

Gridiron action better than studying

DREW DIENER

Sportswriter



I have finally figured out why my GPA is traditionally lower in the fall than it is in the spring.

Football. I can't study on Saturdays. College football is on at least three television stations, begging me to put away my textbooks and watch a plethora of millionaires compete against one another for nothing more than the pride of their respective universities.

I can't study on Sundays either because professional football is on at least three television stations, begging me to put away my textbooks and watch a plethora of millionaires compete against one another for nothing more than the paychecks and potential incentives provided by their respective owners.

It doesn't really matter who is playing: If it's on the tube, I'm going to watch it. Sometimes I wish I was as possessed by the fundamentals of ecology as much as I am by the fundamentals of the run and shoot.

If only I could associate the names of fictional characters with the names of the books they appear in like I can the names of third-string quarterbacks with the names of the teams they appear on.

If only my professors could hold my attention during their lectures as well as John Madden and Pat Summerall can when they call a game on Sunday afternoon.

If only I could take mental notes in class like I can when I watch NFL Prime Time.

If only I spent as much time reading my textbooks as I do reading the football section of the sports page.

If only I put in as much time sitting down in front of my books as I do sitting down in front of the TV.

If only I knew as much about the office of the President of the United States as I do about the office of the commissioner of the NFL.

If only I knew as much about the automotive labor unions as I do about the NFL players' union.

If only none of this was true, then I would not be writing this column at all. In fact, I probably wouldn't even be a paid sportswriter. I'd be a paid thesis writer.

The cold hard fact is that all of this is true. This, unfortunately, is the way I was meant to live my life. I'm Drew Diener and I'm a football junkie.

How can I improve my condition? I know it would be for the best if I abandoned this wretched lifestyle.

What good does it do for me to know Florida State cornerback Clifton Abraham wears number two on his jersey? What kind of good does it do for me to know that Clifton Abraham is a cornerback? What kind of good does it do for me to even know who Clifton Abraham is?

Will knowing the most obscure trivia like that get me a job one day?

The law firm of Kauffman, McGlauffmann, and Higginbotham... Mr. Higginbotham: Tell me Mr. Diener, what can you bring to our firm?

Me: Well, I uh, well sir I uh, you know, hmmm... Oh yeah, I know a whole lot about uh, uh. Football, that's it. I know football.

Mr. Kauffman: And that's going to help you make our coffee,

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Walker steps up in starting position

Sophomore linebacker has 41 tackles

By Tom Day
THE BATTALION

With the loss of stand-out inside linebacker Jason Atkinson at the end of last season, the Aggie football team figured finding an adequate replacement would be a tough chore. However, the search was a short one as the coaches quickly found their man in highly touted recruit Larry Walker II.

In his first year as a starter, the sophomore inside linebacker is using this season to develop and to learn the ropes.

"I just want to play to the best of my ability and get used to the new position and everything," Walker said.

Coming to A&M as a freshman, Walker looked at the talent at his position and wondered if he would ever get a shot to play.

"When you first get here and you see those great linebackers and the tradition they have and you kind of wonder, 'Will I ever get to play?'" Walker said. "But my parents helped me out a lot because they always told me to keep the faith, and I had confidence in my abilities and worked real hard."

Although he was a consensus Texas Top 100 selection and a nationally rated linebacker in high school, Walker was primarily acknowledged for his stand-out accomplishments on offense.

As a running back in his final year at Class 3A Rusk High School, Walker earned honorable mention all-state honors while rushing for 1,307 yards and 26 touchdowns.

Defensive coordinator and inside linebacker coach Tommy Tuberville believes Walker will reach his full potential once he develops the right defensive mentality.

"When you're an offensive player in high school and you come in to play a lot of defense in college, it takes a while to pick up that defensive mentality," Tuberville said. "Defense hasn't come natural to him, so he's had to work pretty hard."

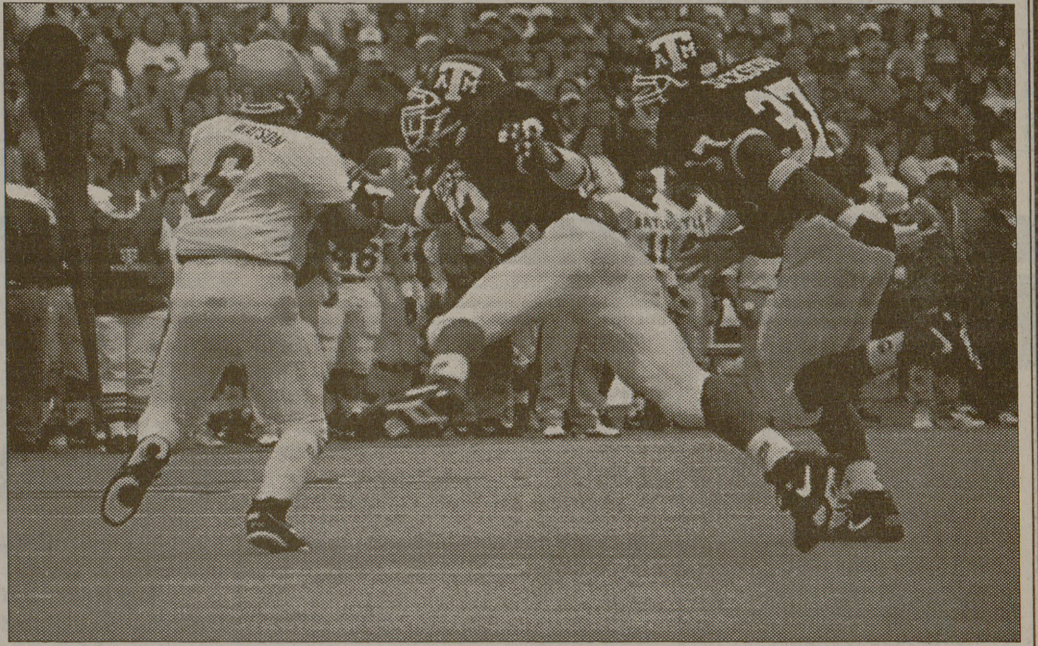
"He's really starting to adapt, his technique has gotten better and he has improved every week."

Walker conditioned and lifted weights in the off-season to prepare himself for his current starting role.

"Last year, I didn't get much playing time, so during the off-season I worked out and got as strong as I could so during the spring I could earn a starting position," Walker said.

Tuberville said Walker's tremendous speed is what impresses him the most.

"He's one of the fastest guys we've got on the team and that's the reason



Sophomore linebacker Larry Walker, Jr. rushes toward the Baylor quarterback.

Stew Milne/The Battalion

he's playing," Tuberville said. "He's fast and he works hard, but he hasn't quite reached his potential yet."

Walker is third on the team with 41 tackles as the young "Wrecking Crew" defense is once again terrorizing opposing offenses. Walker believes team speed separates this year's defense

from those of previous years. "We have a lot more speed, overall, than most of the defenses of the past," Walker said. "We have a lot of young people who will always get better each week and each year."

"We're playing good right now, but I think we have a long way to go."

Volleyball team ready to face Owls tonight

Lady Aggies try to improve winning streak to four after impressive weekend

By Jason Holstead
THE BATTALION

After two road wins last weekend against the University of Texas-Arlington and Baylor University, the Texas A&M women's volleyball team returns home to play Rice University at 7:00 p.m. in G. Rollie White Coliseum.

The Lady Aggies are currently riding a three game winning streak.

Head coach Laurie Corbelli said though A&M won both weekend matches, there were several areas where the team could improve.

"At Arlington, we didn't have our most impressive offensive night," Corbelli said. "We worked hard at trying to keep our ball control where it has been, which has been very good."

"At Baylor we were really off; our ball handling suffered, we got out-dug, and our defense was lacking. I don't think it was an intentional lack of effort, but just inexperience in the surroundings. But we still took home the win, and I was very pleased with the win."

The match tonight with the Lady Owls marks the second meeting of the

season between the two teams. Texas A&M traveled to Houston three weeks ago, beating Rice three games to one (15-12, 12-15, 15-7, 15-9).

Cindy VanderWoude, a freshman middle blocker for the Lady Aggies,

"One weakness (of Rice) is one of their newest members happens to be their setter, and I think that hurts them at times."

Laurie Corbelli,
A&M volleyball coach

said the Lady Aggies should see a different Rice team tonight.

"I know they weren't playing as well as they could, their best player (Sammy Waldron) was not playing as well as she can, so I know we are going to be ready to try to shut her down," VanderWoude said. "(We need to) try to play as one group instead of six individuals, it

worked in (Texas) Tech. We played in a groove and it just helped a lot."

Corbelli said she thinks the Lady Owls will be a tough test for the Lady Aggies.

"The number one offensive weapon they have is Sammy Waldron, and she is playing better and better every match," Corbelli said. "I'm sure they are tired of losing the close ones (matches), and we are really going to have to contain her."

"One weakness (of Rice) is one of their newest members happens to be their setter, and I think that hurts them at times. We can capitalize on that by hitting at the setters, we can draw them into some offensive troubles."

The Lady Owls return four starters from a 1993 team that finished with a 13-18 record, including a dismal 0-10 Southwest conference mark and a sixth place finish. Waldron leads the team in hitting percentage (.312), kills (303) and digs (176).

After tonight's game, the Lady Aggies continue their three-game homestand Friday night as they host the University of Georgia Lady Bulldogs at 7 o'clock at G. Rollie White Coliseum.

Dallas impressed with Peete's clutch performance

IRVING (AP) — The Dallas Cowboys bought themselves a \$575,000 quarter-back insurance policy in the offseason. Rodney Peete was worth every nickel.

"You talk about somebody stepping up and producing when we needed him," said Dallas running back Emmitt Smith. "It was nice to know that we have a backup who can come in and win."

Peete threw two touchdown passes as the Cowboys rallied for a 28-21 victory over the Arizona Cardinals after starter Troy Aikman suffered a concussion in the first quarter.

"Peete gave an exceptional performance," said Dallas coach Barry Switzer. "He started off a little slow, but that's because he never got to execute the game plan in practice. As he got better the team got better."

Peete had played his entire five-year NFL career with the Detroit Lions before deciding to move on.

"In Detroit you were on a constant roller-coaster ride," said Peete, an on-and-off starter with the Lions, but a backup when Erik Kramer led them to the NFC Central title two of the last three seasons. "I'd be the starter at the start of the season then they'd move somebody else in."

Peete said he needed a good game, because his new teammates weren't sure what he would do.

"This gives them confidence that I can go in and make things happen," Peete said. "It was important for me to show them that I can get them into the end zone. Teammates never really have total confidence in you until you do something in the heat of battle."

Peete completed 12-of-19 passes for 186 yards. He took the Cowboys on three touchdown drives.

"I was a little shaky at first. I hadn't had a lot of reps in practice and it took time for me to get comfortable," he said. "We ran our basic offense. We didn't cut back much at all."

Offensive coordinator Ernie Zampese gave Peete high marks.

"He did the job," Zampese said. "It was pretty impressive considering he had to come off the sidelines cold."

Impressive enough that the Cowboys won't worry if Peete has to play again Sunday at Cincinnati.

Thomas wins SWC offensive player award

Senior running back rushed for 136 yards, two receptions for 71 yards

(AP) — Texas A&M fans leave games talking about how the defense performed or that flashy run by Leeland McElroy. When they read about the game the next day, they notice Rodney Thomas.



Thomas

Quietly, Thomas is a major force in most of the Aggies' victories, piling up impressive statistics.

He stood out Saturday when he scored the game's only touchdown on a 60-yard pass from Corey Pullig, giving the Aggies a 7-0 victory over Rice.

It earned the unassuming senior

from Groveton The Associated Press Offensive Player of the Week honor. He rushed 136 yards on 21 carries and caught two passes for 71 yards.

Rodney Thomas is no delayed reaction for Aggie offensive coordinator Steve Ensminger.

"He's the biggest part of our offense, our leader," Ensminger said. "I couldn't be more pleased with Rodney. He had a little bit of an injury last week but he told me 'don't worry, coach, I'll be ready to play.'"

He was ready to play and just as reserved after the game about his performance, giving proper credit to his teammates for his eighth 100-yard performance that boosted him into sixth place on the school rushing list with 2,811 yards.

"The offensive line has worked

hard throughout the year to get better so most of the credit goes to them," Thomas said. "My job is just to run hard and do whatever I can to help the team."

The Aggies were 20-point favorites against the Owls, who haven't beaten the Aggies in 14 years.

"It doesn't mean the offense played a bad game," Thomas defended. "It just means we didn't capitalize."

McElroy, among the nation's top kick returners, gets more notice because of his flashy moves and exceptional speed. Thomas is almost as fast, but likes a more physical game.

"You'll see Rodney in there a lot on the goal lines because he likes to drive it in there," Ensminger said. "Leeland will make you miss out in the open field."

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