

Charles Thornton

Associate AD wants winners in every sport

by Gaye Denley

Battalion Staff
New associate athletic director Charles J. Thornton's reasons for coming to Texas A&M sound a little like Jackie Sherrill's, and his goals for the school's athletic programs bring to mind the familiar "pre-eminence" sought by H.R. "Bum" Bright.

"In all sports, we want to be national in scope," the former University of Alabama assistant AD says. "We want to be competitive to where we're a national (contender), and we want, for the average year, for our team to be in the top three in the conference in every sport, and to be in the national picture also."

Texas A&M, he said, perhaps more than any other school in the country, has that kind of potential.

"When Jackie called, I felt like this was probably the best opportunity in America at this time in the area of football and athletic administration," he said.

Certainly Thornton, 45, brings with him the administrative qualifications to make the Aggies winners. Since early in his college career he has been continuously involved in some facet of athletics — as sports editor of the Arkansas State University newspaper for four years, as the chairman of the NCAA public relations committee, and as an athletic administrator for Arkansas State, Tulane University, the University of Miami, and, of course, Alabama.

His 18-year affiliation with Alabama ended Jan. 23, when Texas A&M head coach and AD Jackie Sherrill announced that Thornton would replace interim associate AD Wally Groff, who now acts as associate AD for finance.

It was during 1964, his first year with Coach Paul "Bear" Bryant's Crimson Tide, that he became acquainted with Sherrill.

"I knew Jackie for two years there as a player," Thornton said. "The thing I remember about Jackie is that he was not a great athlete, but he was a super competitor..."

"Jackie and I have remained acquaintances over the years, not close friends particularly, but I think it was a mutual admiration thing from a distance. When this opportunity came along, I knew enough about Jackie Sherrill to know that the man is a winner and a class person, the type of person I would want to be associated with."

After years of hearing Bryant and former Aggie football players talk about the traditions here, Thornton said he felt Texas A&M was a school he would want to be associated with.

"I've known so many Aggies..." he said. "...and they still speak with that little special gleam in their eye when they talk about A&M, and it holds a special place in their heart."



Associate Athletic Director Charles J. Thornton

One unique aspect of Texas A&M, he said, will make his job a lot easier — the role of the Aggie Club.

"Most schools today have a serious financial problem in that they're having to get out and raise two or three million dollars when they haven't been used to doing it," Thornton said. "A&M is used to doing that. They have the Aggie Club."

"It takes it out of Jackie's and my area of responsibility — of having that tremendous load on our shoulders — of having to raise money before we do anything else."

While the Aggie Club raises funds and Sherrill runs the football program, Thornton will be running the day-to-day operations of the athletic department from former head coach Tom Wilson's old office.

A few of his concerns are assembling the entire department in one set of offices — currently, the football offices are in Rudder Tower and all other sports offices are in G. Rollie White Coliseum — and looking into a special events center for the campus.

"Basketball would not be the lone reason, or possibly even the most important reason (for a center)," he said. "I think the students of this university deserve a place to have concerts and things we bring in, main attractions."

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By Jeff Millar & Bill Hinds



Nuggets win 129-115

Denver's defense beats San Antonio

United Press International
DENVER — An aggressive defense and accurate shooting from the foul line gave Denver a 129-115 win over San Antonio, narrowing the Spurs' Midwest Division lead to 3½ games.

Dan Issel and Alex English had 25 points each Wednesday and Glen Gondrezick and Cedrick Hordges combined for 28 more to pace the Nuggets to their eighth straight win and improve Denver's record to 38-30.

"The key was our defense, we were really aggressive," said Denver coach Doug Moe. "We did a great job on the defensive boards, especially in the second half. We fought over screens and forced turnovers. It was just extraordinary."

Denver trailed 30-21 late in the first quarter. But the Nuggets closed the gap to five after one period and used a 41-point second quarter to take a 69-60 halftime lead.

"I thought we might blow them out a couple of times, but we couldn't make a couple of shots," Moe said. "We had a good game and they didn't. And

"We're going to make y'all complacent."

we've become a little more physical recently and that's helped against teams like San Antonio. Earlier this season we let ourselves get pushed around. But we're holding our ground now."

George Gervin paced San Antonio with 25 points and Mike Mitchell had 22.

T.R. Dunn, saddled with the job of guarding Gervin, said it was impossible to keep him from scoring.

"George is such an outstanding player, he's unbelievable," said Dunn. "You can put two or three guys on him and he still

scores 25. I just tried to overplay him, and fortunately the guys on the weak side helped out a lot."

Denver also hit 37 of 46 free throw attempts, with Issel dropping 13 of 14.

Spurs coach Stan Albeck wasn't happy with the 37 fouls whistled on his team.

"There's a license in the league for the Nuggets to get fouled when they go to the hoop," Albeck said. "You have to keep them off the foul line to win. If you don't do that, you don't have a chance."

But he said he still felt "Denver can't catch us."

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