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America's finest are becoming a thing of the past

There's an old saying in sports — "Records are made to be broken."

However, in this day and age the truth is disappearing from this old adage.

Nowhere is this more true than in America's pastime — baseball. Long gone are the days when a ballplayer played for the sheer fun of it.

That kind of attitude is what allowed people like Lou Gehrig, Joe DiMaggio, Ted Williams, Hank Aaron and present day legend Nolan Ryan to set standards that will stand until someone comes along with a similar attitude towards the game.

Consistency is another characteristic needed to establish the kind of record that makes everyone say it's unbreakable.

It took Gehrig almost 14 years to play in 2,130 consecutive games. DiMaggio hit safely in 56 straight games and Williams was the last person to hit .400 over the course of a full season. Aaron averaged 36 home runs a season to compile 755 career dingers.

Of course, saying that Ryan is consistent is a bit of an understatement. He's 43 years old, just threw his record sixth no-hitter and it's safe to say that when he finally retires the heater that no one will ever top his career strikeout record.

Talk to anyone that knew the game 20 or 30 years ago, they'll tell you that it just isn't the same.

The major leaguers of today don't seem to worry about consistent playing until it's time to sign a new contract.

When a player starts earning the big million dollar contract, it seems to take away the incentive to play well.

The chosen few

These days it takes a special individual to even think about approaching baseball's most hallowed records. Only a few of today's players possess the devotion needed to play every game as if it was the biggest game of his life.

Shortstop Cal Ripken Jr., of the Baltimore Orioles, has that unique commitment. Ripken has not missed a single game for the past eight years and is now second in consecutive games played only to the legendary Gehrig.

Ripken has only missed 42 innings during that span, but still needs to play five more years to break the streak. That means Ripken has to play injury-free until he is 34 years old.

Mark McGwire of the Oakland A's and Will Clark of the San Francisco Giants show the same sort of love and devotion to the game.

Clark has the ability to become a Triple Crown winner and McGwire shows the consistency needed to catch Aaron as the career home run leader.

Both have big contracts, but still play with the consistency not found in other big name stars like Darryl Strawberry and Eric Davis who both have been prone to the off year.

The main reason ballplayers are now receiving these big contracts is because of all the money the owners are making from television revenues.

Television root of evil

Television has made the national pastime big business and focuses an enormous amount of attention upon its participants.

The intense media attention cast upon today's players is what keeps Williams' and DiMaggio's records from ever being broken. Pete Rose wilted under the pressure while chasing DiMaggio's record. The same pressure got to Rod Carew and George Brett when they flirted with a .400 average in the early eighties.

America's sport isn't what it used to be but it's still fun to watch today's best as they chase the immortals of yesteryear.

Tennis anyone?

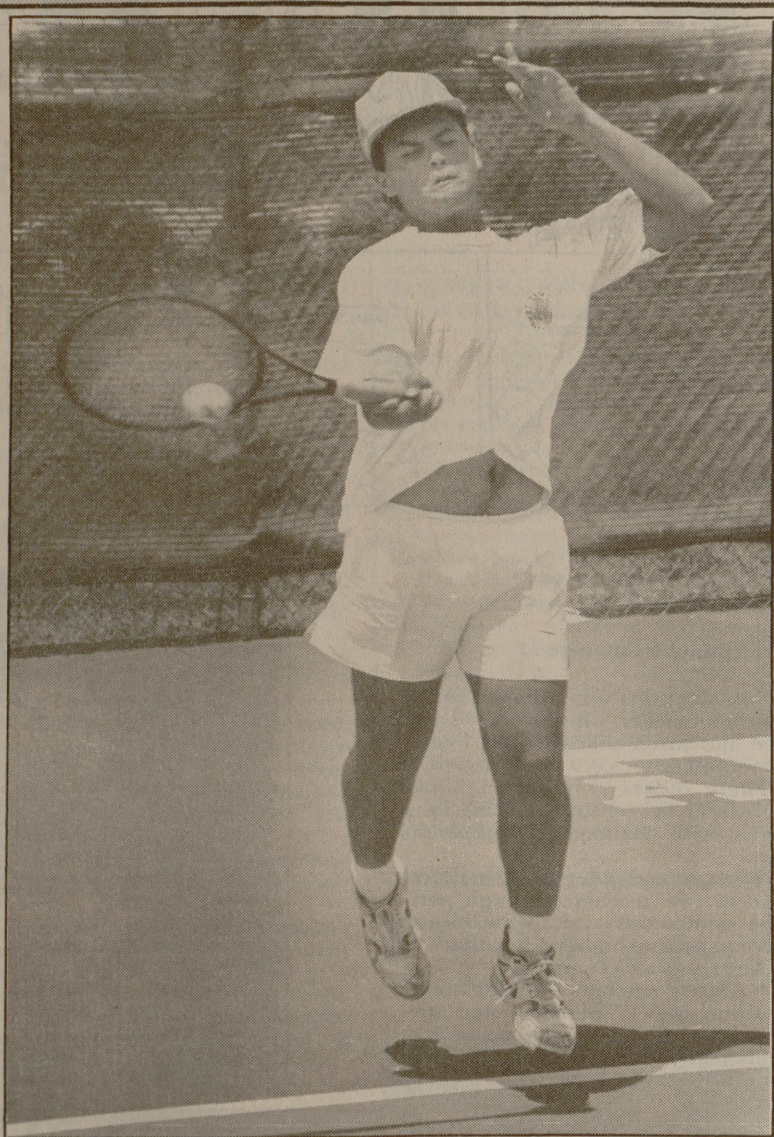


Photo by Sondra N. Robbins

Nick Woodyard, a freshman Houston, practices his tennis general studies major from swing in Thursday's heat.

Fuller's quest

Former Ag fights to adapt to life after football

By DOUGLAS PILS
Of The Battalion Staff

Change — it's something that happens either by choice, fate or tragedy.

How humans adapt to change reflects the character and strength of an individual.

Jeff Fuller, a former linebacker for Texas A&M, was at the top of his game professionally. He was the starting strong safety for the defending Super Bowl champion San Francisco 49ers.

Just as it seemed everything was coming up roses for Fuller something as simple as a routine tackle changed the best of times into the worst of times.

On the second play of a midseason game against New England last year, living a normal life became more important to Fuller than playing football again.

A collision with Patriots running back John Stephens tore nerves from Fuller's spine and left his right side virtually motionless.

Surgery performed in February and on-going therapy have helped him to almost overcome the injury completely.

"My right arm is still gives me trouble," Fuller said. "I pretty much can't use it for anything and not a day goes by where I don't feel some pain."

"Whether or not more surgery will be needed depends on how I progress with my therapy over the next six months."

Playing football is now out of the question for the former standout linebacker who played at A&M from 1980-83. Fuller, who came to A&M from Roosevelt High School in Dallas, is now concentrating on getting on with his life.

"Right now my main goal is getting through my therapy and learning how to compensate for my injury."

After completing therapy Fuller said he would like to become a coach on the college level.

"I think coaching would be fun and I like the idea of making people better," he said. "I feel I have something to offer others and coaching would be the best way to do that."

"Coaching college would definitely be where I could do best," Fuller said. "Players on the professional level have a know-it-all attitude, so I don't think I would like coaching the pros."

Being forced to change his way of life and giving up the sport he loves frustrated Fuller.

"I was feeling sorry for myself in the beginning because I was handicapped," he said. "But if there's one good thing that has come out of all of this, it is the fact that I don't take



Photos courtesy A&M Sports Information

Jeff Fuller at his finest. Fuller (above left) as a member of Texas A&M head coach R.C. Slocum's famed Wrecking Crew and (right) as a defensive back for the world champion San Francisco 49ers.

things for granted anymore. "There a lot of people in this world that are worse off than I am. I've grown to respect people that are handicapped, especially those who can't walk because that could've happened to me."

Fuller's been fortunate to have scores of friends around to help him deal with his injury.

A&M head football coach R.C. Slocum, who was one of Fuller's coaches when he played here, has been in frequent contact with him.

"It is a tremendous tragedy for something like that to happen to

Tragedy mars English victory

ROME (AP) — Tragedy struck the World Cup on Thursday when one English fan died and several people were injured in a bus accident.

Three buses collided near Cagliari on the island of Sardinia. One of the coaches was bound for England's game against Egypt at Cagliari.

"We think all of these (dead and injured) are British," said British Embassy spokeswoman Kay Coombs.

Italian police and the Carabinieri paramilitary police identified the dead man as Robert Hawkins, 18. Lorenzo Pacifici, spokesman for the Carabinieri, said 15 people were injured, while a police spokesman said 23 were injured.

Coombs said 22 were injured. Authorities said one bus was try-

ing to pass a stopped car and paused to let another car go around it. A second bus hit it, and a third bus then hit the back of the second one.

Coombs said half the injuries were believed to be serious.

England won the game 1-0 on a goal by Mark Wright.

In the other Group F game, the Netherlands tied Ireland 1-1 and, through drawing of lots, the Irish were awarded second place after all tiebreakers were deadlocked. The Dutch wound up third, but both advanced.

Earlier Thursday, charges against 23 English fans involved in a brawl with Italians on Tuesday night were dropped by a Sardinian judge, who ruled the incident stemmed from an attack by Italians on a smaller group of English soccer supporters.

Uruguay, Brazil, Argentina, Costa Rica and Colombia all advanced to the second round of the tournament. Uruguay, which hadn't won a World Cup game since 1970 and was the last to get in.

Needing a victory against South Korea, the Uruguayans struggled, unable to penetrate on attack and frustrated by the South Koreans' fouling. In the final minute, though, Alfonso Dominguez took a long free kick that Daniel Fonseca outjumped two defenders to head into the net for a 1-0 win Thursday.

"I looked up and thanked God," said the 20-year-old Fonseca, making his World Cup debut. "My job when I was sent in was to score a goal and get Uruguay qualified."

"You cannot win in more exciting fashion," Coach Oscar Tabarez said.

Mavericks eye draft picks as trade bait for experience

DALLAS (AP) — The Dallas Mavericks, with three first-round selections in next week's NBA draft, are trying to package one or more of them as trade bait for the one player they hope can put the team in contention for the Western Conference title.



"Next week, we might not have all three picks," Mavericks general manager Norm Sonju told The Dallas Morning News.

"It would not surprise me at all if we have just one. It doesn't take a whole lot of imagination to see where we are at this point in this franchise's history," Sonju said.

The Mavericks fell three games short of winning 50 games last season, and their best player, forward Roy Tarpley, was sidelined for 37

games for violating his drug after-care program.

"We feel we can legitimately go for the whole thing now," Sonju said.

The top items on the Mavericks' shopping list as they head into Wednesday's draft — or, rather, "trading session" — are:

— A proven scorer to come in off the bench and provide instant offense.

— A backup guard to play either the point or shooting position.

— And players with speed and pure athletic ability.

The Mavericks' draft day strategy is a gamble that, in addition to guards Rolando Blackman and Derek Harper, they can count on a healthy James Donaldson at center and Tarpley and Sam Perkins at forward.

For that to happen, Donaldson must rebound from an injury-plagued season, Tarpley must play his first suspension-free season since winning the Sixth Man Award in 1988.

Crow names Thornton as assistant A.D.

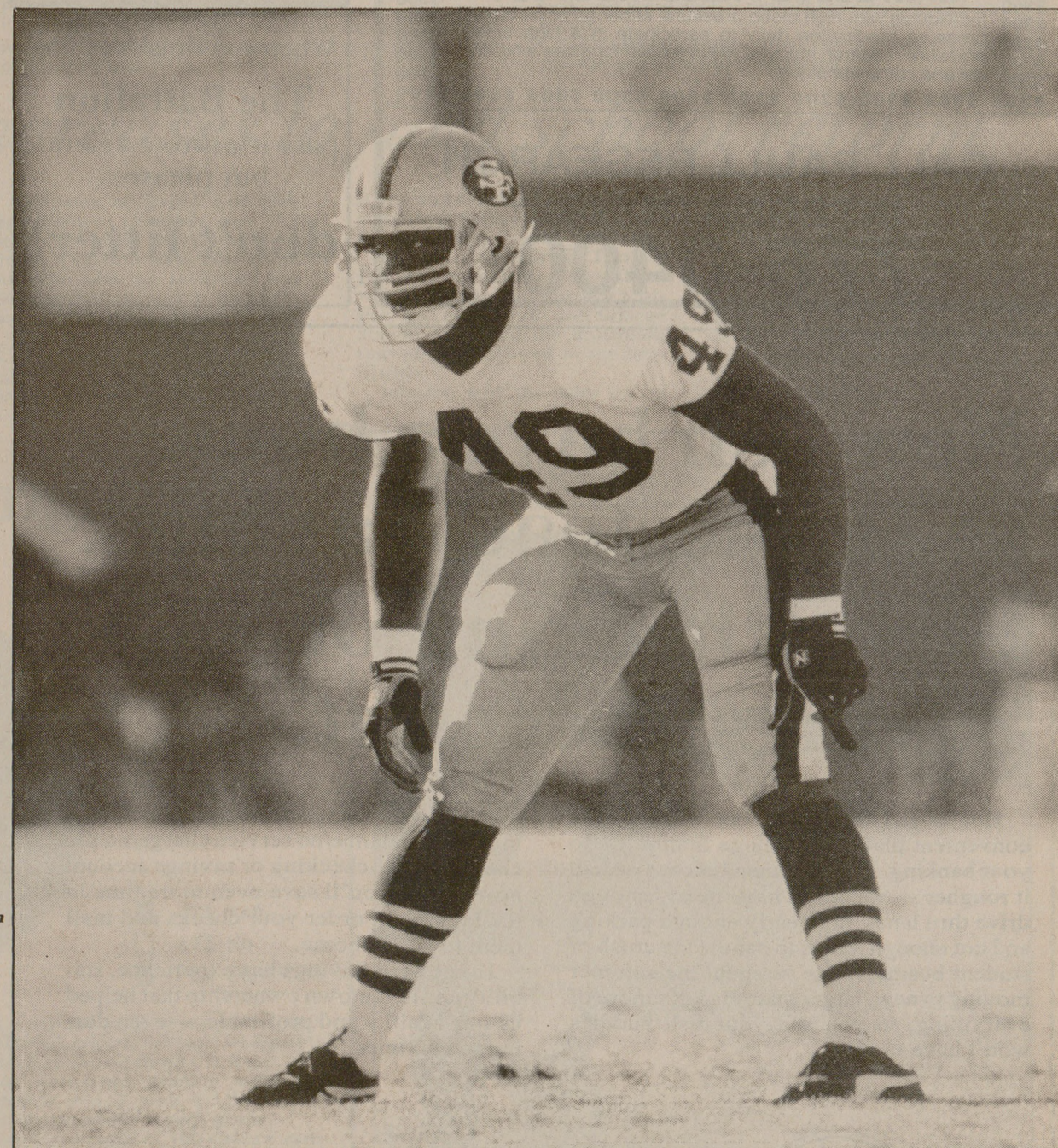
From Staff and Wire Reports

Former Texas A&M interim basketball coach John Thornton was named an assistant to the athletic director with emphasis on career counseling, according to a statement released Wednesday by the University.

Athletic director John David Crowsaid he felt Thornton would do a good job in developing the position.

"We're happy John has decided to stay and help us in this area," Crow said. "We have wanted to begin a career counseling service for our student-athletes for some time now."

Thornton, 37, assumed head coaching responsibilities of the A&M squad in late January 1990 when then-head coach Shelby Metcalf was relieved of his duties.



someone in the prime of his career," Slocum said. "But Jeff understood the risk of playing every Sunday."

"Right now I think he's just glad to be back home in Dallas."

Perhaps his greatest friend has been teammate and former Aggie Chet Brooks.

Brooks wore a long towel bearing Fuller's name and No. 49 to symbolize the loss of his friend to the team after the injury.

"Chet's been really great," Fuller said. "He's really kept my mind off the injury."

"I have a lot of respect for Chet,

he has a lot of heart and it takes a lot for me to be able say that about anyone."

Before the injury, Fuller had come into his own as one of the game's top players.

Sports commentator and ex-Oakland Raiders coach John Madden had named Fuller to the All-Madden team two years in a row. Players who make the All-Madden team are known for their hard-nosed playing abilities and according to Fuller this was quite an honor.

Fuller's ex-head coach Bill Walsh had been quoted as saying that Ful-

ler was becoming the premier player at his position because he was like a linebacker and defensive back all in one.

Fuller's leaving all that behind now. His home in San Francisco just sold and he's establishing himself in Dallas.

"Now I can really get started on my new life and find myself a house somewhere in the Dallas area," he said.

Fuller is coping with the changes life has dealt him and is looking forward to moving on the bigger and better things.