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Bell Helicopter Armed Forces Bowl Return Suits Air Force

By Jim Benton, www.armedforcesbowl.com

Air Force Academy, Colo., December 21, 2009 - The Dallas/Fort Worth metroplex and the state of Texas are bountiful recruiting targets for college football teams.

That's one of the reasons Air Force is pleased to be playing for the third consecutive year in the **Bell Helicopter Armed Forces Bowl**.

Even though the Falcons have different recruiting standards because of academic and military demands, Air Force has been successful attracting players from Texas to enroll at the Academy.

There are 23 players on the Air Force roster from Texas, the most from any state. Eight projected starters hail from the Lone Star State.

"I think playing in Fort Worth will have a significant effect on our recruiting," Air Force coach Troy Calhoun said. "You look the last two years we've been there and the number of players we've been able to bring to the Academy from the metroplex area. Probably as much as anything is the relationship you are able to develop with high school coaches, the number of them that are able to come out and watch practice and the kind of exposure it not only brings to our football program but our institution."

For the second consecutive year, Air Force will be playing Houston in the December 31 game at Amon G. Carter Stadium.

It will be the third meeting between the teams in 15-plus months. Air Force defeated the Cougars 31-28 in the third game of the 2008 season in a contest played in Dallas on the campus of SMU because of weather considerations.

Houston rebounded to edge the Falcons 34-28 in last year's **Bell Helicopter Armed Forces Bowl** and the rematch against the Cougars is another reason Air Force is content for another post-season game in Fort Worth.

"The Armed Forces Bowl has been very good to us and they have been very good hosts," said senior offensive lineman Nick Charles from San Antonio. "To lose to a great team like Houston like we did last year, you always want a second chance. You always don't get second or third chances, but we have one."

This season's **Bell Helicopter Armed Forces Bowl** game will pit Air Force's pass defense, ranked No. 1 in the country, against the nation's leading passing attack led by Houston quarterback Case Keenum.

"It should be a good match up," Calhoun said. "He (Keenum) is very accurate, has tremendous quickness and is elusive. He is able to keep a play alive probably as well as any quarterback in the country and he's throwing to exceptional receivers.

"There are some things you are familiar with but from year to year every team changes based on personnel and sometimes you try a few different things."

In three seasons as head coach, Calhoun has restored Air Force's winning tradition with a 24-14 record but the Falcons have not been able to beat a ranked team and the Falcons will be out to end a three-game bowl losing streak in the game against Houston.

"It's an opportunity," Calhoun said. "Now am I going to put it above what our obligation is to get guys ready to serve on active duty? No. But, any time you get a post season opportunity in any sport at the Air Force Academy, it's a remarkable achievement by our cadets.

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“The one thing we will never do is take that for granted. It’s a great opportunity to play in a bowl game, but we aren’t just content to play, we are going to play to win.”

Air Force is 8-10-1 all-time in bowl games but has not won a post-season game since a 37-34 victory over Fresno State in the 2000 Silicon Valley Bowl.

“Winning a bowl game has been one of our main goals coming into the season,” said senior defensive lineman Ben Garland. “It would certainly be a great way to go out for the seniors.”

Air Force players have gone home for the holidays and will reassemble Dec. 26 in Fort Worth. The Falcons will conduct practices December 26-29 at Kennedale High School in hopes of notching their first win ever at Amon G. Carter Stadium, home of the Mountain West Conference TCU Horned Frogs.

The Falcons have lost four times to TCU in Fort Worth and twice in the **Bell Helicopter Armed Forces Bowl**.

“It’s been an awesome journey for this senior class and (winning a bowl game) would put an exclamation point on our career and a chance to leave our mark,” said Charles.



Jim Benton - Jim Benton was a sportswriter for the Rocky Mountain News in Denver for 41 years until the paper folded last February. He started as a high school beat writer four decades ago. Since then, he has covered a variety of sports including college football, basketball and hockey, professional hockey, football, baseball and basketball, tennis, golf, bowling, soccer, horse racing and NASCAR. Benton is a Denver native and a graduate of the University of Denver.

Air Force’s Practice Schedule (all practices open to the media/public)

Saturday, December 26 - Practice, 4-5:30 p.m., Kennedale High School (901 Wildcat Way-Kennedale 76060).

- Players and coaches will be available following practice for 15 minutes.

Sunday, December 27 - Practice, 2:45-4:15 p.m., Kennedale High School

- Players and coaches will be available following practice for 15 minutes.

Monday, December 28 - Practice, 2-3:30 p.m., Kennedale High School

- Players and coaches will be available following practice for 15 minutes.

Tuesday, December 29 - Practice, 11:15 a.m.-12:45 p.m., Kennedale High School)

- Players and coaches will be available following practice for 15 minutes.

Wednesday, December 30 - No practice, media availability at the Bell Helicopter Armed Forces Bowl press conference

- Head Coach Troy Calhoun, senior OL Peter Lusk, senior DL Ben Garland

Thursday, December 31 - Air Force vs. Houston, 11 a.m. CST

- Air Force has a closed locker room, players and coaches are available following the post-game press conference outside the Air Force locker room.
- Air Force players and coaches are NOT available as they are leaving the field.



Air Force Camera/Video Policy

- Media wishing to take photographs or tape video footage of Air Force football practice may do so for the first 15 minutes only. Photographers and videographers are asked to stay around the perimeter of the practice field.

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