

MAKING THE ADJUSTMENT

Former A&M cornerback Smith conforms to ways of the NFL

By MICHAEL PLUMER

Sports writer of THE BATTALION

Kevin Smith had only one dream as a boy growing up in Orange. He wanted to be a professional football player, but not just for any National Football League team.

Smith wanted to be a Dallas Cowboy. The men in silver and blue always held a special place in his heart. And after an All-American career as a cornerback at Texas A&M, the Cowboys made Smith the 17th overall pick in the 1992 draft.

But Smith's dream turned into a nightmare when he suffered a hamstring injury during training camp in July. The affliction slowed his progress toward his ultimate goal of starting, but now that he is recovered Smith is anxious to get started.

"Everything is fine concerning my injury," Smith said Wednesday. "I am healthy and I cannot wait to get some playing time."

Smith's injury left doubts in the Cowboys' coaching staff's minds about when he would be available to play full-time. He said he is still battling the skepticism.

"I have not played as much as I want to due to my being hurt," Smith said. "The coaches were not sure if I was injured or healthy, but now since I am fully recovered there should be no questions."

"The rest will take care of itself." Since the Cowboys have an open week, Smith said he can see the light at the end of the tunnel concerning getting back into playing rhythm.

"I had some goals at the start of the season and those have not changed," he said. "I started slow with the injury but my long-term goals remain the same."

"I want to start." Now that Smith has fully recovered, he said he is looking forward to helping the 3-0 Cowboys with their push toward the playoffs.

Smith is behind Isaac Holt at cornerback, but he said he feels there are other

ways to help the resurgent 'boys in blue' on their way to the top.

"I have been playing on special teams and we have gotten some notoriety recently," he said. "I have been working a little at punt returner and that is fairly exciting."

A&M fans probably recall Smith being very thrilling as a punt returner. His 71-yard punt return for a touchdown against Rice and 73-yard takeback against Texas rank high in a 1991 A&M season chalked full of highlights.

But Smith did not declare himself ready for the Cowboy punt return job.

"We've got a good one in Kelvin Martin right now, and time will tell whether I get a chance."

When Smith is not shagging punts or pursuing kickoff returners, he is busily trying to learn the Cowboys' defensive system. He said that the learning process has come fast but not without some setbacks.

"The opportunity will come for me to play but I have been discouraged at times," he said. "Last weekend was pretty discouraging because I did not play as much as I wanted to on the defensive side of the ball."

"Out of 70 defensive plays, I played 30. That was cool but I want to play more."

Contrary to popular belief, Smith said that picking up the nuances of the Cowboy system was not as difficult as he first thought they might be.

"As a player you learn from level to level," Smith said. "From high school to college to the pros the stuff has been similar."

"The Cowboy system is real basic and it is similar to the defense we played at Texas A&M, which really helps out. The pro defense is all about recognition and what is happening in front of you."

"You see the same route all through the game in the pros, but it is run just a little different each time. The difference in the pros is it's you against him."

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Former A&M cornerback Kevin Smith returns a punt for a touchdown against Rice in 1991. Smith is now a member of the NFL's Dallas Cowboys and is recovering from an early-season injury that kept his play limited during the first three weeks of the season.

Pay-per-view: A true sports fan's worst fear

For those dyed-in-the-wool sports fans, there is an evil force in television that could possibly be the true anti-Christ.

Pay-per-view.

Those three words. Those three little words that, for those who think ESPN is a gift from God and wish Vin Scully and Joe Garagiola would call every baseball game for the eternity, are like stamping a '666' on the top of your TV.

That's right, just another way Big-Brother Cable company can get his hand into your back pocket and make your life miserable — just when we thought we were going to be able to watch all the sports we wanted thanks to HSE and ESPN.

Sure, pay-per-view has been around a while, but recently those around the Bryan-College Station area are getting a glimpse of just how altered their lives can become by having to pay for sports coverage.

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Thanks, TCA. Next time, how about kissing us first.

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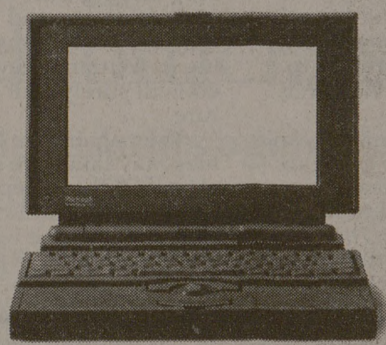
The cable company really expects us to pay for what is supposed to be a match between the one of the winningest male and winningest female

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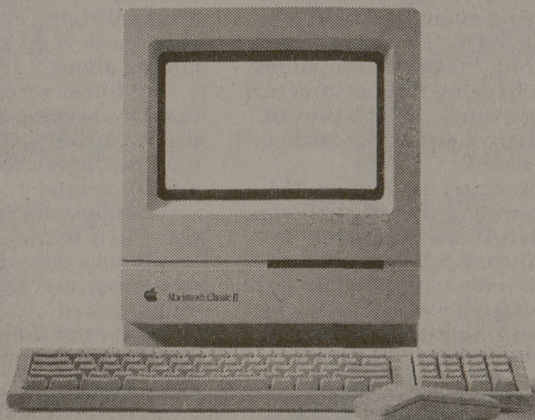


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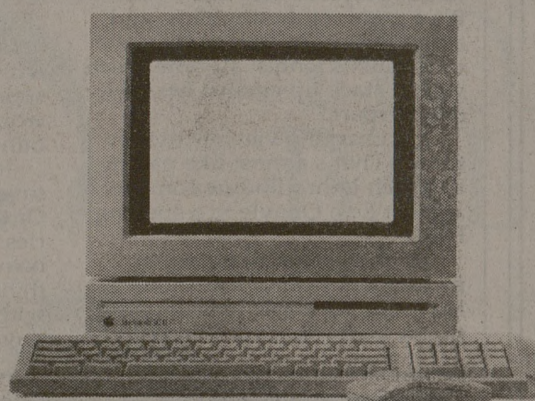
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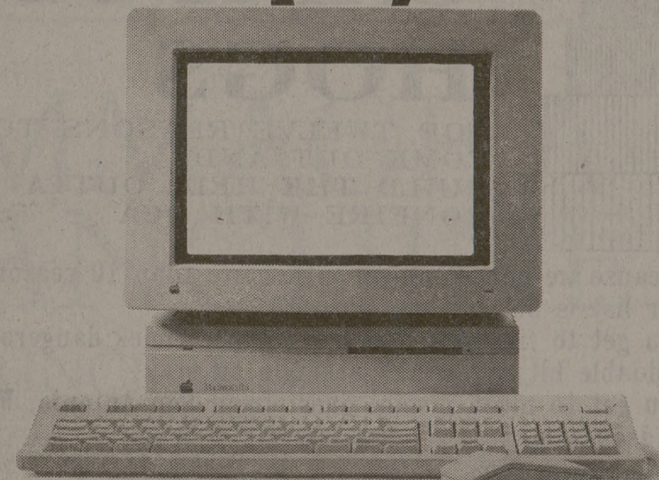
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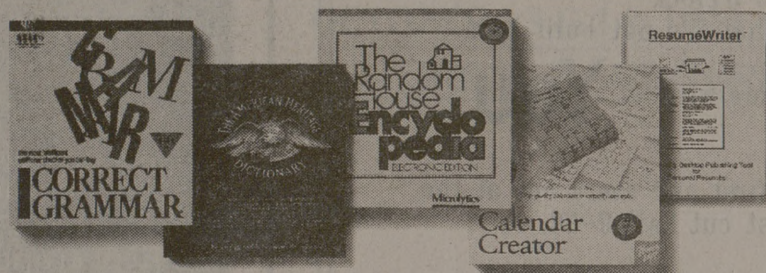


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