

M. MULVEY/The Battalion

By RICHARD TIJERINA
Of The Battalion Staff

Talking big and hating Texas. No place but Anthony Williams. The verbal barrage between Austin and College Station has become expected during the week of the annual Texas A&M-Texas game, the third longest series in collegiate football. For Williams, taking potshots at the Longhorns is as common as Christmas.

"I suppose it's tradition," Williams said. "It's like Christmas. It's something that has to happen during the year, or it's something that's missing from my life. Before I got here, I watched it on television in high school. It didn't mean anything to me."

It does now, on both ends of Highway 21. The verbal bashing began Monday, when several Longhorns spoke out on this Saturday's game in Austin.

"I hate (the Aggies)," UT offensive tackle Stan Thomas told the Houston Chronicle. "I can't stand them. You live and learn to hate the Aggies ... I think we're going to beat them pretty bad. We're going to party on those guys. By the third quarter, I should be over there on the sideline with my pads off, eating hot dogs and telling Aggie jokes."

A&M quarterback Bucky Richardson responded to Thomas Tuesday, trying to downplay the exchanges by saying "hate" is the wrong word to use.

"I'd like to play all four quarters and be in there the whole time," Richardson said. "But that's fine if (Thomas) wants to do that. He's welcome to. I won't say I hate them because I don't. I don't hate them, but certainly we want to win."

The Aggies have won the last six times the two teams have met, A&M's longest winning streak in the series.

The last time Texas won, a 45-13 win at Kyle Field in 1983, Jackie Sherrill and Fred Akers stalked the sidelines. Richardson was a skinny ninth grader, looking forward to his first year at Baton Rouge Broadmoor High

Pregame emotions prompted a fight between A&M and UT players in last year's 21-10 win at Kyle Field. Saturday's game has drawn

a war of words between both teams this week. □ Redshirt freshman Jason Atkinson prepares for first start /Page 8.

Words turn ugly for UT, A&M

School.

"I don't think there's too much love lost over here," Richardson said. "That's the way it is. The week sure started out with a bang, that's for sure. They're having a good year and feel like they're a better ballclub than us. We feel we're a better ballclub than them. There's going to be some talk."

A&M head coach R.C. Slocum said the harsh words between the two teams wouldn't produce much "bulletin board material," because the game already is filled with emotions.

"Fans get concerned, thinking it's going to get the other team all fired up," Slocum said. "They're going to be fired up. We're going to be fired up. All this talk's been going on forever. David (McWilliams, Texas coach) isn't going to stop that, and I'm not either."

UT defensive end Tommy Jeter, talking about Aggie fans, said, "You think maroon and white, and you think of skinheads." Williams called UT quarterback Peter Gardere a "scrub."

"It's almost getting out of hand," A&M cornerback Kevin

"I don't hate anyone, but I don't respect any t.u. players. They haven't shown me anything, outside of Brian Jones. Gardere's a scrub. I have no respect for him at all. His receivers make him what he is."

— Anthony Williams, A&M linebacker

Smith said. "I don't know if it's all for fun and jokes, or it's emotions that are taking over. You have to be careful what you say. In a game like this, you can get carried away."

Prior to last year's 21-10 A&M win, the two teams brawled on the middle of Kyle Field. As the Aggies traditionally lined up at midfield to sing the "The Spirit of Aggieland," Longhorn players lined up directly in front of them. Words were exchanged.

Then shoves. Then fists. Soon, fights were breaking out all over the field in front of a nationally televised ESPN audience. It took minutes before order finally was restored. Still, the Aggies were able to finish the song — a small moral victory in a

fight both sides said showed a lack of class.

"Hopefully, we won't have to go through all that on Saturday," Williams said. "We're going to allow them to sing their fight song, if they have one."

Now A&M players are hearing rumors that UT players have claimed victory in last year's pregame battle this week. Richardson said that was fine. The Aggies have won the war.

"Oh yeah, they won the fight," Richardson chided. "They win it every year. I wasn't even dressed out (for last year's game). I was on the sidelines. I wasn't in the middle of all that. That's the kind of game this is — just an intense rivalry, and that's the way it's always been."

Saturday's game is the most

important one of the season for the Aggies. Left out of the national rankings the past five weeks, A&M has its last two games against No. 5 Texas and No. 4 Brigham Young. Two wins over the top five teams would give A&M a 10-2-1 record.

Texas also has a lot to play for. With the lone blemish on their 9-1 record a seven-point loss to No. 1 Colorado, the Longhorns are looking at a possible national championship. They clinched the Southwest Conference championship last weekend, and are waiting for to a Cotton Bowl matchup with No. 2 Miami.

"They have a right to say what they want to say," Smith said. "They're doing well this year. They have a lot of confidence, and that's evident by what they're saying in the papers."

"I haven't been that affected by it. They've been a cellar dweller who now are trying to bad mouth A&M. But they're winning, and they have all the right to talk."

Williams disagreed, saying the Longhorns' comments only have showed a lack of class.

"I don't hate anyone, but I don't respect any t.u. players," he

said. "They haven't shown me anything, outside of (UT linebacker) Brian Jones. He's the only athlete I see on their team. And the (UT receivers Keith and Kerry) Cash brothers because they make Gardere."

"(Gardere's) a scrub. Below average. I have no respect for him at all. His receivers make him what he is. He's no overpowering quarterback."

Williams' comments won't make him popular with the Memorial Stadium crowd, and he may not even play. A severe groin injury in last week's TCU game has left him doubtful to play against Texas.

"My teammates believe in what I'm saying," Williams said. "They stand behind me 100 percent. Whatever I don't back up, they will. I've gotten a few pointers of what to say and what not to say, but they stuck me with (former A&M linebacker who wore No. 48) Dana Batiste's old number, so I have to live up to his reputation."

Batiste was a media darling because he always spoke his mind. But Smith, who earlier in the year created a controversy when he made statements about distractions on the A&M team, said the Aggies have to be careful this week.

"Some guys' emotions take control," Smith said. "The Texas guys are talking a whole lot. Coach Slocum is telling us not to talk so much. I don't need to talk too much before the game. During the game, you can say whatever you want to say."

Williams guaranteed reporters before the Arkansas game two weeks ago that A&M would beat Texas. He didn't back down Tuesday.

"(The verbal war) started with them," Williams said. "They thought they could rattle us, but that was stupid. We have more composure than that. The guarantee still stands. I'm not retracting any statements I made throughout the season."

"I'm confident in my teammates and myself that we're going to do what it takes to win. It's going to be real bloody."

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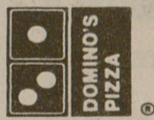
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