

Irby patiently awaits stardom

□ The linebacker was a two-time JUCO All-American.

By Philip Leone
THE BATTALION

John Roper, Marcus Buckley, Antonio Armstrong.

These names affirm Texas A&M's history of having great pass rushers at the outside linebacker position.

Pencil in junior linebacker Jimmie Irby as a possible addition to this tradition. His coaches believe this junior college transfer from California has the potential to be A&M's next great pass rushing linebacker.

Irby's road to College Station has not been an easy one. After starring for Banning High School in Los Angeles, low test scores pushed the talented linebacker to Mt. San Antonio Junior College.

With his potent pass rushing skills, Irby devastated Mission Conference opponents for two seasons and took home JC All-American honors in 1994 with 16 quarterback sacks.

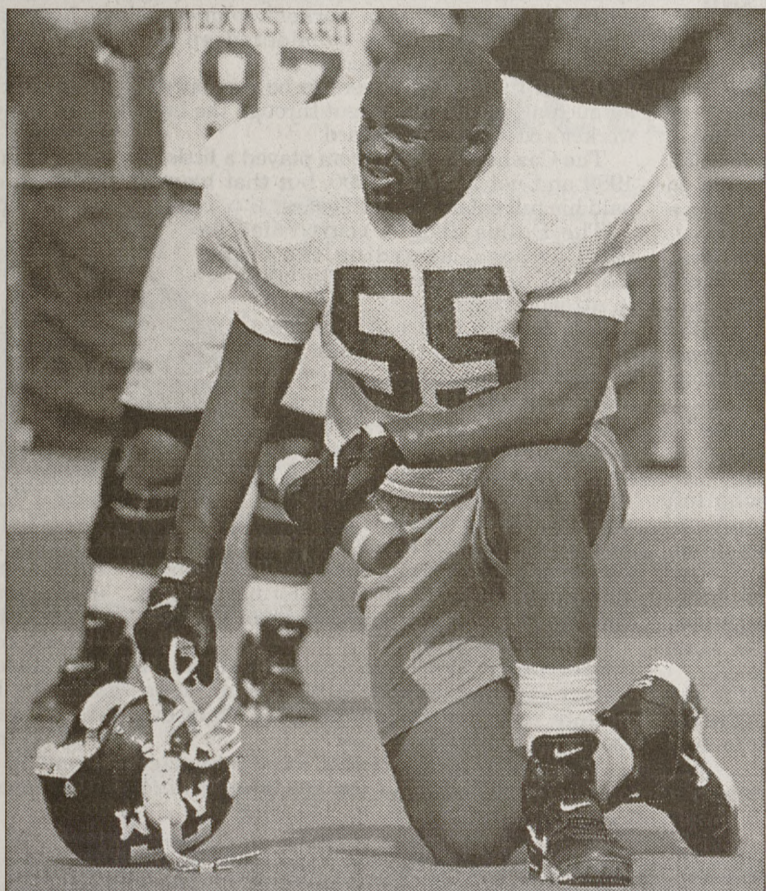
After those two seasons, major college recruiters to come calling, including Texas A&M's Outside Linebacker Coach Shawn Slocum who went to Los Angeles in hopes of signing the top prospect.

"Jimmy grabbed our attention with his great ability to get off the ball — to get upfield vertically — which is the first ingredient in being a successful pass rusher," Slocum said. "He also got our attention because he was an active player who always seemed to be around the ball."

Irby first committed to the University of Arizona, but after much deliberation, he changed his mind about becoming a Wildcat and decided on Texas A&M.

The longstanding Aggie linebacking tradition, the team's legitimate chances of winning a national championship and the school's academic reputation were all determining factors in swaying Irby's decision.

"I just saw Texas A&M as a better overall opportunity — athletically and academically," said Irby. "You can do a lot with



Tim Moor, THE BATTALION

Junior transfer linebacker Jimmie Irby takes a knee and a break during a recent Texas A&M football practice.

a degree from this place."

Irby felt that he struggled during two-a-day practices in August and had a hard time adjusting to the complexity of a new defensive system.

"In junior college, it was like 'Hey, you're good, so just go out there and get after it,'" Irby said. "Basically, all I did was rush upfield and attack. Here, they emphasize your playing technique, learning your assignments and forcing on run support. It was difficult to grasp right off because I wasn't accustomed to it."

With two years of college experience behind him, Irby had the confidence and maturity to know he had the ability to improve and adapt to his new surroundings. He stepped up his play, utilized his speed and explosiveness, and has already put himself in a posi-

tion to see playing time.

Irby is currently third on the depth chart at the "rush" outside linebacker position behind juniors Keith Mitchell and Chris Colon. However, he will probably be sent in definite passing situations to help provide more pressure on the quarterback.

Gaining valuable experience throughout this season, Irby is expected to compete for a starting position in 1996.

"He has the potential to move into a starting role, and I think the more he gets to know the system the better player he's going to be," said Slocum. "It's quite a transition going from the junior college level to a program like A&M. It looks like he's starting to pick it up and get a feel for things. Jimmy will be a player for us at some point in his career."

Mets drop Astros, 4-2

□ Houston trails the Dodgers by 2 1/2 games in the wildcard race.

NEW YORK (AP) — The Houston Astros missed a chance to gain ground in the wild-card race Thursday night, dropping a 4-2 decision to the New York Mets.

With 16 games left in the regular season, the Astros trail the Dodgers by 2 1/2 games in the chase for the fourth and final playoff spot. Los Angeles, which was idle Thursday, has 15 games remaining.

Rico Brogna broke a 2-all tie with a two-run homer in the fifth inning, his team-leading 19th. The 420-foot line drive to straightaway center field also gave Brogna a team-high 61 RBIs.

Dave Mlicki (8-6) allowed only four hits in seven innings before Paul Byrd worked the eighth and John Franco pitched the ninth for his 23rd save. The right-handed Mlicki walked five, but Astros hitters went just 2-for-15 with runners on base.

Shane Reynolds (9-11) took the loss for Houston, allowing seven hits, four runs and three walks in five innings. The Astros have scored only 21 runs in his 11 losses.

Batt Sports Tulsa Sega Shootout

□ A&M nips Tulsa 48-45 in a simulated matchup on EA College Football 1996.

The Texas A&M Football team came precariously close to having its national title hopes dashed on the rocks of despair Thursday.

In dramatic fashion, the Aggies fended off a tenacious Tulsa team 48-45 in an aerial shootout the likes of which Kyle Field has rarely seen.

A&M finally put the game away with five ticks remaining on the clock when senior quarterback Corey Pullig hit a streaking Danny McCray for a 43-yard touchdown, giving the Aggies a 47-45 lead.

Sophomore placekicker Kyle Bryant booted the extra point to give the Aggies a 48-45 lead. On Tulsa's final play from scrimmage, A&M junior safety TYPAIL McMullen broke up a pass at the A&M 40-yard line to seal the win.

McCray, the junior from Killeen, was the star of the

game. He caught six passes for an astonishing 207 yards. Four of the passes went for touchdowns.

The 207 yards in receptions was the second most in A&M history, the four touchdown receptions is a new Aggie record.

Perhaps the only Aggie to enjoy a game as good as McCray was Pullig, who came alive when a surprisingly tough Golden Hurricane defense held junior Leeland McElroy to 93 yards on 15 carries.

Pullig, whose previous high yardage game was 269 yards against Baylor in 1994, passed for 437 yards and six touchdowns.

The 437 yards shattered Edd Hargett's school record of 376, set in 1968. The six touchdowns tied Gary Kubiak's record set in 1981 against Rice.

The Aggies' "Wrecking Crew" defense gave up its highest point total since a 52-15 loss to Oklahoma State in 1988.

The Aggies return to action next Thursday when they travel to Boulder to face the University of Colorado.

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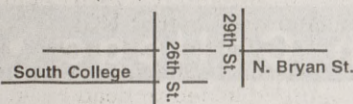
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