

Ralph's PIZAZA
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Curtis Mills finds a new field

By JOHN CURYLO

This time of the year, most outstanding college seniors are considering professional careers in their sports, and new worlds are opening up for them.

But in track, there isn't the professional field that there is in other major sports.

Texas A&M's Curtis Mills has other ideas, though. Once his eligibility is over in track, the world record holder will play football for Gene Stallings.

Stallings can't help but be happy that the great sprinter has volunteered for the team, and Curtis' decision ought to be a drawing card at the gate next season.

"Curtis is a great athlete," Stallings said, "and we're tickled to death to have him come out for the team."

"I don't know what position I'll play," Curtis explained. "That's all up to Coach Stallings."

At 6-4 and 175, and with his speed, he could be used just about anywhere. Defensively, safety cornerback, or even linebacker all seem possible. On offense, split end or tailback might be the place for him. Also, his speed could make him a return specialist. All these hinge on his ability to catch, tackle, or carry the ball.

"I can't say where we'll use him," Stallings said. "Maybe defense, maybe offense, say split end or tailback. But I will say that we're real glad he decided to play."

This brings up the drawback that Curtis hasn't played football since high school. All of his preparation will come in fall drills, since the conference track meet and nationals conflict with spring football drills.

"I'm not interested in him coming out for spring training," Stallings explained. "I want him to be able to finish his track career."

Billy Bob Barnett made a similar move two years ago, playing football for the 1969 Aggies after finishing a fine basketball career. But there is a difference, in that basketball has some of the roughness and bodily contact of football.

Steve O'Neal, the great punter for the 1968 team and now the New York Jets, originally came to A&M on a track scholarship. As a broad jumper, he still holds the school record indoors with a leap of 22'7 1/4" in Dallas in 1967. A kicking specialist isn't usually that involved with the contact (or collision) that the other players are, though, so this is not the same. However, Curtis' speed will probably help him more than O'Neal's jumping ability aided him, so this is a closer comparison.

In the meantime, Curtis will be thinking ahead to his days as a college football player, and Stallings will be thinking about the "newcomer" to the squad.

"He's a fine runner and a good kid," Stallings said. "And he's sure a great national champion."

It's obvious that the Lufkin Dunbar product will be his usual casual self in undertaking the new task. In looking ahead, his attitude is cautious.

"I know football's a hard game," he declared. "It'll be rough, but I want to get out there and play."

Friday at 1 p. m.

Ags open loop play with SMU

The Texas Aggies begin their journey toward what they hope will be the Southwest Conference baseball championship this weekend when they host the much-improved Southern Methodist University Mustangs on Kyle Field.

The two teams will play a doubleheader at 1 p. m. Friday and then a single game at 2 p. m. Saturday to initiate the conference race for A&M.

SMU, the dormat of the league last year, opened its season last weekend, showing an improvement on pitching and defense while they won two out of three games from the Rice Owls.

That record puts the Mustangs in a first-place tie with the Baylor Bears, who surprised the University of Texas at Austin twice in three games in their series.

"They (SMU) are very definitely improved. Especially in pitching and defense," coach Tom Chandler said.

Chandler's statement had some very provable facts to back it up in the Rice series, where the Mustangs hitters managed only 9 hits and yet they still won two games.

Dave Davis pitched a seven-hit shutout to the Owls in the first game and then Pete Stare threw nine innings of zeros at Rice before departing with a scoreless tie after nine innings. Rice finally won that game 3-0 in 10 innings.

On Saturday Lynn Humphries pitched the Mustangs to a 2-1 win.

Those same three more than likely will be on the mound against the Aggies for SMU, which has a 6-4 season record.

In last year's A&M-SMU series the Aggies used timely hitting, shutout pitching from Doug Rau, Dave Benesh and Bruce Katt and an abundance of errors by the Mustangs to waltz to three easy victories. It extended the Aggies' win streak over the Mustangs to 8.

Katt is the only pitcher back for the Aggies from last year's threesome and his performance is the easiest remembered. The junior from New Braunfels struck out a Southwest Conference record of 19 batters in pitching A&M to a victory on Saturday. Katt is

due a starting job for one of the Friday games, probably the second game which is slated for nine innings.

Chandler is very wary of the Ponies.

"We're going to have to play better this weekend if we expect to do well. We've been very fortunate in that our opponents have helped us out with errors at crucial times or we've gotten the clutch hit to get us out."

The Aggies have played in six straight games decided by a single run. Despite their 9-1 record A&M has won six of those nine by a run.

"Our pitching has done well, but we're going to have to improve defensively," Chandler pointed out.

The Ags made five errors Tuesday against Sam Houston, not a trait of a championship team, but Sam Houston made seven and A&M took two one-run decisions.

Paul Czerwinski will start the other Friday game for A&M. Czerwinski (2-0) has a 0.58 earned run average and Katt (2-0) has a 0.53 era to lead the squad. Jackie Binks (2-0) has a 2.40 era and will pitch the Saturday single game. Charlie Kelley will probably be the top relief man. Kelley has a 3-1 record and 2.30 era.

As a team the Aggies have a 1.85 era and also have a team

batting average of .307.

Another important plus for the Aggies has been that only 31 batters have struck out in 296 at bats. An average of only three per game. In fact the team's individual leaders, Jim Sampson and Chris Sans, have struck out only five times.

Dave Elmendorf, off to an outstanding start, leads the club in hits with 16, total bases with 26, runs batted in with 11, stolen bases with 3 and fewest strikeouts among starters with 1.

He also shares the lead for runs scored with R. J. Englert with 8 and doubles and triples with Sans, 3 and 2 respectively.

Billy Hodge leads the team with nine walks and Carroll Lilly leads in average with .500, picking up 14 hits in 28 at bats. Sans is tops in put outs and double plays.

The Aggies probable starting lineup for Friday's opener and their averages are: Butch Gutzman, third base, .306; R. J. Englert, left field, .394; Dave Elmendorf, center field, .471; Billy Hodge, catcher, .333; Jim Sampson, right field, .286; Chris Sans, first base, .242; Jimmy Langford, shortstop, .158; Carroll Lilly, second base, .500; Paul Czerwinski, pitcher, (2-0) 0.58.

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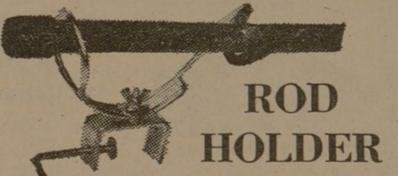
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