Aggie defensive backs . . .

(continued from page 8)

senior from Plano is equally as devastating covering the pass, leading the Aggies in interceptions last season with seven. He has an unusual ability to anticipate the receiver's next move and quickness that can't be described in words.

Robertson had nothing but praise for Thomas' play over the last three seasons. "He has the quickest feet of any defensive back I've ever coached and he's the best one-on-one pass defender I've ever coached," said Robertson. That's pretty good when you consider Robertson has coached eight defensive backs who are currently in the professional ranks.

"He's (Thomas) short for a defensive back, but he has phenomenal jumping ability. I guess he has some weaknesses but I haven't been able to find any yet. It seems as if the only weakness he has is his coach," Robertson said jokingly.

On the other corner is Thompson, (5-10, 183) who plays with great intensity. "He (Thompson) looks like Pat to me," Robertson commented. "He's not as quick, but he plays with those same good techniques." Thompson, who didn't start but saw considerable action last year, really evolved into a solid player this spring. "He looks like he's going to be a good one," said Robertson.

Jackie Williams, (5-11, 178) who is the quarterback of the A&M secondary, is just the kind of man any coach would want at free safety. He's a Larry Wilson type with excellent range and a yearning to get to the football once it's in flight. And he knows what to do when he gets to the pigskin. "He (Williams) has a phenomenal knack for breaking for the football. He's tough and is an excellent open-field tackler," said Robertson of his pupil.

Williams is like a second defensive coordinator on the field. If you ever watched the Aggie secondary as they lined up between plays last season, you noticed Williams turning and shouting to both sides of the defensive backfield. He diagnoses the opposing offensive set and calls variations in the defensive coverage when needed.

The strong safety position probably presents a battle as interesting as the battle for the quarterbacking job on the A&M offensive unit. Hayes, Reggie Williams and junior college transfer Charles Bell all have a shot at the job. Robertson spoke of the situation saying, "I think it's going to be a tight battle during two-a-days. I'm going to pick the best one of those three to start against Mississippi."

Reggie Williams began the spring with the starting job, but injured a knee about midway through the 20 workouts. Williams told The Battalion in an interview that he would be ready to return to full speed action when workouts resume in August.

Of the three people contending for the position Williams has the most experience. Like the rest of his cohorts, he is endowed with talent. "He's the ideal strong safety. He has good strength, good speed and he's an excellent tackler," Robertson said. "The only thing Reggie needs is to play."

Hayes, (6-2, 208) who has 9.4 speed, stepped in when Reggie Williams was injured in the spring and did a fine job, considering that it was his first time playing the position. Hayes has played linebacker for the Aggies for the past two seasons. With his speed and tackling ability, he will probably end up being a prime choice for the NFL draft at the safety position.

Robertson said Hayes has the potential to be great if he continues to learn to play the position as well as he did this spring. "He did well this spring. We didn't throw at him much, because we wanted to give him time to get the basics down," said the A&M coach.

"He's (Hayes) a great tackler and once he learns what he's doing, he's going to look like a blur back there," Robertson continued.

Bell, (6-0, 185) is exploring a new defensive scheme here at A&M, but he learns fast, judging by his play in the spring game. "He came along real fast at the close of spring practice," said Robertson.

Bell plays the safety position a lot like Jackie illiams. He has good range and a nose for the ball. He's also a secure tackler in open field.

With that kind of talent and with a coach like Robertson, No. 1 should be the spot for the Aggie ball hawks next season. You can be sure that Robertson knows how to use the various talents of his troops. And for all those who doubt, there's a book coming out in the next few weeks entitled, "Winning with the Aggie 4-3 Defense," written by Melvin Robertson.

Robertson's book should be finished in time to serve an upcoming coaching clinic in Fort Worth. Now everybody can read to find out what Notre Dame and Northeastern came to College to learn.

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