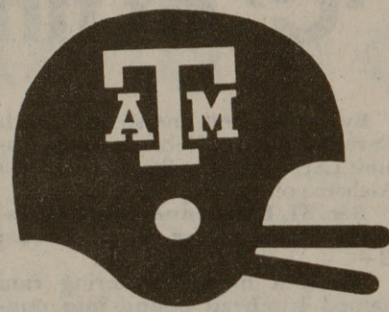


QB competitive even as young baseballer

Nickname 'Bucky' given to Richardson as a Little Leaguer

By Tim Stanfield
Sports Writer



Paul Tubbs was in the early stages of coaching his initial little league baseball team in Baton Rouge, La. in the summer of 1980 when a friend of his, Paul Richardson, showed up at the field on day with a potential player for him.

Richardson, who had just moved his family from Birmingham, Ala., had his 10-year old son John in tow, even though the other players in the league were 11-12 years of age. "He wasn't very big back then," Tubbs noted last Friday afternoon at a restaurant in Huntsville. "I already had a full team, but added Paul's son to my squad as a favor to him."

Tubbs had something of a reunion last week with John, who is better known on the A&M campus as "Bucky." The two hadn't seen each other in nearly six years due to the fact that the former had moved away from Baton Rouge in 1981.

Tubbs initially had a little problem with Bucky, since the youngster didn't want to catch, which is where he was needed the most.

"When I joined the team I wanted to pitch, but the coach told me that I was going to either catch or sit on the bench," Richardson said. "As things turned out, I not only caught but also played a little shortstop and pitched a little, too."

By the time the season ended, Richardson had fallen in love with catching, going to far as to tell Tubbs that it was okay with him if he never played anywhere else on the field.

"That's Bucky all right; he was then — and still is now — such a competitor that he always mastered any position or sport that he played," Tubbs added. "Two players from each team in the league made the all-star team, and I didn't hesitate at all to nominate Bucky."

Not only that, but Tubbs can lay claim as the person who gave Richardson his nickname.

"I found out quickly that he was the kind of kid that played better if he was agitated a little bit," Tubbs continued. "Most of the other kids on the team already had nicknames that I had given them. Our pitcher answered to 'Tongue' because he always stuck out his tongue as he threw the ball to the plate."

"Another guy was very short, so

terback for Louisiana State because they had returning starter Tom Hodson and didn't use quarterbacks except to throw the ball. "There was going to be competition wherever I went to school, so when A&M recruited me, I decided to take up the challenge there," Richardson said. "At the time Kevin Murray was expected to return for his senior year, which would have given the Aggies two fifth-year senior quarterbacks (Craig Stump being the other one). "I expected to be redshirted, then battle Lance Pavlas for the starting job next season, but Murray surprised everyone by declaring himself eligible for the NFL draft."

Richardson still expected to be redshirted, but was told by offensive coordinator Lynn Amedee that he might be used when the Aggies played Southern Mississippi.

Neither Stump nor Pavlas had performed well in A&M's loss to LSU or win over Washington, nor did either do well in Jackson, Miss.

The result was the surprising sight of seeing No. 7 take the field for A&M in the fourth period.

"I was a little nervous, though the coaches had told me to get ready to go in," Richardson noted. "All I wanted to do was move the ball and get some points on the board."

One could say Richardson fulfilled his own wish, because shortly thereafter he raced 82 yards up the middle of the field for the game-clinching touchdown.

It was the longest run ever for an A&M quarterback, erasing the old mark of 80 yards set by David Beal in the fourth quarter in 1978 at Lawrence, Kan., against Kansas.

"It was a straight drop-back pass play, but nobody was open," Richardson recalled. "I saw an opening up the middle and took off. I couldn't believe it when I looked around downfield and saw that nobody was anywhere close to me."

Nevertheless, Richardson found himself back on the sidelines the next week, when A&M lost to Texas Tech, 27-21.

In Houston, a puzzled Tubbs couldn't believe his eyes as A&M lost with his protégé on the sidelines. "I didn't think Bucky would start, but once the others had trouble, I surely thought that he would get to play," he said. "But he did get in

there against Houston, and started against Baylor. "When A&M rolled up that big win over the Bears with Bucky in there, I was sure that he would be the starting quarterback the rest of the year. But he wasn't."

Richardson's star sank as the A&M offense seemed to lose its focus and he was replaced in the Arkansas game.

Stump led the Aggies to a touchdown in that game and played almost all of the Texas Christian game.

With the Southwest Conference title on the line against Texas, Stump played most of the contest, tossing an interception and losing a fumble that each resulted in three Texas points.

Richardson came in the game in the third period, but had to leave twice when UT players intentionally took off his shoe.

"I saw him come off the field the second time screaming mad, and I knew that if he went back out there he would get some points on the board," Tubbs said. "And he did."

With the score tied 13-13 with a little over nine minutes left to play, Stump went down with a leg injury, and Richardson entered the game.

"I knew that Bucky was going to get them a touchdown and that the Aggies were going to the Cotton Bowl," Tubbs noted. "He has always been able to rise to the occasion."

And he did, too, leading A&M to a touchdown that he himself scored on a seven-yard run.

"That is my top thrill in athletics so far," Richardson said. "Just to be able to contribute to the team is great enough, but for me to score the winning touchdown is beyond words."

"And, yes, when I held my hands up in a 'double hook 'em horns,' it was on purpose."

Tubbs expects Richardson to start at quarterback in the Cotton Bowl, but Richardson wasn't so sure.

"The coaches always tell us to be prepared for every game as if we were going to start, and that's the way I am getting ready for Notre Dame," he noted. "I would like to start, but I have full confidence in Coach Amedee and Coach (Jackie) Sherrill and know that we will do well regardless of who is the quarterback."

Safety/receiver remembers '68 Cotton Bowl

By Tim Stanfield
Reporter



When Texas A&M junior safety-wide receiver Tommy Maxwell took the field at the Cotton Bowl on January 1, 1968, he had mixed feelings of awe and confidence.

"We were a close group of guys and had already gone through so much that playing Alabama didn't scare us at all — once we took the field," Maxwell said Thursday from Georgetown. "That season we started off losing our first four games, and outside of our team, nobody thought we could win half our games, much less the SWC title."

As he had all year, Maxwell contributed to the Aggies' 20-16 win on both sides of the ball, recovering a fumble and intercepting a pass at safety, then catching a seven-yard touchdown pass in the second period that put A&M ahead to stay.

Maxwell said, "There was no fear of (Alabama) them after the game started. Having to win all those games in a row — and most of them went down to the wire — had given us the collective feeling that we simply weren't going to be beaten."

Maxwell had come to A&M in the fall of 1965 as a member of Stallings' initial recruiting class.

"My father went to A&M and I grew up an Aggie fan, but right up until the last minute I was all set to

go to SMU," Maxwell continued. "But I liked the A&M coaches, especially Lloyd Hale, who recruited me."

He spent his sophomore season strictly as a wide receiver, catching 27 passes for 445 yards and four touchdowns.

After starting the 1967 season at wide receiver, Maxwell went to Stallings, requesting that he be allowed to play defensive back. His first start came against Texas Tech.

Maxwell played safety, current A&M defensive back coach Curley Hallman moved to a defensive half-back, and after Tom Sooy was injured early in the Tech game, sopho-

more Ross Brupbacher filled the other defensive half-back spot.

A&M defeated Tech 28-24 on the last play of the game, then drilled Texas Christian 20-0 and Baylor 21-3.

Arkansas Coach Frank Broyles had never lost to A&M (winning nine games in a row), but that year he saw his Hogs trampled 33-21.

Maxwell recovered a Hog fumble at the Arkansas 30 in the fourth period, and a few plays later he caught a 15-yard touchdown pass from Edd Hargett to put A&M ahead to stay 26-21.

Following a week off, A&M beat Rice in Houston 18-3 while Texas was losing to TCU for the last time as of 1987.

Again Maxwell provided excitement on both sides of the ball, intercepting a pass at the A&M 40 midway through the fourth period, then catching a seven-yard pass for a touchdown on the ensuing drive.

The Aggies broke a 10-game losing streak to Texas with a 10-7 win during which Maxwell stopped a Longhorn drive with a pass interception at the A&M nine yard line.

"When Texas had the ball there at the end of the game, we all were saying, 'We just can't let them beat us, and they didn't,'" Maxwell continued. "It was such a relief when the game ended because the season had been so tense for us."

Once the Cotton Bowl game began, the Aggies found out that Ala-

bama quarterback Ken Stabler was a good as they had heard.

Stabler gave the Tide an early lead with a short touchdown run, but from then on, he was a marked man.

After earlier intercepting a pass Maxwell set up an A&M score with a fumble recovery in the second quarter.

"Coach Stallings had asked me what kind of pattern I might run in order to beat their All-American safety Bobby Johns, and I told him that the middle looked open," Maxwell said. "I ran a down and in to the center of the end zone and caught the ball with Johns draped all over me."

By catching that pass, Maxwell earned the distinction of being the last player in an NCAA Division I bowl game to both intercept a pass and later catch one for a touchdown.

"That game got tense at the end, too, when Stabler was tossing those long passes," Maxwell said. "Wide receiver Dennis Homan got behind us on one play, but dropped the ball. On another play, he got loose over the middle, but I was able to grab a leg and bring him down."

It would be left to Hallman, who played high school ball in Alabama and would later become Homan's brother-in-law, to cinch the win, which he did with consecutive pass interceptions of Stabler passes.

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