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MEDIA VS. PUBLIC OPINION: Who's Really in Control?

Panel:

Dr. Patricia Griffin Senior Lecturer, Political Science

Dr. Richard Shafer

Asst. Professor, Journalism Mr. Edward Walraven

Asst. Director, Office of Public Information

Moderator: Dr. Don Tomlinson

Asst. Professor, Journalism

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Sports Focus: Texas A&M football

ROBOQUARTERBACK

Pavlas takes part in eye movement study

By RICHARD TIJERINA Of The Battalion Staff

Call him Lance Pavlas, Jedi

The junior quarterback from Tomball found himself playing the part of athlete turned guinea pig Wednesday when he took part in an experiment by a Texas A&M researcher.

Dr. Charles Shea of the Department of Health and Kineseology has been working for six years on an instrument that could make everyday functions like opening the door and turning on television as easy as looking at

But there's more than meets the eye.

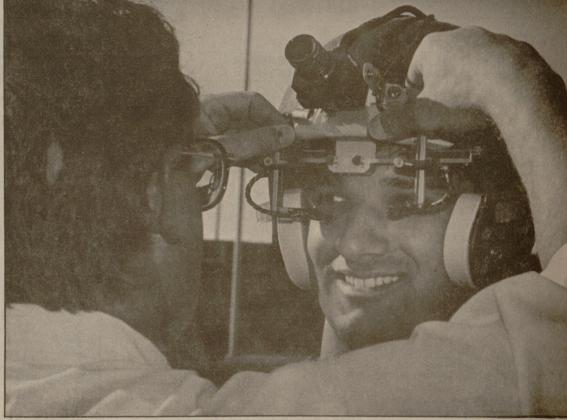
Shea's research led him to believe the apparatus could be used to improve an athlete's performance. Shea approached Coach R.C. Slocum about the possibility of placing a specialized helmet on Pavlas that would monitor on videotape the quarterback's eye movements.

The helmet, which Shea valued at about \$50,000, was rigged with one large lens on the top that records Pavlas' field of vision. That produced the image on Shea's TV screen. Two small sensors, which are detectors that pick up the movement of the eye, were lo cated in front of Pavlas' face. They were placed where the face mask normally would be on a regular helmet.

The sensors bounce an in frared light off Pavlas' eyes. The dark part of the eyes reflect dif-ferently than the light parts, and the sensors pick up the

One sensor picks up vertical eye movement, the other hori-

The vertical and horizontal movements were reproduced on



Photos by Jay Janner

A&M researcher Charles Shea places the eye tracking device on quarterback Lance Pavlas.

the TV screen as crossing white lines. The lines are transferred on Pavlas' field of vision.

The experiment was tried out for the first time Wednesday at Kyle Field, and for five minutes Pavlas turned into some kind of "super quarterback."

Pavlas put the helmet on halfway into practice, and for the

next few minutes took snaps and threw to receivers in scrimmage situations. However, Shea's modified helmet and the cords that connected Pavlas to the video machine might have been too much. He completed just one pass in eight attempts, much to the chagrin of his teammates.

"Use the Force, my son,"

shouted linebacker Anthony Williams, referring to Obi Wan Kenobi's line toward the ending of

Shea said he and his staff will study the videotape of the exper-ment, then hand it over to Slo-

"It's in the early stages of development, so we're really just looking at exploring at what it can do," Slocum said. "I see it primar-ily as a teaching aid for coaches. This records what the quar-terback actually sees, not just what he said he saw."

Pavlas said he saw his receivers well, despite the specialized hel-met obstructing his view some-

"It was a little different today," Pavlas said. "It's kind of weird having a cord hooked up to you it was like a tail or something.

"It blocks your vision a little bit, but it was OK. We're going to have to wait to see what the film looks like and decide if it's going to be a helpful tool."

Shea has been targeting his re search toward helping people make chores easier, including the use of machines and computers, turning lights on or off and con-

Shea said he will continue to do research with the A&M football program, and that hopefully Pavlas will be able to wear the helmet in a real, non-contact scrimmage toward the end of spring drills.

The only problem with the hel-met is that Pavlas moves around, and up until now the equipmen has only been used in the labo ratory by mobile subjects, She

There's a lot of work from he re," he said. "We've already re congnized a number of things w need to do before it can be used efficiently out in the field.

"This is the biggest challenge



SOUTH AFRICA SERIES:

The helmet Paylas wore in Wednesday's football practice. Shea valued the equipment at \$50,000.

Part II

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