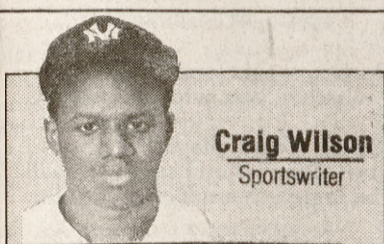


Tuesday, April 23, 1991

The Battalion



Craig Wilson
Sportswriter

Ags' sweep of UT sets stage for greatness

Plenty of interesting things have happened in Aggieland this Spring.

R.C. Slocum decided to drastically change the 12th Man's role in kickoff coverage.

Brooks Thompson decided to transfer to Oklahoma State, a solid decision by a solid guard.

And Aggie baseball coach Mark Johnson decided to stay at A&M despite a wonderful opportunity from perennial college power Mississippi State, showing his loyalty and contentment with this university.

But the most exciting moment of this busy sports season, occurred last weekend at Olsen Field.

Pitcher Trey Witte's picture-perfect strikeout in the ninth capped a satisfying sweep of Texas, completing a two-week climb from last place to first for the Ags.

And Olsen Field will host the SWC tournament in three weeks, so the baseball future looks bright.

To know the feeling of beating Texas three times, one only had to see the face of centerfielder Brian Thomas, who walked through a local bank Monday looking like a man who had seen his wife after a 30-year separation.

The happiness and contentment were obvious.

But Aggie fans and players know

See Aggie/Page 6

Cowboys sign top three

IRVING (AP) — The Dallas Cowboys announced the signing of their top three draft picks Monday, including defensive lineman Russell Maryland, the No. 1 selection in the draft.

At \$8 million for five years, Maryland ushers in an NFL-style recession. He was considerably less expensive for the Cowboys than Ismail would have been. And his contract — compared to the \$13 million that No. 1 Jeff George got last year and the \$11.2 million that No. 1 Troy Aikman signed for two years ago — is certain to reduce the payoffs for all the remaining first-round picks.

All three are represented by attorney Leigh Steinberg, who also is the agent for defensive back Eric Turner, selected by Cleveland as the No. 2 pick in the draft.

Dallas also reached agreement with wide receiver Alvin Harper, the 13th pick of the first round, and linebacker Dixon Edwards, the Cowboys' second round choice and 37th overall selection.

"That was vital," coach Jimmy Johnson said. "We were prepared logistically to get it done. We're very pleased we have all three under contract."

Thus the Cowboys avoid lengthy holdouts that caused their first two choices of last year, running

back Emmitt Smith and wide receiver Alexander Wright, to miss all of training camp.

"We're excited about getting them in camp. It adds the finishing touches when you can make that draft pick and then get them right on into town," owner Jerry Jones said.

Jones had talked for months about the Cowboys' desire to hammer out draft-day contracts before selecting players. Jones denied the Cowboys jumped the gun and came to a pre-draft agreement with Maryland, which would have violated a league directive.

"We weren't concerned about stepping over the guidelines," Jones said. "We had communication with Leigh Steinberg (Maryland's agent). He volunteered that Russell would be very proud to be here and gave us an idea of the range of money. We made our pick on that understanding, but we didn't have a financial agreement until after the pick."

For Maryland, the opportunity to play for his old college coach made being No. 1 even better. "I'm flabbergasted and overwhelmed," the Outland Trophy winner said. "It will be great to be reunited with Jimmy Johnson, who took a chance on me when he recruited me."

Round-by-round selections of Texas and Southwest Conference players in the NFL Draft Sunday and Monday:

First Round
9, San Diego, Stanley Richard, CB, Texas.
21, Kansas City, Harvey Williams, RB, LSU (Hempstead, Texas).
22, Chicago, Stan Thomas, OT, Texas.

Third Round
58, Detroit, Reggie Barrett, WR, Texas-El Paso.
80, Tampa Bay, Robert Wilson, RB, Texas A&M.

Fourth Round
88, Pittsburgh, Sammy Walker, DB, Texas Tech.
89, Denver, Derek Russell, WR, Arkansas.
99, Cincinnati, Donald Hollas, QB, Rice.
104, Philadelphia, William Thomas, LB, Texas A&M.
110, Dallas, Kevin Harris, DE, Texas Southern.

Fifth Round
120, Tampa Bay, Terry Babsby, RB, East Texas State.
125, Indianapolis, Kerry Cash, TE, Texas.
130, Cincinnati, Mike Arthur, C, Texas A&M.

Sixth Round
145, Atlanta, Eric Pegram, RB, North Texas.
159, Washington, Dennis Ransom, TE, Texas A&M.
161, Chicago, Darren Lewis, RB, Texas A&M.
165, San Francisco, Scott Bowles, T, North Texas.

Seventh Round
176, Green Bay, Reggie Burnette, LB, Houston.
183, Houston, Kyle Freeman, LB, Angelo State.
188, Washington, Keith Cash, WR, Texas.

Eighth Round
203, Green Bay, Johnny Walker, WR, Texas.
205, Detroit, Cedric Jackson, RB, Texas Christian.
213, Los Angeles Raiders, Brian Jones, LB, Texas.
217, Chicago, Larry Horton, DB, Texas A&M.

Ninth Round
241, Cincinnati, Shane Garrett, WR, Texas A&M.
242, Philadelphia, Chuck Weatherspoon, RB, Houston.

Respect, race played parts in Rocket's decision

By the Associated Press

The Rocket's road to Canada was paved with dollar signs, but race and respect also played a part in Raghig Ismail's decision to nix the NFL and join the CFL's Toronto Argonauts.

After the New England Patriots and Dallas Cowboys failed to meet his contract demands before the NFL draft, Ismail signed with the Argonauts for a potential \$26.2 million — the biggest deal in pro football history.

But money wasn't the only reason he chose the CFL over the NFL.

During negotiations with the Patriots, Ismail was offended by what he believed was a racist remark by team executive Joe Mendes. Ismail's agent, Ed Abram, also said the Patriots tried to "browbeat" the Notre Dame wide receiver-kick returner by insisting he wasn't an impact player and didn't deserve the kind of huge contract normally reserved for star quarterbacks.

"They repeated that over and over again," Abram said Monday. "They never acted like they really wanted the Rocket."

What made matters worse was a comment by Joe Mendes, the Patriots' director of player operations. During preliminary contract talks, Mendes suggested that Ismail lower his asking price. When Ismail looked away from him, Mendes reportedly snapped,

"You have the attention span of Tim Worley."

Worley, a running back for the Pittsburgh Steelers, and Ismail are black.

Abram wasn't present during the meeting, but said Ismail later told him about Mendes' remark.

"He found it quite insulting," Abram said. "He was really hurt by it."

When Abram mentioned the incident to Sam Jankovich, the Patriots' chief executive officer apologized.

"Joe was under a lot of pressure," Jankovich said. "I'm sure he didn't mean to insult Rocket in any way."

Mendes won't confirm or deny that he made the remark, but says he is sorry if he offended Ismail.

"If I insulted the gentleman, I truly do apologize," Mendes said. "He's a class individual and I wish him nothing but the best."

Abram says the incident didn't play a major part in Ismail's decision to go to Canada, even though Rocket mentioned Sunday that he was impressed by the "cultural diversity" and progressive racial climate in Toronto.

"It was basically an economic decision," Abram said. "Regardless of Mr. Ismail's personal feelings, it came down to dollars and cents."

However, Abram said New England's skepticism about Ismail's potential impact also hurt the team's chances of signing him.

"When you're trying to recruit a guy as unique as the Rocket, you don't beat him down with negatives," Abram said. "We believe Rocket is an impact player and a superstar. Obviously, the Patriots didn't agree."



Raghig "Rocket" Ismail said he felt uncomfortable with New England and Dallas' offers.

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