

The Battalion Sports

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Slocum confident about 3-4 defense

by John P. Lopez

Battalion Staff
 Back in the days of Ed Simonini and Co., the Texas A&M football team was recognized as having one of the most lethal defenses in the country.
 The Aggie 4-3 defense was strong, hard-hitting and more important, took Texas A&M to a share of the Southwest conference championship in 1975. In a word, the Aggie defensive team was overpowering. But those days are gone.
 If the Aggie coaching staff has its way, however, Texas A&M will once again be a feared defensive power in 1983 — but in the 3-4 defense.
 Texas A&M defensive coordinator R.C. Slocum said the Aggies are hoping to improve their defense by implementing the 3-4 alignment this spring. In the 3-4 design there are three defensive linemen, including a noseguard, four linebackers and four men in the secondary. It is used primarily to take advantage of speed and quickness — something Texas A&M is loaded with.

Slocum said he thinks the new defensive scheme fits the Aggies perfectly.

"When we were successful with the 4-3 we had much bigger guys," he said Monday. "We could be successful with it because we had people like Ed Simonini, Tank Marshall and Jacob Green out there."

"But I'm real pleased with it (3-4). The players have adjusted well and it fits our personnel well. On the edges you've got more speed and the four linebackers makes it easier to adjust to the pass."

One reason Slocum and the Aggie coaching staff decided more linebackers should be in the action is because of a study conducted at the end of the 1982 season.

"We did an in-depth study on our personnel after the season to try and find the scheme that fits us," Slocum said. "The big thing that stood out to us was that we're very thin on the defensive line. We've got a limited number of defensive linemen and more good linebackers. So we started to look at the 3-4."

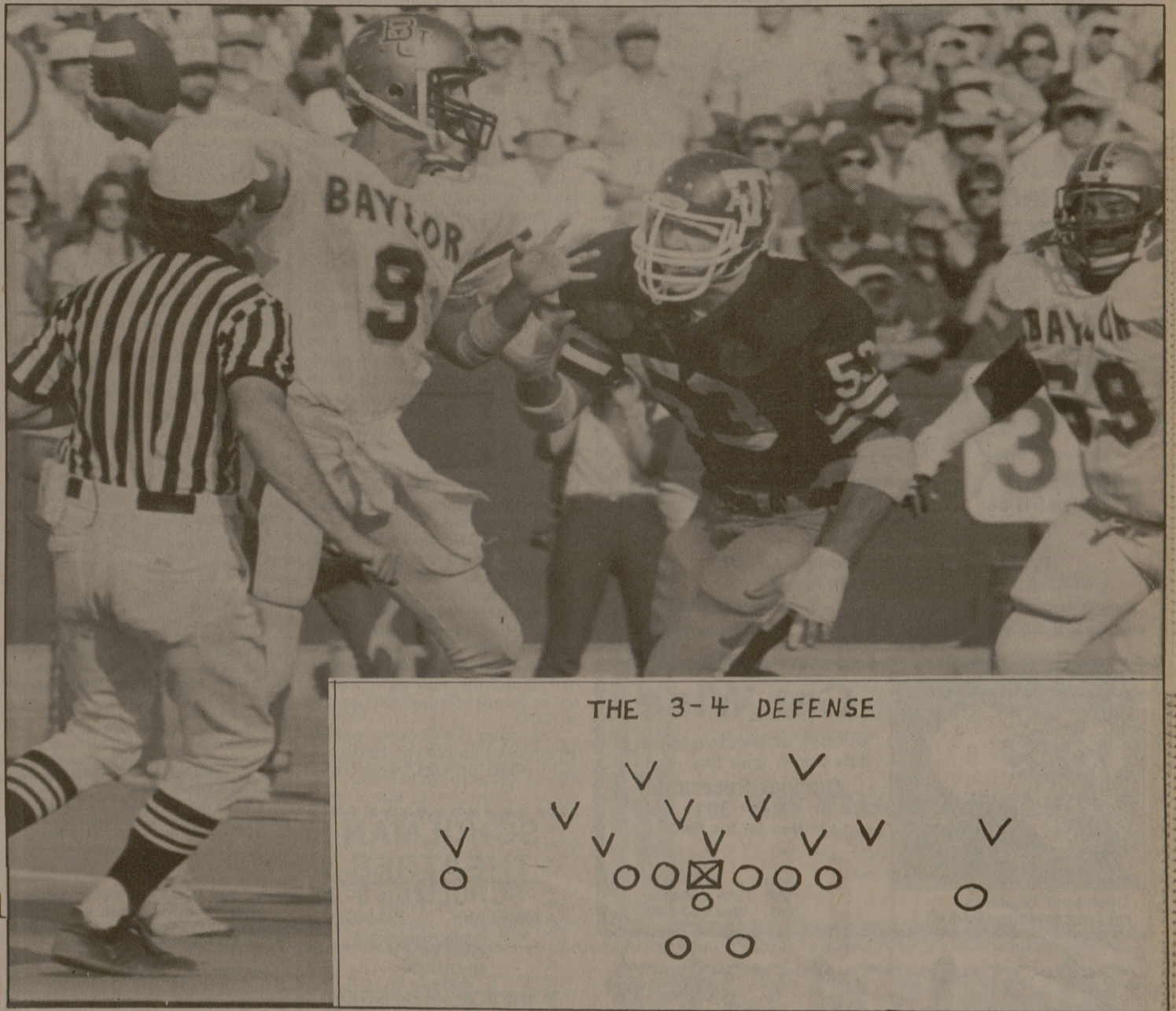
The main advantage in running the 3-4, Slocum said, is that the offense will never know what to expect from the Aggies.

"It gives us a chance to mix up who's dropping," he said. "And from down to down, the offense won't be sure which linebacker is coming and which is dropping — it could be that neither rushes and it could be that both rush."

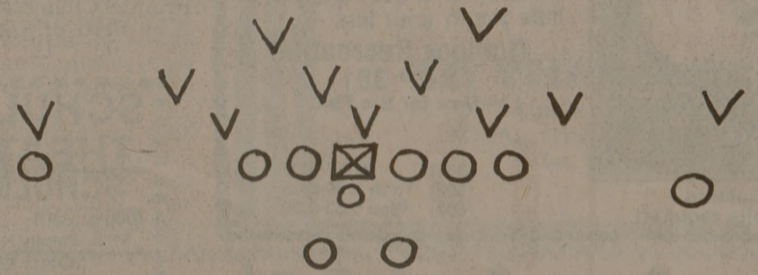
"I think it will work better for us than anything. I can see it becoming our dominant defense in the future. We're really excited about it. We're still experimenting to see what fits us best. And I think it will help our offense too."

If the new alignment is successful next year, Slocum said, it won't be one player who carries the load. But he did add that the noseguard will play an important role. Most teams that run the 3-4 defense put one of their best linemen at noseguard. The noseguard can be either quick or big.

"Really, what you'd like to have is a big guy that's also quick," Slocum said.



THE 3-4 DEFENSE



Sophomore defensive tackle Ray Childress breaks away from his man and rushes David Mangrum of Baylor.

Childress and the Aggie defense are experimenting with the 3-4 alignment this spring (Shown in inset).

NBA playoff wars open tonight; Hawks at Boston

United Press International

While the Boston Celtics have the edge in overall playoff experience, their first-round opponents, the Atlanta Hawks, have been in the playoffs for the past month — at least according to Atlanta Coach Kevin Loughery.

"You have to look at Boston as the most experienced playoff team in basketball," Loughery says. "Our guys played hard ... we deserved to be in the playoffs. We'd been in a playoff situation for the past month — we had to keep winning."

Until Sunday, the Hawks didn't know whether they'd be playing Boston or New Jersey in the opening round, but it was obvious they preferred to play the Nets, whom they beat twice during the regular season. Atlanta won only one of six games against the Celtics.

The Celtics, who haven't had a mini-series since 1977, posted a 56-26 mark and tuned up Sunday with a 114-101 triumph over the 76ers.

"I think we're ready to go," Boston Coach Bill Russell says.

The Hawks, 43-39, are in Boston tonight for Game 1 of a best-of-three Eastern Division preliminary series, with the winner to face Central

Division champion Milwaukee. The Denver Nuggets, 45-37, take the league's highest-scoring offense into Phoenix in Game 1 of a Western Conference mini-series against the Suns, with Midwest Division champion San Antonio awaiting the victor.

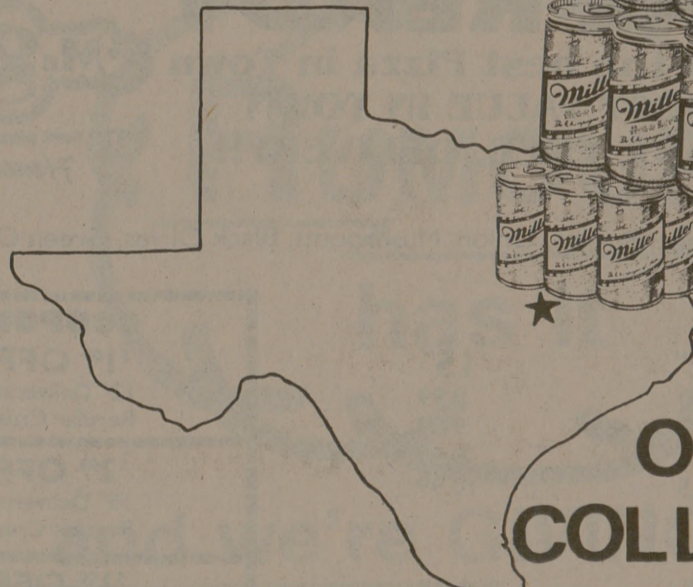
Atlantic Division champion Philadelphia meets the winner of the mini-series between the New Jersey Nets and New York Knicks, with Game 1 slated for Meadowlands Arena Wednesday night. Defending NBA champion Los Angeles, which won the Pacific Division by six games over Phoenix, will meet the winner of the Seattle-Portland series, which opens Wednesday night at the Kingdome.

"Phoenix is playing very well and it'll take a hell of an effort to win," Denver Coach Doug Moe says.

The Suns, 52-29, struggled past San Diego in their regular-season finale, but Coach John MacLeod isn't worried. Phoenix relies on balanced scoring and its own powerful forward duo of Maurice Lucas and Larry Nance, who ranked fourth in blocked shots.

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