

Thompson talks to plants

By PAUL McGRATH
Don't let it get around, but Texas A&M cornerback Willie Thompson talks to plants. Privately.

Thompson, one of three seniors in the A&M secondary (Lester Hayes and Reggie Williams are the other two), has started collecting plants — a hobby he shares with Aggie defensive tackle Edgar Fields. "Edgar's hobby is a little different than mine though. His (plants) seem to live a little longer," Thompson said.

He owns an ivy (his pet), a yucca plant, a maternity plant and another plant he has yet to identify.

"Plants do something for a room," he said. Thompson admits he converses with his collection, usually in private. Man to plant, so to speak.

"Some of them have started to turn yellow so I'll talk to them and they'll do better," Thompson said. "I know it sounds kind of weird. A couple of them have started to droop again so I'll have to start rapping with the plants again to get them going."

Thompson, 5-9, 180 lbs. from El Paso Burges High School, has had to do quite a bit of talking on the playing field as well. With former secondary stars Pat Thomas and Jackie Williams gone, Thompson and Hayes find themselves giving more support to the less experienced players.

"This year we have to have our eyes open — we're more conscious

of the other guys" he said. "Last year Pat and Jackie made up for our mistakes. Now, Lester and I feel we have a teaching role and not a learning role."

Thompson's interception in the third quarter of the Illinois game was instrumental to A&M's gaining a 14-7 win. The Illini substituted quarterback Mike McCray for running back James Coleman to attempt a halfback pass. Thompson diagnosed the maneuver and cut in front of the tight end to steal the pass. His return to the Illinois 14-yard line set up A&M's final score.

"I more or less saw it all the way," said Thompson, who had two key interceptions in last year's Texas game. "It was a trick play. . . the tailback was the quarterback last year."

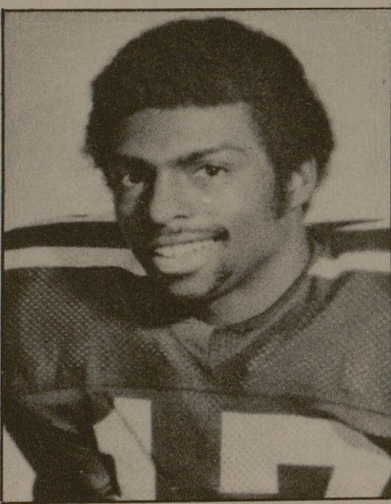
"I should have scored, there was a lot of grass in front of me," he said.

Thompson was born on Staten Island, N.Y. into an Army family, traveling around the country and never staying anywhere long enough to grow many roots.

His family, which includes his parents, two brothers and two sisters, now resides in El Paso.

Thompson, who played free safety and quarterback in high school, was highly recruited. He received 23 offers, including one from Texas Tech, A&M's upcoming opponent.

"As a kid I always wanted to be the



Willie Thompson

first black quarterback ever at the University of Texas," he said. But he chose A&M over the other schools, primarily because of the closeness he noticed between team members. He was impressed with Thomas, Williams and Ed Simonini, the three A&M players who escorted him on his recruiting visit.

"Other schools said 'if you come here.' With them, (the aforementioned trio) it was if I was already here. They said 'when you come back in August.' That made me feel pretty good," Thompson said.

Another reason he picked A&M was because of the presence of

defensive co-ordinator Melvin Robertson.

"In my four years here, I'd be surprised to find anyone who knows more about the 4-3 defense," he said of Robertson. "He will tell you what to do and all you have to do is do what he says at 100 per cent effort."

Thompson said he is amazed at the defensive mind of Robertson. As a freshman standing on the sidelines, he would often listen to Robertson discuss the action of the field. "He would say 'oh goodness, they're going to run here' and sure enough that's where they'd run."

Opposing offenses have found little success running the ball against A&M (the Aggies have ranked near the top in the nation the past two years in defense against the run) and have turned to the air more often, putting added pressure on Thompson and the rest of the A&M secondary.

Texas Tech gained 320 yards against A&M last year while losing 38-9. It was the most yardage gained in one game on the Aggies the entire year.

Red Raider quarterbacks Tommy Duniven and Rodney Allison operate a powerful attack again this year as they alternate according to the situation. Allison is perhaps the better runner while Duniven is perhaps the better passer.

As to whether he would prefer Duniven or Allison, Thompson said, "They're both at the point where I would hate to see either one."

Thompson rates Red Raider split end Sammy Williams as one of the best in the Southwest Conference, along with TCU's Mike Renfro, Texas' Alfred Jackson and Baylor's Alcy Jackson. He said Alfred Jackson is the speediest while Renfro runs the better pass routes and has the best hands.

Professional football looms largely in Thompson's future ambitions. "You can't sneeze at the money," he said. He added he would enjoy the challenge of covering the top receivers in the pro ranks.

In the meantime, he continues to discuss the world's affairs with his plants. Their response is strictly confidential.

A THOROUGH SCOUT

NEW YORK (AP) — Former major league manager Birdie Tebbetts could be called one of the most thorough scouts in the game of baseball. He is on special assignments for the New York Yankees.

"When I go into a town to see two teams play I usually like to watch one of their games on television," says Tebbetts. "You get closeup action on practically every pitch and you can see more than at the ball park. But, then again, there's nothing like being in the ball park for the over-all picture of what's happening."



Battalion photo by Suzanne Cole

Cindy Cough is forced out at home while attempting to score during the Stephen F. Austin game Saturday. Gough, shortstop for the A&M women's team, ran for home after

A&M's Robin Oakley hit the ball to the lumberjack's shortstop. A&M went on to win the game 4-1.

Women's softball team finishes third in tourney

By CAROLYN BLOSSER

A&M's women intercollegiate softball team took third place in the Texas A&M Softball Tournament held last weekend at Travis Park in Bryan.

Top seeded University of Texas at Arlington, last year's State Champion, defeated Sam Houston State University in the finals to win the championship.

The Aggies played a total of six games in the tournament, winning five and losing one, their only loss coming at the hands of the University of Texas at Arlington. A&M's season record now stands at 12-3.

The Ags began play Friday afternoon with an easy 10-0 win over West Texas State University. However, pitcher Kim Bellamy suffered a wrenched knee in the game, which thinned out the already ailing Aggie ranks. First baseman Terri Sandvik was out with the flu and outfielder Janice Williamson was still recovering from a bone chip in the elbow.

In their next game the Aggies had little difficulty as they blitzed St. Mary's 14-0. Their first big competition came Saturday night against Stephen F. Austin State University.

The Ladyjacks, with back-to-back base hits in the second inning, jumped out to a 1-0 lead. But in the third inning A&M's Toni Hymel led

off with a double to rightfield and scored following Liz Zemanek's single down the leftfield line, tying the score at 1-1.

Then in the fourth inning came the play of the game. With the bases loaded and one out, A&M's Vickie Markowsky flied out to centerfield and Robin Oakley, who was on third base, started tagging home.

A picture perfect throw from the centerfielder to homeplate made Oakley's situation look hopeless as the catcher waited to apply the tag.

However, as Oakley approached home, she startled everyone by hurdling several feet over the catcher to avoid the tag, landing safely on homeplate. Her score proved to be the winning run as A&M defeated SFA 2-1.

The top two teams from each pool in Friday's competition advanced into Saturday's finals. In A&M's pool the Aggies and SFA finished first and second, respectively, enabling them both to compete in next day's quarterfinals.

Saturday morning in their quarterfinal game against Baylor, the Aggies seemed to be in trouble as they trailed 2-0 late in the game. But in the sixth inning Toni Hymel came through with a bases loaded triple to push the Ags ahead 3-2. A&M picked up momentum, scoring three more runs that inning, and went on to defeat Baylor 6-2.

In their semifinal game that afternoon against the University of Texas at Arlington, the Aggies never really got things going.

Although Cathy Boswell's first inning double gave A&M an early lead, UTA came right back with a rally in the same inning to pull the score to 1-1.

The Ags seemed to be riding high in the second inning after a lead by Hymel and Becky Harshbarger and an RBI double by Annette Harshbarger brought the score up to 4-2. But Aggie's fortune soon turned to tragedy.

On the very next play Annette Harshbarger attempted to score from third base on an infield grounder. Sliding into home, Harshbarger was caught on the plate but her momentum pushed her leg across, resulting in severe bruising of three bones in her leg, right at the ankle.

An ambulance soon arrived to take Harshbarger to the hospital as teammates watched the scene in despair, choking with tears of emotion. The Aggies never really got things going in the game as UTA went on to win 9-5.

A&M now faced Stephen F. Austin in a game to decide the place finisher. Although trailing early in the game, the Ags came through with a big fifth inning rally as Liz Zemanek, Liz Zemanek, Mike Alford and Cathy Boswell all scored giving the Ags a 4-1 victory over SFA and a secure lock on third place. This weekend, October 8 and 9, the Aggies will travel to Beaumont to compete in the Lamar University Softball Tournament.

Ford to view Texas-OU game

Associated Press
DALLAS—President Ford will officially open the 91st annual Texas State Fair here Saturday, fair president Robert Cullum said Tuesday.

The President will cut a ribbon to open the 17-day exposition and is to speak to the opening day crowd.

Special guests scheduled to be on hand for the fair opening include

Texas Gov. and Mrs. Dolph Briscoe and former Gov. and Mrs. John Connally.

Tentative plans call for Ford and also watch the Texas-Oklahoma football game in the Cotton Bowl Saturday and attend church at the First Baptist Church before leaving Dallas Sunday. The Cotton Bowl on the fair grounds.

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