

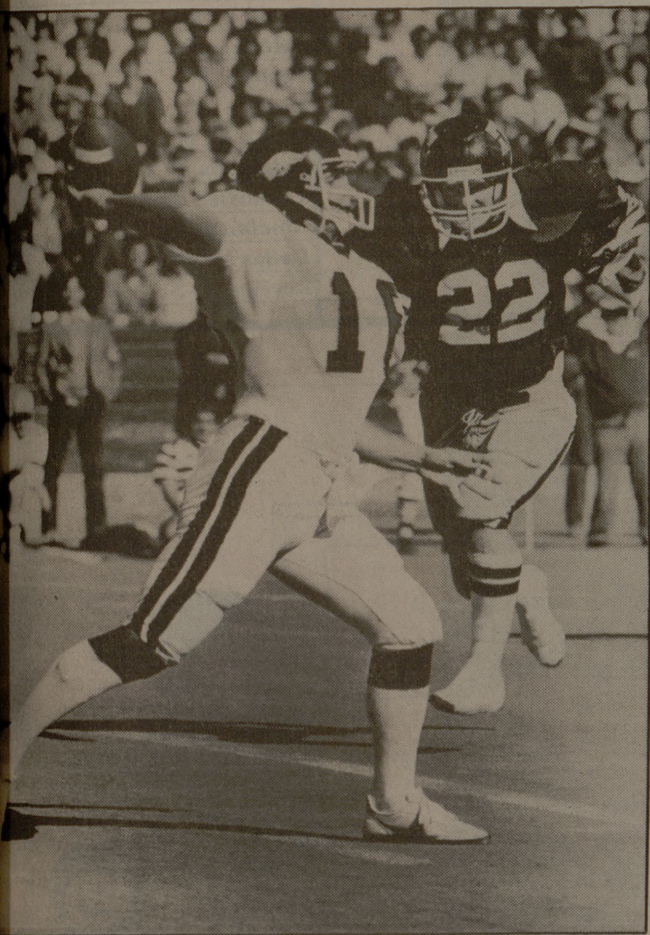
Texas A&M

# The Battalion Sports

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## Billy Cannon

Ag player fights off problems; looks to future



by John P. Lopez  
Battalion Staff

Billy Cannon's fortunes have pretty much taken the same path as those of the Texas A&M football team.

There have been some rough times — real rough times — but things are looking better these days.

Ever since Cannon was at Broadmoor High School in Baton Rouge, La., and he decided he wanted to go to school at Texas A&M, he's had many hurdles to clear.

"There was a lot of pressure to go to LSU back then," Cannon said. "People write you up in the paper and say things about you."

And that was just the first obstacle Cannon has had to overcome. Since then, he's had to decide whether he wants to pursue a pro baseball career or a pro football career. Cannon also has had to make the transition to a new position three times as a Texas A&M football player.

And victory-hungry Aggie fans have often used Cannon as a scapegoat during his four years at Texas A&M. More than once, Cannon has come under fire as an underachiever or a disappointment.

But that's not all. The biggest dilemma Cannon has had to deal with came up this summer when his father, former Heisman Trophy winner Billy Sr., was arrested and convicted on counterfeiting charges.

Consequently, Cannon was pursued by pushy newspaper reporters. The red-headed 22-year-old could have easily thrown up his hands and broken under the pressure, but Aggie head coach Jackie Sherrill said Cannon handled the adversity admirably.

"He's taking this extremely well," Sherrill said during the Southwest Conference media tour this summer. "He's handling his (father's) situation a lot better than I could if I was in his place."

And one of the ways Cannon is handling the situation is by heeding the advice of former baseball pitcher-philosopher Satchel Paige.

"Don't look back, something could be gaining on you," Paige once said. And Cannon hasn't looked back in quite a while — especially when it comes to the Texas A&M football team.

"You look at us this year with the new defense and we haven't really been beaten by anybody," he said. "It makes the game fun. I've had more fun this year than I've ever had playing football."

"When you have incentives behind you, it's always fun to play. And we've got some things to play for right now. Some people are talking about bowls and we're trying to improve our record right now. If we beat TCU, we'll be flying pretty high for the Texas game."

And when Cannon talks about his father, he talks about the influence Billy Sr. has had on his career.

"He always influenced me," Cannon said. "But he never put any pressure on me. The only thing he always emphasized was that if I did play, and I did go out for a team, I wouldn't quit. I remember that."

But quitting football crossed his mind more than once, Cannon said. It's not that Cannon didn't enjoy playing the sport, he just figured he had a better shot at making it in the pros if he played baseball.

"When I first came here, I didn't think I wanted to play football," he said. "I wanted to play baseball. But the way it looks right now, I could probably do better playing football."

"It's helped playing both sports here at A&M because I look back and realize that I really didn't know what I wanted to do. If I would've gone straight into baseball, I would've asked myself, 'I wonder how I would've done if I played football' and if I didn't play baseball here, I would've wondered about that." The Aggies are particularly



Texas A&M's Billy Cannon prepares to hit win last week. A&M plays TCU Saturday. Arkansas' Brad Taylor during the Aggies'

Billy Cannon has rebounded from adversity several times and is enjoying his most productive year ever for the Texas A&M football team.

## Mavericks win despite calls

United Press International

DALLAS — Mark Aguirre's 30-foot jump shot with 58 seconds remaining provided the winning points Thursday night and the Dallas Mavericks overcame a series of controversial rulings in the final moments to beat the New Jersey Nets, 115-113.

The win kept Dallas unbeaten at home this season, but the Mavericks had to survive a shot at the buzzer by Darrell Dawkins to nip the Nets.

Dallas trailed by 11 in the second quarter, fought back to within two early in the third period and fell behind by eight late in the quarter.

Dallas, despite being outmuscled for much of the evening on the boards, clawed back in the final quarter and eventually tied the game at 112-112 on a jump shot by Pat Cummings with 1:31 to go.

Moments later Aguirre hit his shot to put Dallas in front. Dawkins then hit one of two free throws to get New Jersey to within a point.

During the final 45 seconds the two teams traded turnovers and Dallas' Elston Turner then missed two free throws with 10 seconds to go to give the Nets a chance.

## A&M tennis to host tournament

The Texas A&M women's tennis team will host a four-way tennis tournament starting at 1 p.m. today at the Omar Smith Tennis Courts.

Four teams — Texas A&M, University of Houston, Oral Roberts University and Lamar University — will compete in the event. The final rounds are scheduled to begin at 9 a.m. Sunday.

Texas A&M coach Jan Cannon said the Cougars are favored to win the tournament.

Both Houston and Texas A&M played in the Rice Invitational Nov. 11-13. Houston placed first out of the 12 teams competing and Texas A&M placed third.

"Realistically, UH should be favored," Cannon said. "They just got through proving they were stronger than us."

Leading the Houston team will be Margaret Redfearn, who won the Southwest Conference singles championship last year.

## Kings crown Spurs by one

United Press International

SAN ANTONIO — Eddie Johnson canned 25 points Thursday, including two free throws with six seconds left, to lift the Kansas City Kings to a 129-128 NBA win over the San Antonio Spurs.

The Kings hit 20 of 22 shots from the floor in the third period as they outscored San Antonio 46-26 to take a 103-93 lead into the final period.

Larry Drew hit 11 of his 21 points in the third quarter and Steve Johnson pumped in 10 of his 20 points in the stanza. San Antonio hit 18 of 20 free throw attempts but only four of 15 field goal attempts in the third quarter.

George Gervin hit 24 of his game-high 35 points in the second half, including 13 in the final period. Mike Mitchell, who

gave San Antonio its only lead of the final period at 128-127 with 16 seconds left, added 24 points for the Spurs.

The game lasted 2 hours and 32 minutes because of 78 personal fouls, including 43 against the Kings — a record for an opponent of the San Antonio franchise.

Billy Knight added 20 points for the Kings. Gene Bank, the NBA's leading field goal percentage shooter, scored 17 for San Antonio and hit all six of his field goal attempts.

Artis Gilmore had 17 points, 10 rebounds and seven blocked shots for the losers.

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glad Cannon decided to play football this season. Since being moved to linebacker, Cannon has had one of his most productive seasons ever in a maroon and white uniform.

"I feel pretty comfortable right now," Cannon said. "I had my doubts when we first started because the first thing they did was put us up against some freshmen linemen that weighed 240- or 250-pounds and I had to take those guys on. I had never done that before."

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