

Texas A&M

# The Battalion Sports

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## SMU's plans include repeat championship

by Frank L. Christlieb  
Sports Editor

DALLAS — Craig James and Eric Dickerson can't help joking about their situation. It's just that the two SMU tailbacks are getting tired of fielding the same question every day.

Since James and Dickerson first set foot on the SMU campus three years ago, they've easily been among the most prominent players ever to wear Mustang uniforms. Over the past two seasons, the two seniors have alternated at the starting tailback position for the I-formation-oriented Mustangs.

It's not often they're seen on the field at the same time, but that awesome possibility still prompts similar questions before each football season.

"Will there be many times that you two will be on the field at the same time this season?" a reporter asked during an interview session at the second stop on the Southwest Conference press tour in Dallas Tuesday.

James, in a serious manner, said: "From what we've been told, there'll be times when we'll be in there together."

But moments later, James used another of his teammates — sophomore quarterback Lance McIlhenny — in adding to his reply.

"Lance wants to break in at the I-back," James laughed. "We'll have a trio back there."

Not likely, considering McIlhenny's duties as the Mustangs' talented option quarterback. But this year, as usual, it won't be often that the two tailbacks will line up in the SMU backfield simultaneously.

With the Mustangs' success during the last two years, first-year coach Bobby Collins will be content in alternating James and Dickerson at the tailback slot. In

1981, during SMU's 10-1 SWC championship season, the tandem piled up 2,575 yards, with Dickerson's 1,428 total winning the conference rushing title.

Appropriately touted as the "Pony Express," James and Dickerson have combined for a mere 5,637 yards in three years. The 6-3, 215-pound Dickerson leads James 2,833 to 2,804 in the career rushing category.

"You can coach for a lifetime and not have one Dickerson or James," Collins said. "We're fortunate to have both. They are very dominant at their position, and the thing that I like is that they're complete ballplayers."

And, he said: "If a coach is worth his salt, he'll try to find some way to utilize their talent."

Collins, who finished seven years at the University of Southern Mississippi with a 48-30-2 record, said there's little difference between the styles of the Mustangs and his former team.

"We're going to put the passing game a little more into our attack," he said. "We've worked hard on it ... and we'd like to complement our running game with a high percentage passing attack."

"I believe we have the finest option quarterback in the country. We will utilize that and the option play will be a big part of our offense."

Even though the Mustangs committed only 11 turnovers in 1980 and 15 in 1981, Collins said he'd like to improve on that statistic.

"I think we still have a long way to go before we're the offensive team we hope to be," Collins said.

Much more involved in the offensive scheme will be the tight ends, Collins said. Senior Norm Revis and junior Ricky

Bolden are the top two players at that position.

The SMU coach said one of his main concerns about the offense is the line, which lost three players from last year's squad. Starting left guard Joe Beard, 6-3, 227 pounds, has injured a knee during two-a-days and is still in the process of rehabilitating it back to full strength. Collins said: "We need Beard back. He'll be a key to the line."

The Mustang defense, which allowed 12 points and 281 yards a game in 1981, will again feature a 5-2 alignment. However, Collins has had to replace the leadership and talent of graduated tackle Harvey Armstrong and linebacker Eric Ferguson.

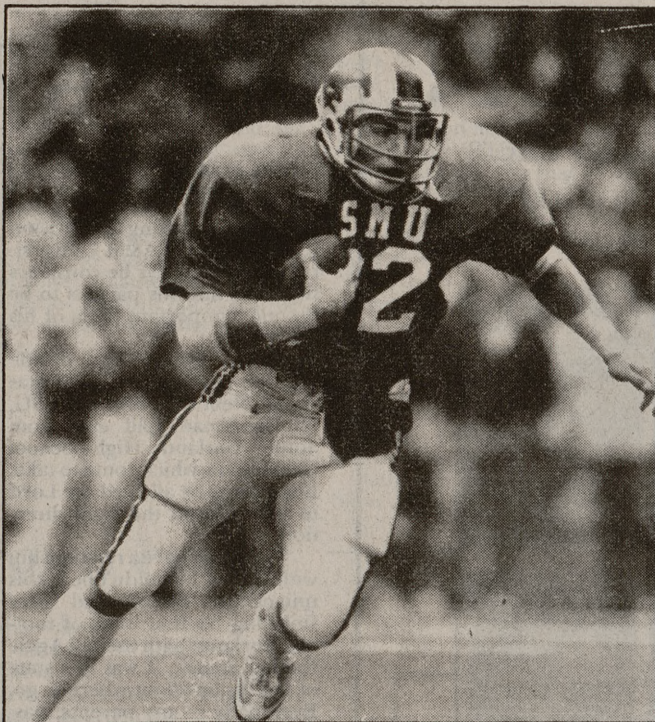
Collins and his staff believe they have assembled a unit that "may bend and bleed, but not break." In an unusual move, the coaches switched starting fullback Jerry Kovar to defensive end during the spring.

"Kovar moved in and almost seemed a natural from day one," Collins said. "He's one of those who seems like his motor's running at all times and we're real pleased with him."

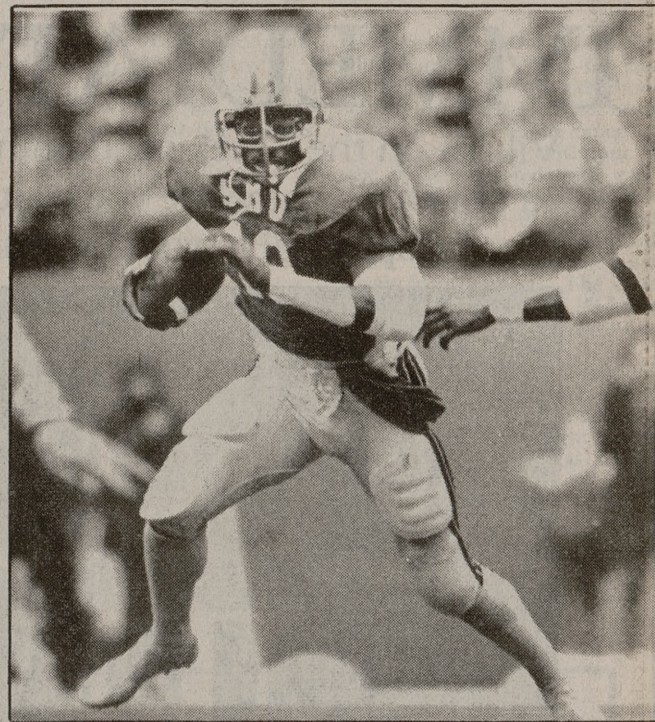
Collins said: "The only way we can be a good, consistent football team is to be a consistent defensive team. Our defense probably doesn't get the publicity that our offense gets, but it certainly gets our attention."

The 48-year-old SMU coach cited right end Russell Washington, linebacker Gary Moten and left cornerback Russell Carter as keys to the Mustang defense. In addition, senior strong safety Wes Hopkins, who made the squad as a walk-on during his freshman year, will help make the Mustangs' secondary one of

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Craig James, SMU tailback



Eric Dickerson, SMU tailback

## Chaney set for injury-free year

by Frank L. Christlieb  
Sports Editor

DALLAS — Most college football players are able to weather through their careers with a limited number of injuries. There's always a sprain here, a bruise there, but nothing too serious.

Such is not the case with Kevin Chaney.

Entering the 1982 season as the SMU Mustangs' starting left defensive tackle, Chaney has withstood several injuries which have slowed his progress and have detracted from his efforts to contribute to the team. But the 6-3, 266-pound Conroe High School graduate, now a senior, has left injury worries behind.

"The first year here was really hard on me," Chaney said Tuesday before his team's afternoon workout. "Everything had really gone my way in high school, with all the awards and the recruiting. All of a sudden, here came adversity, and I really had to fight it. But after a while, it all worked out."

After playing defensive end at Conroe, being recruited as a linebacker and moving to defensive tackle during two-a-day workouts of his freshman year, the injury bug bit Chaney. During his freshman season, he had a broken thumb, and didn't play at all.

A severe ankle sprain slowed Chaney in 1980, when Coach Ron Meyer switched him to nose guard, but he still managed to

total 21 tackles. Although he hurt his right shoulder in the Mustangs' 38-22 victory over Houston in 1981, Chaney was able to play in all 11 SMU games.

Chaney, putting his first three years of college in the past, said he only hopes that the 1982 season brings his team the success it enjoyed last year. The Mustangs won the Southwest Conference championship with a 10-1 regular-season record.

"I'd love to play in the Cotton Bowl, especially since this is my last year," Chaney said. "I'm pretty confident about this season. Not too many things have changed, because we still have most of the same players and a lot of the same leadership."

Speaking of leadership, SMU coach Bobby Collins considers

Chaney a prime source of that guidance.

"I'm sure we'll keep him working at both (tackle and nose guard) positions," Collins said. "He came back this year a little overweight, so he's having to work his way back into shape. He's a proven veteran and gives us stability at the tackle position."

Chaney, a health education major, will probably graduate on time in May. But unlike many of his classmates, Chaney doesn't plan to pursue a career in professional football.

"I'd like to play some more," Chaney said, "but I'm looking at it realistically. There aren't too many people that make it up there, and I've got a good career ahead of me anyway."



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