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Ag football changes span the years

By MIKE BURRICHTER
Battalion Staff

Back in the fall of 1977, Texas A&M football fans shifted their attention from the almighty defense of years past to the potentially explosive offensive backfield.

Defensive coordinator Melvin Robertson's band of marauders had all faded away; many, such as Pat Thomas, Tim Gray, Lester Hayes, Edgar Fields, Brad Dusek and Robert Jackson, are currently playing in the National Football League. Dave Elmendorf, John McCrumby, Tank Marshall, Ed Simonini and Garth Ten Napel all played in the pros. The Aggies of '77 were depending on a young defense.

Any hopes of winning the Southwest Conference were dependent on the performance of a young, inexperienced defense and a potentially volatile offense.

When I first got to A&M, I was a naive 17-year-old kid from out of state who knew nothing about the state of Texas, much less Texas A&M traditions or football. While the traditions still baffle me, I've since

Analysis

come to take a keen interest in the football program here.

I noticed immediately that all Texans, especially Aggies, took their football seriously. I remember an adviser saying, "I can't wait for the season to start, you've simply got to see George Woodard play football."

That year Emory Bellard's wishbone backfield consisted of senior quarterback David Walker, junior fullback Woodard, sophomore tail-

backs David Brothers and Curtis Dickey and junior tailback Adger Armstrong. Armstrong and Brothers alternated.

Walker was coming to the end of an impressive career. Many feel his talents were wasted with Bellard's wishbone. Walker was a classic drop-back passer in high school, and though he ran the bone effectively, he always looked uncomfortable with it. Had he gone to another school, he may have at least been drafted by the pros.

Behind Walker, there were a couple of freshmen named Beal and Mosley. Bellard was never quite clear on who was the actual second-teamer, saying they were both capable of doing the job.

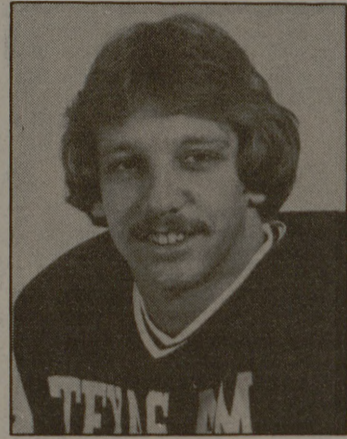
The Aggies averaged nearly 30 points-per-game that season, but gave up 25.5 per outing, and towards the end of the season, when Bellard knew his team had no chance to go to Dallas, he began using younger players. Mike Mosley saw quite a bit of action, leading the team to an impressive victory over Houston, after he was inserted in place of a dejected David Walker. Mosley looked equally great in a losing cause against USC in the Bluebonnet Bowl. David Beal saw little action, but Mike Mosley was clearly Bellard's quarterback of the future.

Bellard had to look forward to the next season. He'd finally landed himself a legitimate wishbone quarterback. For years, the Aggie quarterback had been a converted high school passer, such as Walker. Mosley ran the bone at Humble High School, where he was all-America. At 6-2, 177, Mosley had the speed to run the offense Bellard invented. He could run the 100-yard dash in a little under ten seconds. The wishbone is an offense analogous to a juggernaut; it is a ball control offense that is most effectively run by a mobile quarterback, a sturdy fullback, at least one fleet halfback and a big offensive line. Bellard had all of this, and looked towards the 1978 season with high hopes of ending up in the Cotton Bowl.

Woodard sat out the season with a broken leg, and he never regained his old form.

David Beal served as Mosley's back up. Beal had been more of a passer at Russellville High School than Mosley. Roughly the same weight, two inches shorter and a couple of steps slower in the 100, Beal was a more than adequate reserve.

Over the next two seasons, Mosley was the man at quarterback. He enters this season as the best quarterback in the conference, though a returned-to-form Mike Ford could wrest that title from him. David Beal enters the season as the league's best reserve quarterback. There is no



Mike Mosley



David Beal

question in my mind that he'd be a starter on at least four other conference teams — even Arkansas. During the past two seasons, he's made the most of his brief appearances at the offensive helm.

There'd been talk of red-shirting him. There'd been reports he'd leave if that happened. He wanted to play baseball but newly-crowned head coach Tom Wilson said no dice. Beal really has never openly complained, but I know he must wonder what would have happened had he gone elsewhere, or just entered the scene a little earlier or later.

If all goes according to plan, Mike Mosley will graduate from college ball with first team conference laurels on his record. He may even have a chance to play in the pros. And, barring an injury to Mosley, one of the conference's better quarterbacks, David Beal, will graduate in relative obscurity.

The start of last season was similar to the start of the 1977 season; but the position in question shifted to tailback, where Curtis Dickey was being mentioned in the same breath as Billy Sims and Charles White. However, the world class sprinter was plagued with little injuries that kept him away from a serious chance at winning a Heisman trophy. Many Aggie football die-hards, including this writer, muttered ruefully to themselves that the big Bryan runner was a malingering, an under-achiever. And when it became apparent early on that the Ags were going nowhere last season, the attention focused on Curtis' replacement. Who could replace a Texas A&M legend?

Johnny Hector was most people's answer. The New Iberia, La. native had been getting headlines six months before he even got to Texas A&M. He was the guy we snatched away from LSU. In the summer of '79, the mere thought of Hector going somewhere besides LSU enraged some cajuns.

A Baton Rouge dentist even

threatened to keep him in prison if he didn't sign with the Bayou Bengals. But at the time, Hector was a savior. The Aggies had the bitter loss of Eric Dierks, the best high school back in Texas after saying he'd pulled a Hector and joined SMU after saying he'd joined Aggies. Hell, if we could best running back in Texas we got Louisiana's best.

The heir to the throne flashes of brilliance late in the season, but he's certainly had more than 378 yards on 99 carries per carry average. He broke for the big yardage but couldn't run up the well as Dickey, who's a track meets looking more than the shotputters.

Another freshman turned kicks. Earnest Needville, came in from camp last year to do the job for the reserve tailback. Crookston won. Jackson saw the end of the season, and he had 140 yards on 29 carries. Jackson didn't have the speed but he sure had the legs and had starting tailback a two-year-old po-

the two. Hector was certainly worth the money. He was listed at being the bigger and stronger. Their running styles were different. Hector is a shifty runner and I saw him slash through the insec-

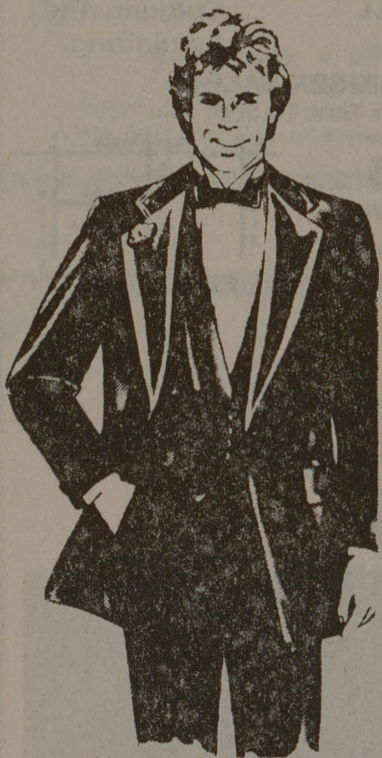
Payton or Tony Dorsett while he is more of slashing many of time lar to Lawrence McCutcheon. Lydell Mitchell. For a while during the season, with a split backfield. Earlier this week, I asked who would start against Mississippi. He alternate the two, but he'd start off with the "T" which means David Hill. ing up directly behind him that it'll be Hector.

I like the split backfield inexperienced line the (one senior starter, four sophomore), runners ability to choose their With Mosley, Hector and the backfield, the Aggies scoring threat every time the ball.

I just hope Earnest doesn't end up being Beal.

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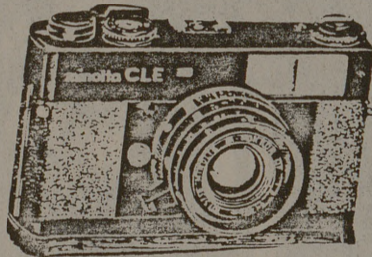
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