

Sherrill gets supporters' vote of confidence

By Hal L. Hammons
Sports Editor
and
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Staff Writer

Jackie Sherrill got multiple votes of confidence from Texas A&M officials and supporters this weekend as the turmoil surrounding the coach and former A&M player George Smith continued to boil.

In a report in Friday's edition of the *Dallas Morning News*, Smith said he had received "hush money" from Coach Sherrill concerning recent recruitment violations, including one \$500 shipment four days after the NCAA placed A&M on probation. Smith retracted his allegations Saturday at a press conference, saying he made the story up to promote a book he was preparing with News reporter Doug Bedell.

Lane Stephenson, director of A&M's Office of Public Information, said after the press conference that A&M's investigation of the situation is still in progress.

David Eller, chairman of the Regents, said Saturday he was completely in support of the head coach and athletic director.

"I am definitely backing Sherrill," Eller said. "I'm not only backing him, I'm behind him 100 percent."

"A&M is built on the support of your fellow man and your team. Besides, he has done so much for Texas A&M."

At the regularly scheduled Board meeting Sunday, Eller said, "I think Sherrill has done more for A&M, through the 12th Man, than any other person in athletics. I feel confident that Jackie has done an outstanding

job. I never doubted that for a second.

"There are always going to be overzealous alumni and they make it difficult not to have any violations."

"Jackie Sherrill's job — in my opinion and the Board's opinion — was never in jeopardy and certainly is not in jeopardy now. Unless something new is brought out, I consider it a closed issue."

Eller said George Smith's comments at Saturday's press conference were enough for the University.

"The investigation is finished as far as George Smith is concerned," he said.

Regent William McKenzie agreed with Eller's endorsement of Sherrill.

"I don't know much about what's happened," McKenzie said. "But I am very supportive of Sherrill. I'd have to say he is one of the finest men

to ever set foot on this campus."

A&M student body President Jay Hays said he wasn't as sure.

"Obviously Sherrill has been here at A&M during some controversial times and he's had to deal with them," Hays said. "Whether or not he's responsible I'm not in a position to say."

"I know Dr. Mobley and the University are taking steps to fix the problem. Sherrill could be a very important part of the solution if he would try to be."

There was no doubt about the feelings of the A&M alumni contacted. The crowd around the Aggie Diehards' bus at the Texas A&M-Texas Christian football game was full of vocal supporters of Sherrill and the A&M football program.

"We're behind the school, we're behind the coach, we're behind the

whole program," said Dean Carlton, Class of '49.

"Everybody here (at the bus) is in support of Jackie Sherrill and the school," he said. "Even if we're guilty we will support this school and every institution at this school."

Everyone who spoke blamed poor reporting techniques for the furor.

"The fact of the matter is, it was sloppy journalism," Carlton said.

Particular blame was leveled at *The Battalion* for reporting the story in the way it did.

Carlton said, "What I want to know is why somebody at the school paper is not in favor of the school."

"The best thing hopefully we can get out of this is get rid of *The Battalion* and get another paper."

Bill Price, Class of '51, implored journalists on the story to stop printing unsubstantiated rumors.

"Be like Mr. Friday — just the facts," Price said.

Price suggested that the *News* had held back the story to try to nail A&M with two investigations instead of getting it over with one.

"These guys have wanted a field day with us for years," Price said.

"When they got us the first time I told my wife, 'There's another shoe coming,'" he said. "Is this the other shoe?"

Price said he was willing to take punishment from the NCAA, however, if the charges proved substantiated.

"A&M's always been fair," he said. "If we take a whipping we'll take a whipping. We always have."

Allegations, investigations continue to plague A&M football program

By Richard Williams
City Editor

The following is a compilation of the recent events involving the allegations of violations of NCAA rules by the Texas A&M football team.

The Texas A&M football team came under fire in 1985 when newspapers published allegations that A&M was guilty of breaking NCAA regulations governing the football team.

The allegations were investigated by the University and the NCAA. A&M forwarded its report to the NCAA. This report included some self-reported violations that had not been reported earlier.

On Sept. 13 the NCAA Committee on Infractions met with University representatives to consider A&M's response to the allegations.

As a result of the findings released Sept. 9, the Aggie football team was placed on a two-year probation, was barred from post-season appearance this season and lost five scholarships for the 1988-89 school year.

During this press conference President William H. Mobley announced that both he and Head Coach Jackie Sherrill had

been placed on administrative probation. It was during this press conference that Sherrill said, "If Jackie Sherrill does something wrong, Jackie Sherrill will leave. This institution comes first."

The NCAA gave Mobley credit for taking control of the program.

The report states: "After he (Mobley) took office, the University began taking actions that were designed to gain control over the University's athletics program in general and its football program in particular. The committee believes that President Mobley's actions provide a basis for mitigating the penalties in the case. Absent President Mobley's actions, the penalties imposed on the University's football program would have been more severe."

On Nov. 18 the *Dallas Morning News*, in a copyrighted article, quoted former A&M fullback George Smith as saying he received cash payments as "hush money" from Sherrill.

The article also quoted Smith as saying he received a \$500 payment on Sept. 13, four days after the NCAA report was made public.

The story contained a quote from Rob-

ert Smith, A&M's compliance director and vice president for finance and administration, that said Sherrill did not deny making the payments, but that Sherrill had said he was coerced into making them.

Mobley later said he believed that Robert Smith may have been misquoted.

"I think there may be a slight misquote about that statement," Mobley said. "You need to further direct your question to Robert Smith. I think there is some concern whether the 'not' was left out of that sentence." *The Battalion* has not been able to ask Robert Smith about the possibility of a misquote. The *News* has said the quote is correct.

At 1:30 a.m. Friday *The Battalion* received a story about the article from the Associated Press newswire. From approximately 7 a.m. to 9 a.m. Friday *The Battalion* attempted to interview Mobley, Sherrill, Robert Smith, vice president for finance and administration, and A&M football players for an article to run in that day's edition. None of the members of the administration *The Battalion* sought to interview could be reached for comment. The football play-

ers interviewed refused to comment except to say they first heard about the allegations through radio reports.

The Battalion's Friday edition contained two editorials about the allegations. One editorial said that if the allegations were true Sherrill and anyone associated with the violations should resign or be fired. The second editorial said the football program deserved the "death penalty" if the allegations were true.

The Battalion received several phone calls Friday afternoon that Sherrill was going to hold a press conference at 3 p.m. to resign as head coach.

At approximately 3 p.m. Lane Stephenson, director of A&M's Office of Public Information, said a press conference was not going to be held at 3 p.m. Stephenson said his office had also received reports of the rumors, but he said he had not been informed that Sherrill would resign. Stephenson and an official with A&M's Sports Information Office said they could not confirm that Sherrill would be with the team at the next day's Aggie football game.

At approximately 4:30 p.m. Mobley

held a press conference. During the press conference Mobley said the University had already begun an investigation into the matter. He also said A&M wanted to complete the investigation as soon as possible.

"It is of high importance for the institution, high importance to all the individuals involved," he said. "We have no interest in a high level of ambiguity for any period of time."

The article said George Smith was trying to change his story before the article was printed. During his press conference Mobley said the A&M investigation would try and determine if what Smith told the *News* or Robert Smith was the truth. Mobley said George Smith had earlier called Robert Smith to report that everything he told the *News* was not true.

Mobley said A&M was "in contact" with George Smith.

During the press conference Mobley said A&M officials were worried about the impact of the allegations.

"We are concerned about the integrity of the institutions," he said. "We are concerned about our probationary status

and we are concerned about the individuals involved."

A statement from Sherrill, released at approximately 5:45 p.m., said Sherrill was still in charge of the athletic program and would return to coach the team for the upcoming game against the University of Texas.

On Saturday A&M defeated Texas Christian University 18-0. R.C. Sloum was acting head coach for the game.

Saturday A&M held a press conference which started at 6 p.m. During the press conference Smith, reading a prepared statement, said he did not tell the truth during the interviews with the reporters. The *News* reported in the article that Smith had signed an affidavit stating that everything he would tell the reporter was true.

Members of the Board of Regents have said they still support Sherrill.

David Eller, chairman of the Board, said the regents believe Smith's statements during the Saturday night press conference and Smith will not be questioned again.

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