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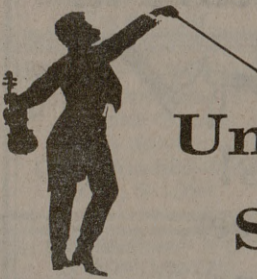
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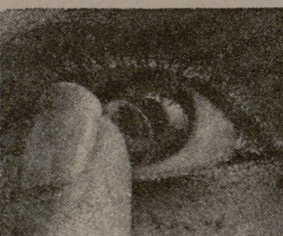
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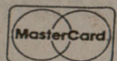
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Showdown

(Continued from page 9)

Press' Top 20 before each game, and was knocked out of the polls after the losses.

This week, A&M is coming off a 17-13 upset over the previously eighth-ranked Houston Cougars. A&M's defense dominated the Cougars and effectively shut down quarterback Andrew Ware and the Run-and-Shoot offense.

Texas A&M at Baylor

- Site: Floyd Casey Stadium (48,500 cap.)
- Kickoff: 1 p.m.
- Ranking: A&M (23rd), Baylor (-)
- TV/Radio: The game will not be televised; KTAM (AM 1240)

"There's something that's really frightening about doing that (getting overconfident with Houston win)," Slocum said. "If you're in the sales business and all you talk about is the great sales you made last week, there's not much chance of you making any sales this week."

"You've got to stay hungry. You can't dwell on success very long."

The Aggies (ranked 23rd in AP's Top 25) can't afford to take the Bears or quarterback Brad Goebel lightly just because of Baylor's 66-10 loss to Houston three weeks ago.

Goebel is creeping up on former Baylor quarterback Cody Carlson's career passing records and is second on career pass completions (345) and third in total offense (4,355 yards).

"Brad's always played well against us," Slocum said.

Defensively, the Bears have pre-season All-American linebacker James Francis. Francis is a candidate for the Butkus Award, given to the nation's top collegiate linebacker, and has been a terror to opposing offenses in 1989.

However, Francis will have his work cut out for him, as he faces the Aggies' offensive attack.

At times, the Aggies have terrorized defensive coordinators with a balanced running and passing game. Last week against Houston, the Aggies rushed for 251 yards and threw for 163.

A&M quarterback Lance Pavlas continues to mature as a leader and is solidifying the Aggie offense. Pavlas is completing over 60 percent of his passes, despite throwing seven interceptions.

The Aggies' bright spot has to be their defense, regardless of Slocum's lamenting last week.

But against UH, A&M linebackers Aaron Wallace and William Thomas combined for three sacks of Ware.

If the defensive backs can keep Goforth covered, Wallace could break Seattle Seahawks' Jacob Green's career sack record (37). Wallace is tied with Green.

The Aggies have had problems playing on the road this year, and playing a team of Baylor's calibre makes A&M's task of winning more difficult. Both of the Aggies' losses this year have come on the road.

"If you want that conference championship, you've got to win games on the road," Slocum said. "You're not going to go to the Cotton Bowl with just four conference wins."

What would calm Slocum's nerves before playing Baylor this week?

"I'd much rather be playing this game in College Station," Slocum said.

Lehmann

(Continued from page 9)

fought Oakland for the AL West title throughout the season, and each finished with records good enough to have won the AL East.

The Royals, who finished four games behind the A's, posted a 92-70 record, which would have tied the Giants for the NL West lead. With their 91-71 mark, the Angels would have finished only two games behind the Chicago Cubs in the NL East.

Is the AL West stacked, or is the NL simply a weaker league?

Yes, on both counts.

Why? True fanatics will try to argue statistical reasons.

"The American League hits more home runs, and has better team batting averages."

"The National has better pitching, and lower earned run averages."

Both facts are true, but not accurate.

Since the National League isn't as advanced as the American, NL clubs don't use a designated hitter. Thus, the statistical discrepancies.

The designated hitter rule is a wonderful concept. It allows the pitchers to concentrate on doing what they do best — throwing the ball — while the DH, who does nothing other than bat, hits and runs the

bases in his place.

American League designated hitters hit far more home runs than NL pitchers and pinch hitters, and also hit for higher average. Home runs are exciting to me, maybe because I've never muscled one out of a little league field, much less a major league ballpark.

Granted, some people rather would see a pitcher come up to the plate and be victimized by the opposing pitcher. If I wanted to see someone look really bad while striking out, I'd videotape myself in the batting cage.

Whether or not you agree with the DH rule, you have to agree that the controversy hurts World Series play. Under the current system, both teams use DHs only when playing at the AL stadium. In the NL park, pitchers must bat, or be pinch hit for.

Seems fair? Yes, but not consistent. Swapping formats from game to game is confusing to fans, and unfair to the players. Hey, we're an organized civilization, and we should be able to decide for the common good on an issue as important as baseball.

So, come on and help drag the NL out of the dark ages. Write or call NL President Bobby Brown and tell him to play baseball the way it was meant to be played, with the DH.

Until you do, the NL will remain the National Losers.

Thomas

(Continued from page 9)

Wallace. Now Thomas is starting to make his mark.

Teammates are even starting to call Thomas "Johnny Rock" — Holland's nickname when he was starting at A&M.

But it's been a long road to linebacker stardom for Thomas.

He was recruited as both a quarterback and a defensive back coming out of high school. He said he considered three schools to play for — Baylor, Texas and A&M.

Baylor wanted him as a quarterback. Texas wanted him as a defensive back. But A&M wanted him just as an athlete.

Although Thomas visited all three schools, he said his decision was an easy one to make.

"A&M had the best program," Thomas said. "It was a simple choice for me. I went to Baylor first but I wasn't too interested. Texas was pretty nice, but then I came down here. That said it all. I signed the next day after I left here."

Still, he played his first two seasons at A&M in the secondary — backing up All-SWC safety Kip Corington in 1987 and leading the secondary in tackles in 1988 as a starter.

Last spring, coaches decided to move the 6-3, 205-pound junior to linebacker. Thomas responded well, and Slocum is pleased about the way Thomas is playing.

Thomas still is surprised a player his size can be having as good a year as he's been having.

"I didn't really think that I'd be making that much of an impact at linebacker," he said. "You don't really see too many 205-pound linebackers. I was worried about my size at first, but it worked out pretty well."

Thomas' speed makes him better than the average linebacker. With him on one side and Aaron Wallace on the other, it's been a long year for opposing offenses.

Thomas has 37 unassisted tackles, one fumble recovery and two fumbles caused in 1989. Not bad for a converted defensive back.

"I'm not sorry (about making the

switch to linebacker)," he said. "I've had success over here on defense. I didn't mind giving it a try and it worked out pretty well."

A&M has the best pair of outside linebackers in the SWC with Thomas and Wallace. But the Aggies probably also have two of the quietest.

"You don't really have to act mean to be mean," Thomas said. "I let my actions speak for myself out on the field. People don't imagine a person like me would go out on the field and cause a lot of trouble like linebackers do."

"But once I get out on the field, the whole thing changes. That's when I get riled up — when I make a good tackle or a sack. That keeps me up for the rest of the game."

The junior had his finest day of the season last week against Houston. Thomas leveled UH quarterback Ware twice with sacks.

Thomas led the Aggies again with 16 tackles against the Cougars. He was named on Tuesday the Associated Press' SWC Defensive Player of the Week for his performance.

"I'd love to face an offense like that every week," he said. "You'd have no choice but to blitz all day. I knew I was going to get some sacks because they can't keep blocking me every time."

When Thomas leads the Aggies on Saturday against the same Baylor team that wanted to make him a quarterback, he'll have his sights set on Bears quarterback Brad Goebel.

The opponents may change, but his goal's the same: Get to the quarterback. Thomas has had little difficulty doing that so far this year. Just ask Ware.

"People didn't really say much out on the field (Saturday)," Thomas said. "I pretty much play the game and I think about it afterwords. People started telling me how good of a game I had."

"First, I knew I had two really good sacks. Then I started thinking about how many tackles I had. The coaches told me I had a good game, and I felt like I had a good game."

Thomas led the team last week in what could be one of the team's biggest wins this year. No. 11's performance even would've made Holland proud.

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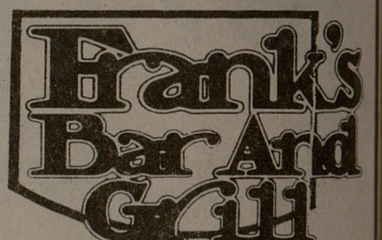
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