

Recognition passes up Williams one more time

It's the same story once again for Texas A&M safety Jackie Williams. Another fine season with little recognition because he is surrounded by those who cast a larger shadow.

The Aggie defensive back is a cinch to repeat as All-Southwest Conference and was recently named as an Associated Press honorable mention All-American. But "honorable mention" is not a true testimony or reward for the A&M senior.

"He's better than that as a football player," said defensive co-ordinator Melvin Robertson. "But I know how publicity goes. He's like Bubba Bean. Bean hasn't received his share of publicity either."

Williams leads the Aggie defense in pass thefts with four and stands third amongst the defenders in number of primary and assisted tackles with 93, an item Williams himself hadn't noticed.

Notice is one thing the former all-star from Plano hasn't attracted what with such headline grabbers as Ed Simonini, Pat Thomas and Lester Hayes drawing much of the limelight. "It's become a way of life with me. I guess it's God plan to make life a little harder so I'll have to work harder," said Williams.

"People give Pat (Williams' cousin) credit for a lot I do. I think I'm compared to Pat too much. I'd like to think we're the same caliber players, but we're still completely different from each other," he said.

"I keep hoping that maybe this time they'll look at me on my own. Each time they don't it hurts me a little. I get kinda down. But I get a lot of satisfaction out of knowing that a lot of guys on the team respect me," said Williams, one of nine Aggies defensive players to receive All-American honors in some form.

"Jackie is the best free safety in the conference and as good as any in the nation," Robertson said. "What he got he got strictly on performance."

Williams is having his best season out of the four years he has been at A&M since being recruited by Coach Paul Register. He also had offers from Arkansas and TCU. Recruited originally as a means of getting to his more celebrated cousin Thomas, convinced Register into looking at some film of him in action. Later Register brought him to A&M.

Not only has Williams emerged as one of the statistical leaders of the defense, he has also provided some key plays that have enabled the Aggies to be undefeated and 10-0 on the year.

In the season's very first game, Williams tipped away a desperate, last second Mississippi pass in the end zone to preserve a 7-0 win. A few weeks later against Texas Tech, he halted a potential scoring drive with an interception on the one-yardline. At the time of his steal, A&M was ahead by only a single point.

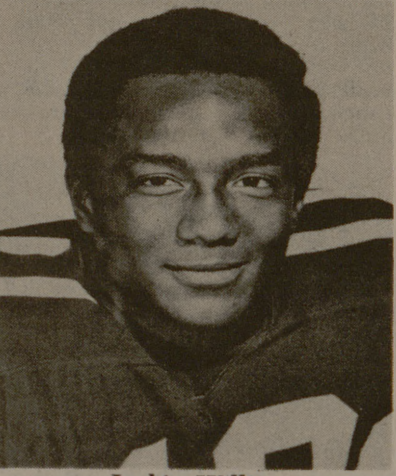
"You can pick out some where we wouldn't be where we are now," said Robertson about his pupil's ability to come up with the big play.

Considering the quality of the

A&M linebackers and linemen, it is a little surprising to find a safety man number three on the tackle chart.

"I like to hit. I take more pride in tackles than in interceptions," said Williams who also played linebacker in high school. He and Simonini have a mild contest going as to which of them will wind up with the most interceptions or tackles.

Williams attributes one reason for his success this year to a change in



Jackie Williams

position. Last season he played both strong and free safety but was anchored at the free safety spot this year.

"I've had to concentrate on only one position," he said, "and this has helped me a lot."

"He should be making a lot of tackles," said Robertson. "Normally they (opposing offenses) have people deployed so that the other secondary men are covering receivers. The free safety is the centerfielder on passes and he's also the first in the secondary to help on the run."

"I concentrate on what we call our

focal point," said Williams, "which is the near back on my side. By watching the tight end, near back and quarterback I get a pretty good idea where the ball is going.

"I take a few more chances when I play on Pat's side," he said. "I'm not putting down Willie (Thompson) or Lester (Hayes), but me and Pat have played a lot longer together, eight or nine years."

Williams will be earning his third letter this year and is one of 20 seniors present on the 1975 roster.

Since his arrival, the Aggies have climbed from 3-8 in 1972 to the number two ranked team in the nation. "One of the reasons I came to A&M was because I didn't want to go to a team that was already winning. I wanted to help a team that was losing turn into a winner. I get more satisfaction from that," he said.

"Jackie's a self-made athlete. He came in unheralded. A lot of people offered him a scholarship just to get at Pat," Robertson said.

"He didn't have the talent of a lot of kids, but he worked hard. He's worked tremendously hard and he's tremendously dedicated. No one has contributed more than Jackie Williams. He doesn't get the recognition, but he knows that his teammates respect him," Robertson continued.



The Aggies' unheralded safety, Jackie Williams, tips away a pass in the closing seconds of the Ole Miss game to preserve an A&M victory. Williams was named honorable mention All-American.

Staff Photo by Chris Svatek

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