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Torn ACL sidelines top WR

Tuesday, June 23, 2009

By Bill Bryant

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Vipers seek stand-ins for injured Bocage

Good thing the Tennessee Valley Vipers have depth at receiver.

The news Monday that Chris Bocage's season is finished means the af2's South Division leader will need it.

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The former Southern Cal player tore the ACL in his left knee in the Vipers' 54-29 win Saturday over Florida. Bocage was the team's leading receiver with 81 catches. He was also tied for the team lead with 14 touchdown receptions.

"That's a big loss. He was a strong engine for us," Tennessee Valley coach Dean Cokinos said. "The effort he gave during practices and during games - on offense and special teams - that's a lot of the reason we're where we are. He's a top-shelf guy."

The Vipers, who recently lost another versatile player in Bradly Chavez, still

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have solid receivers in Jeremy Grier, Michael Johnson and Larry Shipp. Those three combined for 24 catches and six touchdowns against the Firecats.

The team on Monday re-signed Gary Elliott, who played on last year's ArenaCup championship team. However, he will not play this weekend at the Von Braun Center against the Tulsa Talons (11-1).

"We all have to try and pick up where (Bocage) left off," said Grier, who has 68 catches and 14 touchdowns in just seven games with Tennessee Valley.

"It's a blow to us. He was one of those consistent kind of players. We all have to be a little sharper now."

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