk and Steve Marlowe were going into the season. They were still expected to break loose any game, and

The kicking game isn't suffering too much with the loss of all-American Marv Bateman, as sophomore Dan Marelli is doing a fine job filling Bateman's big shoes. Neither has big feet, but Marelli has averaged over 40 yards per kick in three games, good enough for third in the conference.

This will be first Western Athletic Conference game ever played on artificial turf, as well as the inaugural event for Utah's new Robert L. Rice Stadium. The game will officially be the first of a series of time ceremonies. The stadium was made a of \$1 million by in. In a seven game season, the Miners, Utah leads the conference three, while Utah comes in second. Coach Meek was pleased with last week's win over Washington State, and for the same type of play out of his team.

The Utes will be playing their new 60-member Pepsi team, a totally new look to the football season. A new is estimated, and Utah's manager Monty said the tickets are still available. purchased at the Student Center Ticket Office on Friday afternoon and at the ticket office on Saturday. are admitted free with



Steve Hallsey (84) is one of Don Van Galder's favorite targets. He is here against Lamar Tech. of a student activity others, reserved seats general admission.

The game Saturday again bring forth another game breaker. Belczyk, Van Galder, Taylor, Odom, Armstead, or any of a number of athletes. It looks like with possibilities a dream.