

the sports

Bellard, Robertson off to MSU



Sly moves

Battalion photo by Lee Roy Leschper Jr.

Texas A&M's Steve "Sly" Sylestine guards Texas' Jim Krivacs in Monday night's Texas-A&M game. In the Aggies' last two games, Sylestine has come off the bench to score a total of 22 points, much to the delight

of Coach Shelby Metcalf. Tonight the 18th-ranked Aggies travel to Fort Worth to play the TCU Horned Frogs. Texas A&M is in fourth place in the Southwest Conference and TCU is in the cellar. Tip-off is at 7:30 p.m.

United Press International
STARKVILLE, Miss. — Emory Bellard, who masterminded the wishbone attack while at Texas A&M, was named Mississippi State's new football coach Monday and said his goal was to make the Bulldogs competitive with any team in the nation.

The new Mississippi State head coach announced that Melvin Robertson, defensive coordinator at Texas A&M last year, would be the defensive coordinator for the Bulldogs. Robertson, who was released by Texas A&M head coach Tom Wilson at the end of the 1978 season, built consistently tough defenses at Texas A&M. In 1975, the Aggies were No. 1 in the nation in total defense.

Bellard, accepting the coaching reins at a news conference, said he was anxious to get on with the job of turning Mississippi into a national power and that he felt he had a solid foundation at the school to build on.

"You are looking at a man who has his motor turned on," Bellard said to applause from school supporters gathered at the news conference. The former Texas A&M chief, who resigned last year in mid-season, promised his Mississippi State team would be "representative" in the tough Southeastern Conference.

Bellard's appointment ended days of speculation that he had been chosen to succeed Bob Tyler at the Starkville school. Bellard, 48, vowed last season after quitting Texas A&M he was finished with coaching.

Tyler resigned the football coaching job last month, several days after he was fired as athletic director.

Bellard built a national power at Texas A&M, compiling a 48-27 record in six and one-half seasons. The Aggies also went to three bowl games under Bellard. He presently ranks 22nd among winningest active major football coaches.

"I pledge that you will have my heart and soul in the effort," the slow-talking Bellard said.

Bellard said his first priority would be to make sure all high school players who have signed Southeastern Conference letters-of-intent with the school are secured by the national signing date of Feb. 21.

Mississippi State Athletic Director Carl Maddox, longtime Louisiana State University administrator who succeeded Tyler, said Bellard passed all the tests during a two-day visit to the campus last week.

Bellard said his club would likely use the wishbone attack.

"The wishbone is a philosophy of coaching and we will be using that philosophy," Bellard said. "We will

run a lot of options — a lot of variations from that particular philosophy."

Bellard told the packed news conference he changed his mind about coaching because "that is all I've done all my life. Coaching is what I like."

The coach quit Texas A&M last season after six games. He said he resigned the post because he understood he would be fired at the end of the season.

He said although he had not gone into details on the strengths of the Bulldogs, a general observation was the school had some talented players coming back.

Maddox said Bellard was given a four-year, \$45,000 contract with MSU — the maximum allowed under state regulations. Maddox said the coach also would receive \$20,000 per year in television show premiums.

Mississippi State currently plays the majority of its games in Jackson because the stadium in the capital city is larger than in Starkville.

Tyler quit the coaching post Jan. 22 shortly after being ousted as athletic director by MSU President James McComas. The college president said he removed Tyler as athletic director because the football program had demanded too much of his time in answering criticisms.

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Dickerson having second thoughts

United Press International
When Texas A&M coaches thought they could place the state's schoolboy running back on their se, Dickerson had second thoughts.

"It's not going to sign with us," A&M spokesman said of the Aggie-tue-stubbing on opening day of annual Southwest Conference talent search.

He told the coaches today he wanted more time," the spokesman speculating that no one — including late suitors such as SMU — would sign Dickerson today.

That's what he told us, that he wouldn't sign with anyone just yet," A&M spokesman said.

"I think SMU has really put some pressure on Eric," the Houston Post source as saying. "If they had land Eric Dickerson along with Craig James (Houston Stratford), they'd really have had a great recruiting haul right there."

"I'd say it hurts a hell of a lot," an A&M source said. "I thought we had a firm commitment but I guess he had second thoughts or something."

High School coach Ralph Harris also confirmed the NCAA investigating Dickerson in connection with his acquisition of a Pontiac Trans-Am.

The NCAA says on paper it's "clean," Harris said. "But it's poor timing whether it's clean or not."

Harris said he saw Dickerson leaving the car the day the 6-3, 200-pound running back announced he'd signed with SMU. The car reportedly was purchased by a member of Dickerson's family.

Today's scholarship agreements are binding only within the SWC. A player is not fully guaranteed to a school until he signs a national letter Feb. 21.

That means schools such as Oklahoma and USC — places Dickerson visited during the recruiting season — still have another week in which to lure Dickerson away from the Southwest Conference.

But there are a lot of players other than Dickerson who will help SWC football programs next year and — as usual — every team in the league has some reason to be happy.

It would appear, however, that Texas, Texas A&M, Texas Tech and SMU are going to be happier than others.

And while Texas is all but a cinch to land top-flight quarterback Rick McIvor from Fort Stockton and Tech is expected to sign quarterback Mark James of Gregory-Portland, the big surprise of the recruiting race could be SMU.

Mustangs coach Ron Meyer will not announce his signings today, choosing to wait until after the national signing date instead. But Meyer, who recruited what one independent judge of high school talent said was the 10th best high school class in the country last year, is privately ecstatic about SMU's prospects this year.

"It's not just whether we will have one of the 10 best recruiting groups in the country," Meyer has told one associate, "it's a question of whether we will have one of the two best."

Among those who have committed to SMU are Craig James of Houston, the all-time running back leading rusher in Texas Class AAAA

football, speed burner wide receiver Mitchell Bennett of Bonham and the player of the year in New Mexico, quarterback Layne Walker of Clovis.

In addition SMU hopes to land one of the top running backs in Ohio

and two big linemen from Colorado. Besides Dickerson, if he signs, A&M should have the services of Gary Kubiak, one of the state's leading quarterback prospects from Houston, and wide receiver Eference Murphy of Texarkana.

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