

Vermeil, White to Coach East-West Shrine Game Squads

HOUSTON—Jack Hart, executive director of the East-West Shrine Game, announced today that former NFL head coaches Dick Vermeil and Mike White have been selected to coach the two squads in the annual classic to be held on Jan. 19, 2008, at John O'Quinn Field at Robertson Stadium on the University of Houston campus.

Kickoff for the contest is slated for 6 p.m. CST and will be nationally broadcast by ESPN.

"It is our distinct pleasure to have Dick Vermeil and Mike White as our head coaches for the 83rd East-West Shrine Game," said Hart. "Their NFL background and experience will give the players in the game a great 'NFL Exposure' opportunity. Last year, Don Shula and Dan Reeves were our first NFL coaches, and Coach Vermeil and Coach White add to that important direction of the game.

"I have known both men for many years, and they will bring a lifetime of coaching accomplishments and experience to the game. That is great for the players who will participate in the East-West Shrine Game."

One of the most distinguished head coaches in the history of both professional and college football, Vermeil spent 19 seasons as a head coach in the NFL and two years at UCLA. Vermeil is the only head coach to lead teams to victories in both the Super Bowl and the Rose Bowl. He finished his professional career with an overall mark of 126-114 and was 15-5-3 in his two seasons with the Bruins.

A former color analyst for NFL and college football broadcasts from 1983-96, Vermeil returned to the sidelines in 1998, eventually leading the St. Louis Rams to a franchise-best 13-3 mark in 1999 and a victory in Super Bowl XXXIV over Tennessee. Vermeil has been named "Coach of the Year" at four different levels:• high school, junior college, NCAA Division I and has earned the honor twice in the NFL.

"To me, the East-West Shrine Game goes back to my childhood and is much deeper," said Vermeil. "I grew up in Napa Valley in Northern California, and my grandpa was a Shriner. My dad would take me to the East-West Shrine Game every year.

"Now, to have the opportunity to coach in this wonderful game is very exciting."

White spent 47 years coaching at both the college and professional levels, including head-coaching stints at his alma mater, the University of California-Berkeley, the University of Illinois and the NFL's Oakland Raiders. He compiled an overall collegiate record of 82-71-4, and finished at 15-17 in his two years with the Raiders.

A two-time National Coach of the Year (1975 and 1983), White was the PAC 8 Coach of the Year in 1975 in leading Cal to a PAC 8 Co-Championship with UCLA. Later at Illinois, he led the Illini to a Big 10 Championship in 1983 and was named the Big 10 Coach of the Year in both 1983 and 1985.

"Like Coach Vermeil, I, too, am from Northern California and grew up with the East-West Shrine Game," added White. "When I was a college coach, I had the pleasure of coaching in the game twice. I guess it comes full circle that I can coach again.

"This is a great cause. The key to the game is the hospital and the hospital visit by the players. It has settled in Houston, which has not only the great services and hospitals for the children, but it also has the facilities and backing from the Houston Texans and the

University of Houston.”

Every year since 1925, the East-West Shrine Game has been played to help raise money and awareness for Shriners Hospitals for Children, an international system of 22 pediatric specialty hospitals that provide care for children with orthopaedic conditions, burns, spinal cord injuries, and cleft lip and palate – all at no charge. To date, the game has helped raise more than \$15 million and informed millions of people about the mission of this extraordinary philanthropy.

The 82nd East-West Shrine Game in 2007 included 37 players who were selected in the NFL Draft this past April, while an additional 51 players were later signed as free agents. Former Cougar standout Jackie Battle was a member of the West Team in 2007 and later signed a free-agent contract with the Dallas Cowboys.