

SPORTS BRIEFS

Starting secondary Jones' primary goal

Mavericks sign Iowa State center Meyer

DALLAS (AP) — The Dallas Mavericks believe they've added some of the frontcourt toughness lacking in recent years with the signing of Iowa State center Loren Meyer Wednesday.

Meyer was the second big man the Mavericks selected in the June draft behind Duke's Cherokee Parks. The 6-10, 261-pounder averaged 15.7 points and 8.9 rebounds last season for the Cyclones.

Meyer is the bulkiest Maverick, 30 pounds heavier than the 6-11 Parks, who will play both forward and post.

Meyer will wear No. 40 in honor of Chris Street, the Iowa player killed in a car wreck in 1993.

Air Swoopes soon to hit shoe market

LUBBOCK (AP) — The basketball shoe Nike named for former Texas Tech star Sheryl Swoopes-Jackson is expected to hit stores next week.

Retailers in Lubbock predict strong sales for Air Swoopes, the "S"-emblazoned footwear billed as the first sports shoe named for a female athlete.

"I just think it's a real cool shoe," Swoopes-Jackson said in a recent interview. "I have several pairs. I've played in it and I love it."

Swoopes-Jackson, 24, said she can't talk about terms of the shoe deal that placed Air Swoopes in the footsteps of Michael Jordan's Air Jordan.

"I never thought this would happen. People come up to me and say, 'Gosh, Sheryl, I want your shoe,'" she said.

The two-sport star from Refugio has seen plenty of special-teams action at A&M.

By Tom Day
THE BATTALION

Like most track and field athletes who play football, Toya Jones has all the weapons.

Blessed with superb speed, quickness and athletic ability, Jones fits the mold of a typical two-sport athlete.

But A&M Defensive Backs Coach Larry Slade said Jones has something most track stars don't have on the gridiron — toughness.

"He has great speed and ability," Slade said. "But what's been very surprising about Toya is how tough he is and his intensity as a player."

"A lot of the time, you get guys that run track that aren't tough or track guys playing football. Toya is a football player who runs track."

As a two-sport standout at Refugio High School, Jones was nothing short of spectacular. As a senior, he earned Prep All-American honors in football and track and field.

Jones led Refugio to three straight Class 2A team championships and also set Class 3A records in long jump and the 100 and 200 meters. The most decorated track athlete in state history, Jones won 13 gold medals at four state meets his final year.

Jones was just as much a force on the football field. Catching 15 passes for 308 yards, rushing for another 504 yards and

posting 103 tackles on defense, Jones was named Second-team All USA by USA Today and was selected a Dream Team member by Blue Chip Illustrated Magazine.

Needless to say, Jones was pursued by several top-notch collegiate athletic programs, including the University of Tennessee, Notre Dame and the University of Arkansas. However, A&M was Jones' first choice.

"I grew up in a small town," Jones said. "I wanted a small-town atmosphere that was close to home and had a big-time football program, so A&M was the place to go."

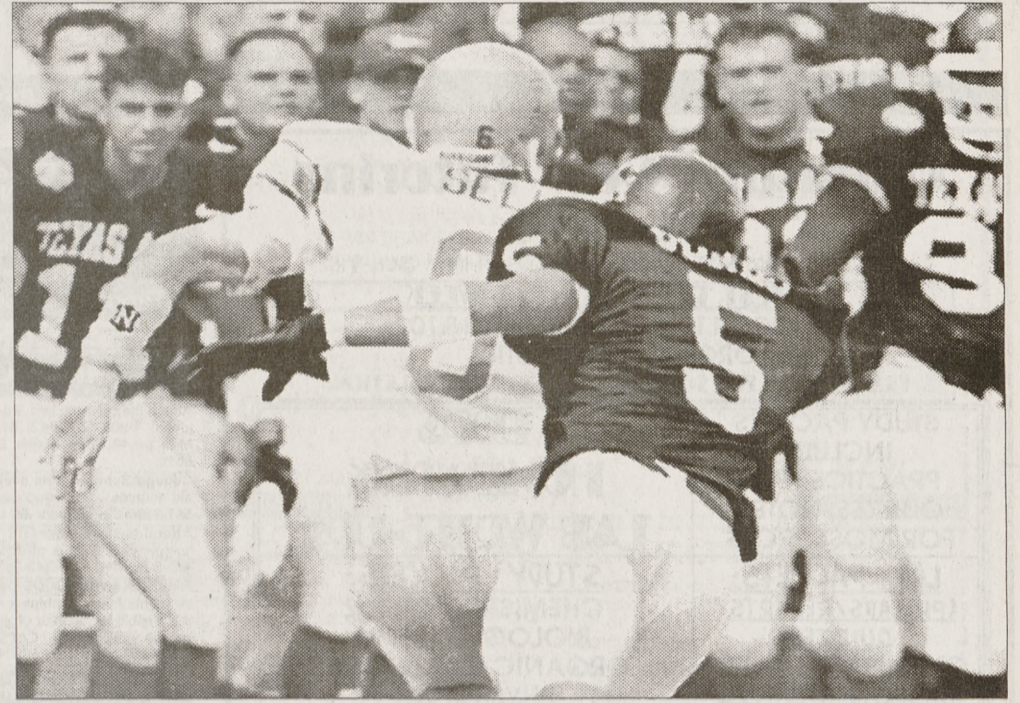
Accepting a reserve role this season, Jones has taken his time learning the Aggies' defensive system while excelling on special teams and seeing limited playing time at safety.

Two weeks ago, the freshman made quite an impression against Colorado when his third quarter sack of quarterback John Hessler forced a fumble and a Buffalo turnover.

"He's coming along," Slade said. "It's been slow at times for him to get acclimated to the different coverages and responsibilities of a defensive back. But, right now he's big on special teams and he's one of those guys you love to have at that position."

After playing on both sides of the ball in high school, Jones has had to adjust to playing one position, something he didn't anticipate would be so difficult.

"There's a lot of listening and learning," Jones said. "In high school, I played everywhere, but now there's more emphasis at one position that you have to know everything."



Stew Milne, THE BATTALION

Freshman safety Toya Jones chases a Tulsa receiver out of bounds during the Sept. 6 meeting at Kyle Field.

Jones said he doesn't mind waiting in the wings this season.

"I like it right now," Jones said. "Usually, in the spotlight, people are looking for you to mess-up."

"I'm low man on the totem pole right now, so I'm working hard to make my way up. Once I get my plays down, I'll be

in there." Jones said unlike track, he can release a lot of steam on the gridiron.

"In track, you can relax a lot," Jones said. "But, sometimes you have to let it all out and I can do that on the football field."

"Football is my first love."

Communication key to upbeat Slade's success

Slade brings championship experience to the Aggies.

By Philip Leone
THE BATTALION

Everyone likes Texas A&M secondary coach Larry Slade - his players, his fellow coaches, even the receptionist in the A&M football office thinks Slade is a "real cool guy."

For over 20 years now, Slade's winning personality, positive attitude, and sense of humor have keyed his success and his ability to get the most out of his players.

Junior cornerback Donovan Greer believes Slade's charisma and laidback approach to coaching have been definite assets to the Aggie defensive backfield the past two seasons.

"Coach Slade is a trip. He does things even that crack us up every day," Greer said. "We all enjoy playing for him, and I think that if you

don't like your coach and don't get along, you're not going to play as well as you could. We don't have that problem with Coach Slade."

Slade is a firm believer that a football coach must focus on more than just the rudiments of the game. From his perspective, a good coach should also be a good teacher and must establish a steady level of communication with his players.

"You've got to be able to transfer what you know as a coach," Slade said. "There are a lot of coaches who can dazzle you with Xs and Os on the chalkboard, but they fail because can't relate to their kids."

Slade began his career in 1973 as the offensive line coach at Shepherd College in West Virginia. Nine years of seasoning at NAIA Shepherd fostered an ambition to coach at the Division I level, and Slade jumped at the chance to move on to coach tight ends at the University of Richmond.

After only one season, however, Slade left Richmond to join the staff

at Howard University where he coached defensive backs for the first time.

"I had this big fear of coaching defensive backs before I went to Howard because up until then I always coached up front," Slade said. "I tell my guys that I didn't have any gray hairs until I started coaching the secondary."

Slade's first Division I job was in Seattle where he took a job under Don James at the University of Washington in 1986. During his tenure as secondary coach at Washington, the Huskies beat Michigan in the 1991 Rose Bowl to win a national championship. The Huskies produced a number of future NFL defensive backs like Dana Hall of the San Francisco 49ers and Lelo Lang of the Buffalo Bills.

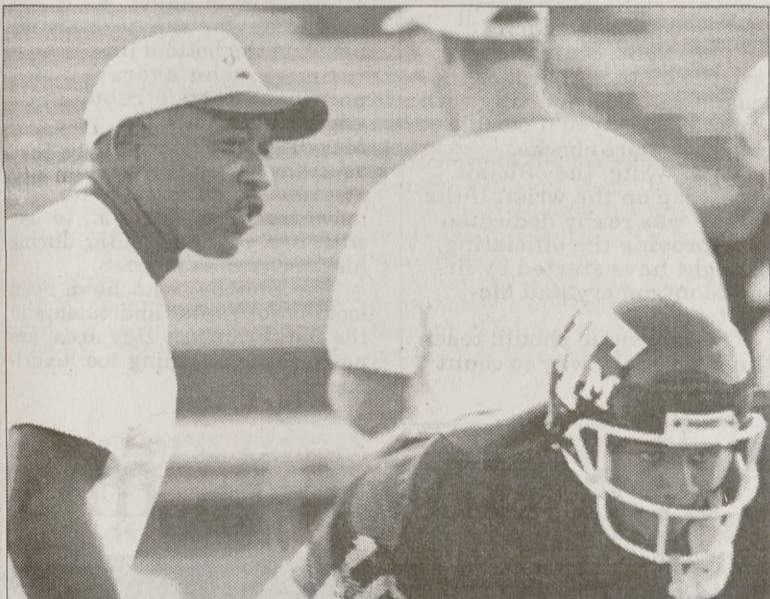
But after five years of sunshine at Washington, the clouds rolled in and the skies got dark for Slade in 1992 when he became the defensive coordinator at the University of Maryland. Lack of major college tal-

ent made it difficult for Slade and his Terrapins to achieve anything but losses.

"When I went there, I was shocked to find out that the talent just wasn't there," Slade said. "I can remember the first time I saw guys work out during the offseason program. I said to myself, 'Oh my God, what have I done?' We did the very best we could do, but it just didn't work out."

An offer from R.C. Slocum in 1994 brought Slade to Aggieland and rescued him from the losing ways of Maryland. Slade enjoys the camaraderie of the Aggie staff and feels fortunate to be working for a quality coach like Slocum.

"You have to look a long way to find any negative things that he's done," said Slade. "I think that the big thing that he does is surround himself with quality coaches and quality players. He's not afraid of having strong people around him, and that's a sign of a good manager."



Shane Elkins, THE BATTALION

Secondary coach, Larry Slade, instructs defensive back Sedrick Curry during practice at Kyle Field on Tuesday.

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