

Sports

Athletic Department doesn't eat our tax dollars

Budget of \$7.8 million produced completely within department

By Doug Hall
Sports Writer

There's a misconception around Texas A&M these days that state-appropriated tax dollars fund Texas A&M's Athletic Department and the "enormous" salary paid to Athletic Director and Head Football Coach Jackie Sherrill.

Viewpoint

Fact: The Athletic Department receives from the University a \$750,000 grant that is designated for women's athletics. Other than that, the department's entire \$7.8 million budget is produced within the Athletic Department.

On the eve of this year's A&M vs. Texas Thanksgiving matchup, a letter to the editor of *The Battalion* read: "In a time of budget cuts, A&M continues to put huge amounts of money into athletics. . . . If we want a world-class university, we should cut back drastically in athletic expenditures and use the

money to attract more high-quality faculty. I have one suggestion for (A&M President Frank) Vandiver: Give A&M Athletic Director Jackie Sherrill the option of taking a big salary cut or going to coach at another school."

Don't think, however, that the author of this letter is alone in the opinion that the Athletic Department eats up our collective tax dollars.

Countless times — especially before the Cotton Bowl became a New Year's Day tradition for Aggies — I have heard fans and non-fans alike mutter and mumble about paying for Sherrill's salary, the special treatment toward athletes and the cost of "major college athletics."

The facts, however, don't substantiate the complaints. In fact, even with university budgets shouldering state-directed cuts due to the fall of oil-related revenues, virtually all aspects of athletics at A&M are holding their own.

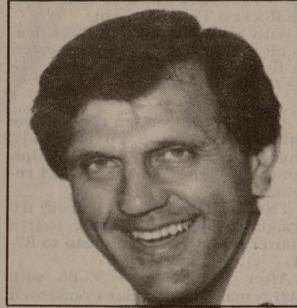
The letter also referred to a comment from Vandiver in which the president defended sports in the academic world by saying sports encourage former students to contribute to the school.

Predictably, the letter said if the only reason former students give money to A&M is because of the football team, then we obviously don't deserve to be a "world-class university."

But is there really anything wrong with sports in the academic world or with former students making donations to the athletic programs at a particular school?

The two largest sources of revenue for the Athletic Department are ticket sales, which produce \$4.25 million, and scholarships and gifts funded through the Aggie Club which bring in \$1.7 million.

Both ticket sales and contributions produce money that people willingly part with. No one makes alumni buy season tickets year after year or do-



Jackie Sherrill

nate a permanently endowed 12th Man scholarship. No one makes students line up for Cotton Bowl tickets three days in advance or consistently pack the east side of Kyle Field for football games.

But both things continue to happen.

And when the Athletic Department at A&M, unlike other schools such as the University of Houston which is the unhappy owner of a \$4 million deficit, continues to pay its

own way, then why fix something that isn't broken?

The most common attack to this question is to say that college athletics is indeed a broken product. This argument is perpetuated by saying collegiate athletics is a corrupt business that exploits athletes and wastes time and money.

Many colleges, including A&M, have been accused of scandalous activities. Some, such as TCU and SMU, have even been punished for illegal activities.

But those wrongdoings can be rectified. Athletics provide a school and a community with a sense of identification, a source of pride or remorse and an outlet for a large number of students.

Although they don't receive the publicity or the fanfare of the Athletic Department, the Intramural Department and the Department of Health and Physical Education also are areas of athletics at A&M that affect the everyday student.

Like the Athletic Department, these two departments were affected by the budget cuts mainly because the employee pay increase was put on hold. But unlike other departments that lost sizeable portions of their budgets, these departments

rolled out of the way of the falling hatchet without affecting the services they provide the University.

The P.E. department offers over 300 sections of 33 different activities to A&M students through its P.E. 199 programs. Despite the budget cuts that have affected other areas of the department, these programs have not been hindered because they are funded through a \$12 fee that enrolling P.E. students pay.

The Intramural Department funds its 27 club sports and intramural programs through a portion of the \$65 student services fee that each student pays at the beginning of the semester. This fee, which in turn finances 15 areas of student activities, has a state-mandated ceiling of \$90 that most other Southwest Conference schools already charge.

Dennis Corrington, director of the Intramural Department, perhaps summed up the role of athletics best by saying, "Our goal is to spend the money we have available to provide each student at A&M with a recreational outlet."

The end result: Athletics at A&M affect thousands of students in a positive manner every day and, with minor exceptions, cost the students only what they are willing to pay.

Landry says Collier probable starter for Sunday's game against Chicago

IRVING (AP) — Dallas Coach Tom Landry said Tuesday that third-string quarterback Reggie Collier, who has thrown only six NFL passes, probably will start for the Cowboys against the Chicago Bears on Sunday.

"We'll probably get him in right off," Landry said. "We'll probably start him."

A three-year starter for the USFL's Orlando Renegades, Collier has completed four passes for 52 yards and one touchdown.

Collier's start "will take some of the pressure off Steve Pelluer. We'll probably use both of them but it's an opportunity to see a player. We'll

have Steve ready as a backup," Landry said.

Landry said Chicago will be a severe test for Collier. "You learn a lot about people when you play the Bears," he said.

Collier, who was a sixth-round draft choice in 1983, "has a lot of work ahead of him and he knows it," said Landry, who has criticized the player for sloppy work habits.

"He might be a player some day but he's not as dedicated as he should be," Landry said. "We'll have to cut our offense down to plays we think he can handle best. He's more comfortable back there when he's moving."

Collier rushed for 606 yards and scored 12 touchdowns during his last season with the Renegades. For Dallas, he's run one time for 21 yards.

Pelluer has waded through a roller-coaster season as the starting quarterback after Danny White suffered a broken wrist in the ninth game against the New York Giants. He's thrown 16 interceptions and only seven touchdown passes.

"It's not Steve's fault we're down where we are," Landry said. "His confidence may be down a little, but he made the play that got us ahead against Philadelphia. Then the defense let down."

Paul McDonald, a former Cleveland Browns quarterback who was obtained as a free agent, also is available.

"McDonald could play if needed," Landry said. "He's a smart quarterback."

The Cowboys, 7-8, are faced with the possibility of their first losing season since 1964. Their 20-year streak of winning seasons ended Sunday with a 23-21 loss to the Philadelphia Eagles.

"This is an important game for us," Landry said. "You want to win it if you can. A win gives you a better outlook for next year. We don't want to start next season on a downslope."

Southern Cal talks to Teaff about head coaching job

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Athletic Director Mike McGee expressed hope Tuesday that a successor to head football coach Ted Tollner at the University of Southern California will be selected early in 1987.

"I think in the first third of January we would hope to have a coach aboard," McGee told the Associated Press. "We don't want to put artificial time constraints on ourselves. It's too important a decision."

According to published reports, McGee has talked with Baylor Coach Grant Teaff, Miami Coach Jimmy Johnson, and Dave Levy, an assistant coach for the San Diego Chargers, concerning

the Trojans' coaching job.

The dismissal of Tollner as the Southern Cal head coach was announced on Dec. 8, nine days after a 38-37 loss to Notre Dame.

Teaff, who has been Baylor's head coach for 15 years, confirmed that he met with McGee last week for nearly two hours in Dallas.

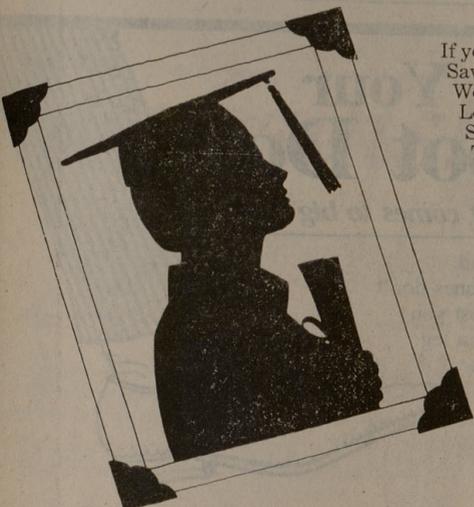
"They called and asked for permission to visit with me and Baylor gave them permission," Teaff said. "The only thing I can say is my commitment and loyalty to Baylor runs very deep."

It also has been reported that McGee wants to interview Paul Hackett, an assistant coach for the Dallas Cowboys.

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