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# Wallace thrives in the

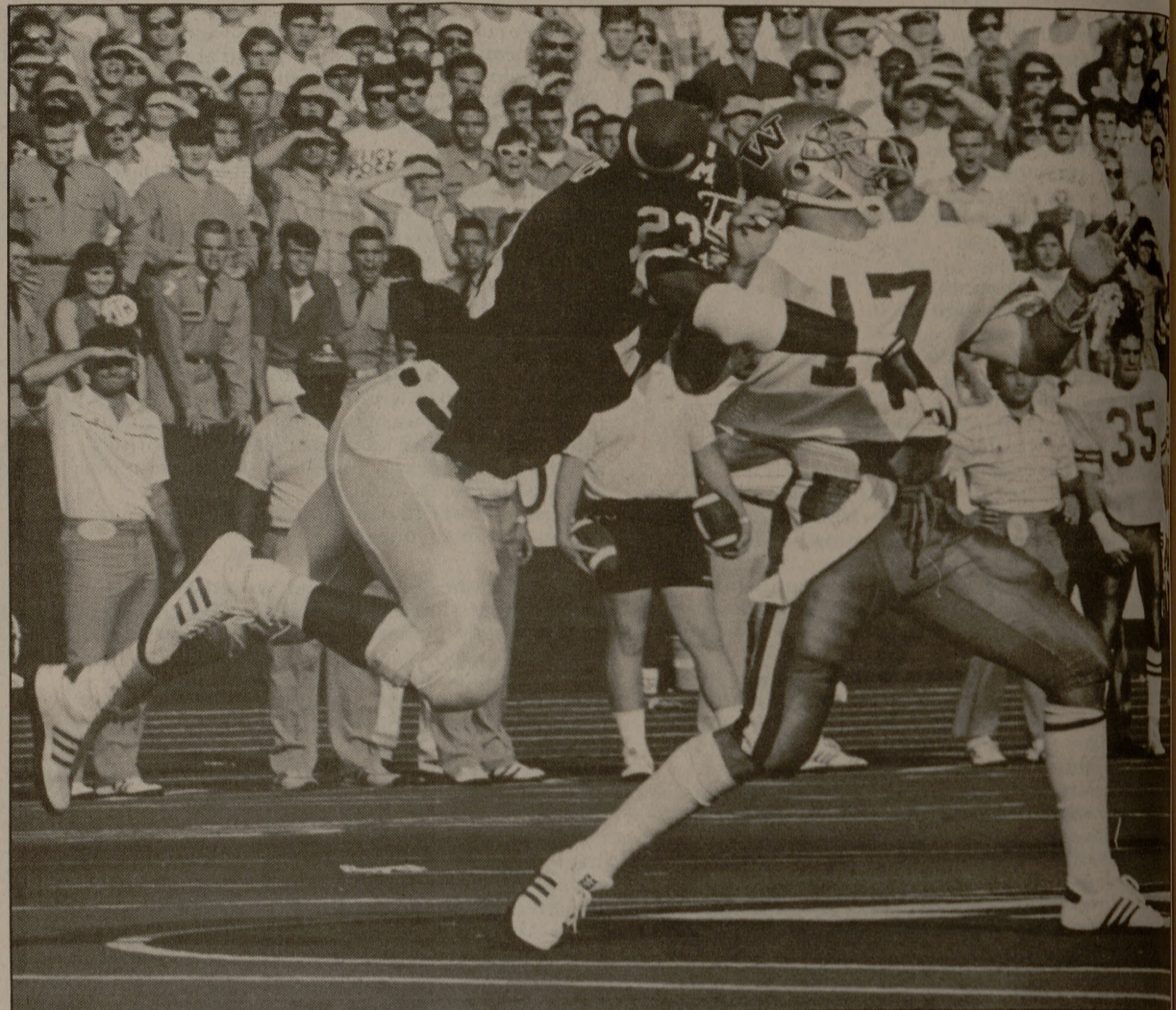


Photo by Jay James

Ask former Heisman Trophy candidate if Aaron Wallace can cause damage in the backfield. Wal-

lace established himself early in 1987 as one of the top linebackers in the Southwest Conference

## 'The Other Blitz Brother' relaxes on the road to All-America status

By Hal L. Hammons

Sports Editor  
August 6, 1988: Texas A&M Media Day.

Hundreds of fans mill about Kyle Field looking for their favorite Aggie football players. Many of them are armed with cameras, looking to get a photograph of one of the giants in white.

The star of the show is easy to spot — the man with the number 83 on his back and a huge throng of admirers surrounding him, looking for an autograph from the man who almost certainly will be one of the first 10 or 15 players chosen in the 1989 NFL draft.

John Roper, All-America, Lombardi Trophy candidate, voted Southwest Conference Defensive Player of the Year by everyone who had eyes last year. The very name is becoming synonymous with A&M linebackers.

About 40 feet away stands a different player — different in almost every sense of the word.

No hordes of autograph-hunters swarm him; occasionally a young fan asks him to sign his football or some parents will ask for a picture of him holding their young child.

But as often as not he stands alone, looking out of place — almost lost.

It's representative of the way his exploits frequently are overlooked on the football field. He's always being compared to The Man. Seldom is he recognized for his own abilities and accomplishments.

If any other linebacker had amassed 12 sacks on the season in 1988, no doubt he would have been swamped with admirers and writers alike. Playing for any other team, almost certainly he would have been the center of attention.

But Aaron Wallace plays across the field from the All-American. 'Nuff said.

So last year, when Wallace registered a bone-crushing sack on national television, it was not unusual to hear commentators talk about how the blockers were overcompensating on Roper's side.

He's always "the other Blitz Brother," never "that incredible outside linebacker from Texas A&M."

John Roper casts a long shadow, there can be no doubt. But Aaron Wallace doesn't mind standing in the shade.

He just goes about his task, doing most of the talking on the field and living his off-field life in his own slow, methodical way.

If he's in a hurry to catch Roper on the field, it doesn't show up in his gait in everyday life. It is almost a joke among his teammates, the way he slowly shuffles around. Always nice 'n' easy.

It even shows up when he signs an autograph; eschewing the typical, superstar scrawl, he carefully forms each letter so there can be no mistake what name is written. He even adds "# 23" when he's finished, almost as if he accepts it as fact that his number is far more known to fans than his name.

He talks the same way he walks — slowly. You don't get the impression that he doesn't like to talk — it's more like he's taking his time about it, amking sure of every word. What's the rush, after all? He knows that if a reporter asks him a question, the reporter will be willing to wait for an answer.

Slow and sure — that describes almost everything about Wallace. Everything except his action on the field.

Teammate and fellow-linebacker Dana Batiste says, "He's slow off the field but fast on the field. He walks slow, he talks slow. But when he gets on the field he has an acceleration about him. It's exciting."

He hasn't been slow about climbing to his potential, either.

As a sophomore last year, unsure of even a starting position at the beginning of the year, quickly he established himself as one of the top linebackers in the Southwest Conference.

The accolades don't quite read like those of Roper, but they are quite impressive in their own right:

Named second-team All-SWC by the Associated Press, Dallas Morning News, Houston Post and Houston Chronicle; first-team All-SWC by the San Antonio Light; ESPN player-of-the-game in A&M's win over Texas; honorable mention All-America.

And what lies ahead, only time will tell.

A&M Defensive Coordinator R.C. Slocum: "He has really great potential to be a great outside linebacker — as much as anybody around. I don't know if players like Aaron really know how great they can be. He's in the position where he's starting to realize he can be a great player."

A&M Outside Linebacker Coach Bob Davie: "Aaron is a guy who



Battalion file photo

Wallace put the heat on quarterbacks as a freshman. But in 1986 who could have guessed how common this sight would become?

## Now that's improvement!

Aaron Wallace's statistics	1987	1986
Tackles	73	9
Unassisted tackles	47	7
Assisted tackles	26	2
Fumbles caused	6	0
Quarterback pressures	12	0
Quarterback sacks	12	5
Tackles for losses	9	0
Passes broken up	1	0
Tackles — game high (opponent)	13 (UT)	3 (NTSU, Rice)

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