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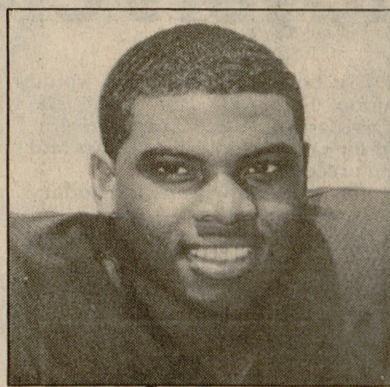
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Aggies' Jones relishes new defensive role

By Anthony Wilson
 Sports Writer



Gary Jones

Playing in the defensive backfield is similar to fighting on the front lines of a war — it's no place for inexperienced rookies. However, there is a difference between the two.

A mistake in combat is usually not witnessed by a crowd. Sometimes the person in error is even able to crawl into the underbrush to suffer alone. However, when a defensive back makes a mistake, it occurs in the wide open spaces of the secondary for the whole world, or at least 50,000 people, to see. And then, as if the cornerback or safety doesn't feel bad enough for failing, people say he got "burned," or "toasted," or "faced."

Texas A&M has plenty of experience in the secondary in seniors Chet Brooks and Kip Corrington and junior Alex Morris. However, the only member of the Aggie's "Wrecking Crew" defensive backfield who has not been beaten for a touchdown is sophomore cornerback Gary Jones.

"To be the youngest back there, people tend to pick on you since you're the youngest and most inexperienced," Jones said. "But it's just something you have to take in stride. You've got to rise to that challenge or they're gonna keep picking on you."

Actually, Jones is not totally inexperienced. He saw some action at free safety last season as a true freshman when Corrington went down

quick feet, so they tried me over there."

Even after the weight loss, the 6-foot-2 Jones still weighs 210 pounds and runs the 40 in 4.5 seconds.

The move from safety to cornerback has been a difficult adjustment, Jones said.

"At free safety, you get a lot more action," he said. "Corner's a little bit more challenging. At first when I moved to corner, I wasn't too fond of it because moving over to a new position, it's always hard to adapt."

"I like it now. I've been playing it for about four weeks." The most difficult aspect of playing cornerback is the isolation of the position, Jones said. Because cornerbacks are positioned near the sidelines and are responsible for covering downfield, they have no one to back them up and are often the last line of defense.

"You're out there all alone — like on an island," Jones said. "It's you and that receiver. It's knowing that you don't have any help deep. At free safety, you're usually just helping other people. Now you're the only one — just you and the receiver."

Although he's the only starting defensive back who hasn't been burned for a touchdown, Jones doesn't make a big deal about it.

"They haven't thrown any in the end zone with me yet," he said. "That could be one of the reasons. But I could get beat in the next game. Everybody's going to get beat."

Saturday's game against the Uni-

versity of Houston should prove to be the secondary's biggest challenge of the year. Houston head coach Jack Pardee, who was an All-America linebacker at A&M in 1956, installed the run-and-shoot offense for the Cougars. Against Baylor last week, freshman quarterback Andre Ware completed 25 of 62 passes for 404 yards.

UH receiver Jason Phillips caught 14 passes against Baylor and led the nation with 9.3 receptions per game.

To combat the run-and-shoot, defensive backs have been working on their man-to-man technique, which they run about half the time with zone defense, Jones said. Jones is scheduled to cover Phillips all week, freshman quarterback Andre Ware completed 25 of 62 passes for 404 yards.

"I really prefer playing man-to-man," Jones said. "In zone, it's not much of a challenge. You just have to take care of a third — take care of the zone. In man-to-man, you have to watch that guy all over the field."

Jones was a highly touted cornerback his senior year of high school in Tyler, but he had no intention to play the position once he got to college.

"I don't like getting hit," he said. "I took a beating when I was in high school. I just said when I got to college I was going to get the beating instead of getting beaten."

"At quarterback, you get hit from the blind side all the time and you wake up the next morning hurting. I wanted to dish out a little punishment instead of being dished upon."

Former Browns coach interested in SMU post

DALLAS (AP) — A former Cleveland Browns coach said he was interested in talking with new Southern Methodist University Athletic Director Doug Single about the school's head football coaching job.

Sam Rutigliano said Single offered him the head coaching job at Northwestern in "June or July" 1986, but he turned it down because he didn't believe he had time to put together the kind of staff he wanted.

He said he hoped Single will consider him for the SMU job, but that he hasn't talked to him because he did not want to pressure him.

"To be very honest, SMU, to me, has the two things that are very, very important," said Rutigliano. "One is geography, the other is tradition."

Single told the *Dallas Times Herald* from his home in Evanston, Ill., that he would not confirm he is considering Rutigliano.

"I'm not going to talk names," said Single. "If Sam says he wants to be considered, that's fine."

Rutigliano said he was intrigued by the idea of working with Single.

"Doug Single and I have a very nice chemistry," he said. "If I would

have accepted the job at Northwestern, it would have totally been because of him."

"I think (SMU) made the right decision in hiring (President A. Kenneth Pye). I know they made the right decision in hiring Doug Single. I had some second thoughts about not accepting the Northwestern job because of him."

Rutigliano, who coached the Browns from 1978-84, graduated from Tulsa and received his masters degree in education from Columbia.

Single said earlier he will place academics above athletics while SMU

tries to rebuild the football program, which was suspended for the 1987 season by the NCAA in February for major rules violations that include cash payments to players.

SMU officials later canceled the 1988 season because of harsh sanctions.

"I really believe SMU has made a statement they want to do the right way," Rutigliano said. "I believe there are a lot of people that are doing it the right way. That's the kind of job I would like to be involved in."

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