

um steers 'em straight

# The athlete's other side

By MARK PATTERSON  
Battalion Sports Staff

The numbers game called college where success is judged on the number of letters received each 16-week semester, the pressure to do well increases with each year of school. A student's future rests on how well he performs during his days at college.

The pressure to succeed is even greater for athletes at the university. Not only do they have to perform well in school, but the pressure on the field is constantly increasing them. While the coaching staff does all it can to teach the athletes the steps to take on the field, it is up to the athletes to perform in the classroom. And it's helping them perform well off the field that the athletic department at Texas A&M is proud of its student athletes.

The NCAA requires that an athlete maintain at least a 1.6 grade point average to remain eligible to compete in sports at the university. Texas A&M requires an athlete, and any student enrolled in the University, to maintain an overall 2.0 GPA to remain in good standing academically.

According to Max Bumgardner, athletic counselor for the athletic department at Texas A&M, football players had an overall GPA of 2.38 last semester. All other athletes followed the direction of Bumgardner and had a 3.04 GPA for a compiled GPA in the athletic department.

It came here with Coach (Emory) Bellard in January, 1972. Bumgardner said, "Bellard felt that it was time to come to school to get an education first and play football second."

He went into the living rooms along the coaches when they went out to eat. We would sit down with a tall set of parents and assure them that we would do everything possible to get their boy to achieve academically as well as athletically at Texas A&M.

After enrolling at A&M, the pressure is put on an academic level in an attempt to develop his skills. All freshmen athletes need that required to attend study sessions, held in Cain Hall, at least twice a week. According to Bumgardner, it's done in an attempt to get the players in the habit of studying.

## Season ends

By KURT ABRAHAM  
Battalion Staff

Good things, sooner or later, come to an end, and for the Texas A&M tennis team, today's match with the Michigan Wolverines will not only close out the season, it will also end the careers of two A&M players.

At 17, seniors Robin Baker and Mike Moss mark the end of four years of pole vaulting from 1975 in which they coached an A&M tennis program to a high school success to rock-bottom vaulting, only to rise once more to get into the national finals.

Somehow, finishing out their eligibility, Baker and Moss have some expectations for the team's rollercoaster performance, as well as a few better thoughts about their own careers.

When I say attitude, I mean not only team-wise, but also individual-wise. Since Coach (David) Baker came here, there's been a difference in the team. It used to be we were satisfied with the other teams in our conference breaking even with the weaker teams.

But Coach Kent is very aggressive, taking over and he's given us more incentive to win. I've agreed with Baker, saying there's been a complete turnaround in the last year.

Not only a change in attitude, but also a gain in experience. "Our 1978 team has five men on it and they weren't to play in the Southwest Conference. This year, those same freshmen are sophomores and it's made them much more mature."

Players cited further strengthening of conference teams as one of the main reasons for the success during recent years. "Until this year, our team only recruited players from within Texas. This meant that we had the same level of performance from our players each year," said Baker.

Meanwhile, other teams like SMU, Texas and Rice were recruiting absolutely the best players they could find, even if it meant having to go to other states or out of the country to get to the point where we were having a hard time competing.

Baker said he thought aggressive recruiting by other schools had made the Southwest Conference the

ment. They are available any night of the week.

"We don't use the tutors to replace going to class. The tutors don't do the work, they just help the kids with what they need to learn and try to teach them how to study."

The students who need tutoring help are assigned a tutor at the beginning of the fall semester and work with the tutor throughout the semester.

"The player and the tutor work together one night a week throughout the semester," Bumgardner said. "And with exams coming up, we have a few more tutors and a few more boys burning the midnight oil."

"Our tutor program isn't unique. Every school around the country who can afford academic counseling does it."

Marvin Tate, interim athletic director at Texas A&M, feels the money spent by the athletic department on the tutor program is wisely invested by the department.

"To be competitive with schools like Texas, Texas Tech and Houston, we have to spend X-amount of dollars recruiting an athlete," Tate explained. "It's expensive to get them here and if they're not eligible to play, all our efforts and money go down the drain. To protect our investment, we have tutors."

"The athletes are here for two reasons. First, they're here to get an education. Second, they're here to represent A&M in athletics. If they don't do the first, they can't do the second. The money spent on tutors comes out of the athletic budget. I personally don't see anything wrong with the system."

The tutor program became available to the athletes five years ago after problems arose about scheduling tutors through the service on campus. The athletes need tutoring at night from 7:30 on so the athletic department was required to set up its own system.

"Our help sessions and tutor sessions are closed to students other than those on scholarship," Bumgardner said. "There is a free system on campus to handle other students. We just try and take care of the people that live here (in Cain)."

When an athlete has a problem with some phase of school, Bumgardner is the man they come to talk to. After he hears the gripes or problems, Coach Bum (as he is called by the athletes) takes certain steps to solve the problem.

"I first send them to see their teacher," Bumgardner explained.

"After that, I talk to the teacher to see if the problem might stem from the boy not making it to class or if he just doesn't know how to study for the course. Then I take steps to correct whatever the problem is, including telling his coach about his problem. And coaches have ways of making the students shape up."

According to head football coach Tom Wilson, the coaching staff has a variety of ways of motivating an athlete to do well in school.

"Other than just encouraging the player, we sit down and counsel with him to supply motivation," Wilson said. "If that doesn't work, we have to turn to punishment motivation."

"The punishment comes in the form of running. If the player has a problem making it to class, we get him up at 5 or 6 in the morning and run him. He may run laps, bleachers (up and down the stands of Kyle Field), grass drills or just added running after practice."

"It's all done as an attempt to impress upon the player the importance of getting an education."

According to Bumgardner, good rapport with faculty members is a key factor involved with the success of an athlete. Since most players have to miss classes in the course of the semester because of out-of-town games or matches, an input to the professor can be a great help to a student-athlete.

"Naturally, there are some teachers on this campus who show a lack of interest in athletics as well as some that show a great interest," Bumgardner said. "It's hard for some teachers to understand that some kids have to miss class because they're on the road for a game."

"In general, if the boy goes to class and contributes, the teachers will be fair. And that's all we want. We don't want, or expect, any teacher to show any special attention to an athlete."

It's the job of Dr. R.C. Potts, retired dean of Agriculture at Texas

A&M, to find out who the teachers are who are sympathetic to athletes and their problems. After retiring from his position as dean, Potts was hired by the athletic department to serve as a consultant to the athletes in selecting their course of study and semester load.

"Coach Bellard said that he needed someone that knew education and the programs available at A&M," Potts said. "He knew that I knew the opportunities here at the University. I work for a small consultant fee over and above what I receive in retirement from A&M."

"Sometimes I recommend teachers for the boys to take. I know some members of the faculty who take an added interest in young people. And there are a few who might have compassion for athletes. They might have played sports themselves and know what the athletes go through."

Potts mentioned Charles Leigham of the English department, Dr. Nelson Duller in the physics department, Dr. Jesse Grady of the agriculture economics department and Dr. Gerald O'Donovan of the genetics department as members of the faculty that have been helpful to athletes in their course work.

Potts' office, in the lobby of Cain Hall, is open to all students who need assistance in any phase of their school work.

"I have as many young people in the University come and talk to me as athletes," Potts said of the visitors to his office. "When I have the time, I'll work with anyone I can."

"But only time will tell in the hearts and minds of athletes that I've talked with if I did any good. Directing their lives in the right direction, that's the payoff. That's the reason I'm here to help."

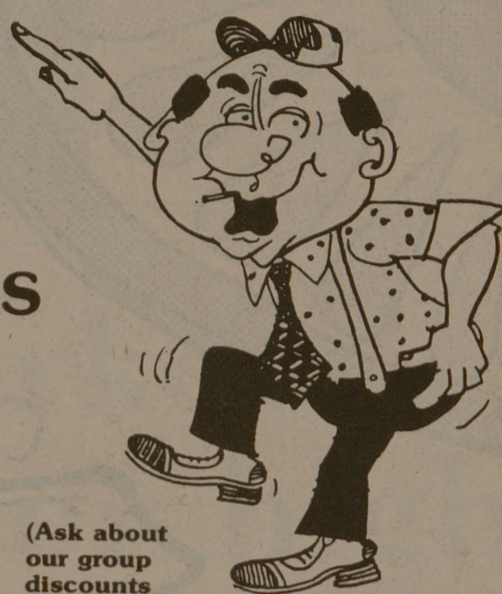
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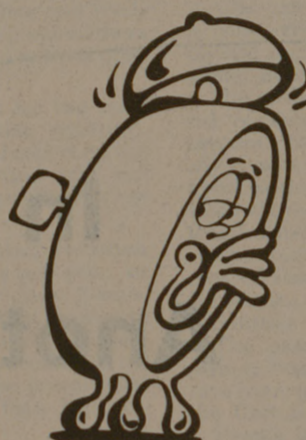
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