

Only Aggie to make team

Thomas earns All-America honors

By ROBERT CESSNA
Staff Sports Writer

With over 6,000 football players competing at the collegiate level, it's an honor to be named one of the best 24 players in the country. And such is the case with Pat Thomas.

Thomas plays cornerback for the Aggie defense and was named All-America by the American Board of Coaches this week. The 5'9" Thomas is a junior and has been starting since late in his freshman year. This year he led the Southwest Conference in interceptions with six including a fumble recovery in mid-air for a 32-yard touchdown against Rice helping break the game open.

Thomas came to A&M after playing three years at Plano High where he was All-District, All-Metro and All-State at runningback. "It feels good," was the initial reaction of Thomas when he learned of the selection. "I'm glad I got it, but it's not just for me but for the whole team," Thomas said.

He went on to explain that he couldn't have done it without a number of ingredients. First, the linemen have to give a good pass rush to make Thomas' job easier. Linebackers then have to drop to cover and finally the secondary has to do its job.

"It's an honor for the defense because everyone contributed. I'm happy they chose me," Thomas said. Thomas felt a few other Aggies deserved All-America but were snubbed by the various selectors. The Thomas story can be related to the Aggie story in that both came from nowhere to receive national recognition. Look at any pre-season polls and the Aggies were not ranked. Examine the All-America potentials and Thomas' name was absent. Now the Aggies are known nationally after the 1974 season and are starting to reap the individual awards from this recognition.

Personally Thomas did not see that much difference from his play this year over last year's campaign. "I felt I played as good last year," Thomas said. But last year no one knew Thomas, or the Aggies. Now they do.

When the season started Thomas had goals that he hoped to attain. His mind was on going 11-0, winning the Southwest Conference and having the best secondary in the nation, Thomas said.

"I fell short of my goals," Thomas said. His goals were almost attained however. A&M only lost three games and finished second in the SWC. As for the secondary it did rank as the nation's second best and was best in the SWC.

Thomas then described the most valuable assets he has on a football field. "My mental frame of mind other than the coaching I've received is my most valuable asset," Thomas said.

"My high school coach taught me a lot about football and God gave me quickness," Thomas said. Thomas described the knowledge needed to play the game along with knowing what's supposed to happen are keys in playing. Add to this the ability to concentrate and you have the mental frame of mind needed to play, he said.

Thomas summed up his feeling toward being named All-America this way: "It's nice but it doesn't do anything for you. We come here as individuals to play on a team. We play as a team, win as a team and get recognition as a team. The team should have preference over you. You feel for the team not yourself."

In the off season, Thomas will work on everything he needs to both mentally and physically prepare for next season. Then next year shoot for No. 1 in the nation, Thomas said.

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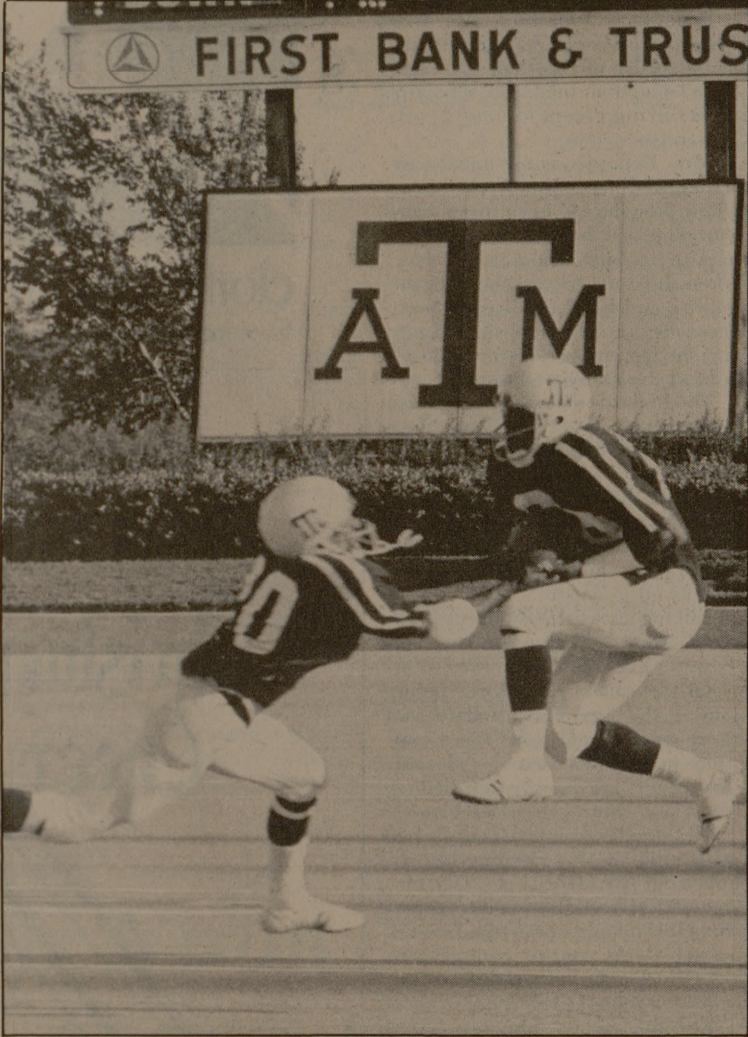
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Pat Thomas intercepting one of six passes.

Winter trading busy

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — Baseball's winter meeting marketplace erupted with major deals Tuesday that included three of the game's top names — Dick Allen, Tug McGraw and Lee May.

But the Houston Astros think they've come away with the best player in the bunch, highly-regarded minor leaguer Rob Andrews. He's the best young second baseman in the minor leagues, Houston General Manager Spec Richardson said after getting Andrews and first baseman-outfielder Enos Cabell from Baltimore in exchange for May and minor league outfielder Jay Schleuter.

Atlanta purchased the rights to Allen, who has announced his retirement from the Chicago White Sox for a nominal sum, reported to be \$5,000. The Braves will also send a player to the White Sox if they can convince Allen to report to Atlanta.

McGraw went to Philadelphia in a sox-player swap that brought center fielder Del Unser to the New York Mets. Outfielders Don Hahn and Dave Schneck also moved to

the Phillies in that one, with the Mets acquiring left-hander Mac Scarce and rookie catcher John Stens.

In another deal of somewhat lesser significance, California acquired veteran utility man Bill Sudakis from the New York Yankees in exchange for right-hander Skip Lockwood.

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Ali, Bugner a possibility

LONDON (AP) — Muhammad Ali wound up a five-day visit to Britain Wednesday by admitting he was not indestructible.

"I've got to fall someday," the world heavyweight boxing champion told newsmen before leaving London's Heathrow Airport for Chicago.

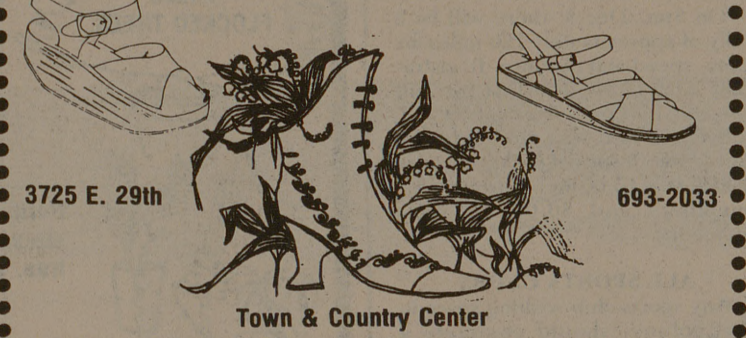
Ali crushed speculation he might retire without fighting again. "If anyone will put up the money, I don't care where I fight and I would certainly like to fight Joe Bugner in London," Ali said.

The champion's trip has been a mixture of public appearances and private negotiations with British promoters. He watched Bugner, Britain's European champion, stop Alberto Lovell of Argentina in two rounds Tuesday night at London's Royal Albert Hall.

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