



Stew Milne, THE BATTALION

Meryl Martin, a freshman BioMedical Science major, directs the placement of logs onto stack as the "scarecrow" Monday morning during push.

## Stacking Up

### Students make the push to get Bonfire erected on time

Amy Protas  
THE BATTALION

When push comes to shove, 800 to 1600 students make a mass exodus every night. Their destination is the Polo Fields where they are building the world's largest bonfire.

Push is the phase of stack that started on Nov. 16. The shifts last from 6 p.m. to midnight and midnight until 6 a.m.

Carl Baggett, head stack redpot and a senior accounting major, said many people come out for push because they get to see the actual building of Bonfire.

"When you work for something, it's easier if it's tangible," Baggett said. "You can see it before your eyes making a difference. We know we're making it for around 60,000 people, and we get really excited."

Working at stack all night long may be detrimental to grades, especially with finals looming ahead.

Rebecca Fields, a Bonfire coordinator and a junior environmental design major, said students have to know how to balance their time.

"It's a commitment of my own heart," Fields said. "From the very beginning, you have to have your priorities in order and balance your time. Grades are a top priority, but once you make that commitment to Bonfire, it has to be a top priority too."

Baggett said the reason there are shifts is to allow students time to keep up with school.

"There are only 10 days of push when we're really busy," Baggett said. "The reason there are eight or nine red pots is so we can work in shifts. When we're not working on Bonfire, we're either studying or sleeping."

Baggett said that despite the long hours students spend cutting down trees, most students are not burned out by the time push rolls around.

**"In so many ways, Bonfire is the tangible personification of A&M."**

- Carl Baggett  
head stack redpot

"Bonfire has a lot of different aspects," Baggett said. "We have eight different cuts. If someone gets tired at cut, in two weeks, you have a whole new environment called push and stack."

To many students, Bonfire is more than just building something that is going to burn in one night — it is about friendship and tradition.

David Thurston, a sophomore general studies major, said he works on Bonfire because it represents the spirit of people at the site.

"I started working last year because of the camaraderie with friends," Thurston said. "Bonfire is one of the traditions of A&M. Personally, I hate heights, but I'm willing to get up there for Bonfire. People will come out here

and are willing to give up personal things for Bonfire."

Last year, when Bonfire stack fell, people sacrificed hours of time to rebuild Bonfire in one week.

Noel Hoff, a sophomore agricultural economics major, said that this year, the pressure is off and not so many people have come out.

"This year, it is laid back because we don't have to rush to build in one week," Hoff said. "We don't have enough people coming out, and there are still trucks showing up with more wood. People think because it hasn't fallen, they don't have to come out, but there are still a lot of dedicated people. There just aren't that many new faces."

Last year, there were publicized complaints about racism and sexism at stack.

Baggett said that this year, they have worked to not have any more incidents.

"We changed the whole framework," Baggett said. "This is now an environment with an open-door policy. There used to be closed meetings, but now there are representatives from different organizations that come to our meetings."

Baggett said Bonfire is different from other traditions because anyone can work on it.

"In so many ways, Bonfire is the tangible personification of A&M," Baggett said. "Silver Taps and Muster are great, but you can touch and feel Bonfire — especially on the night it burns."

## Scorsese rolls the dice and wins big with violent *Casino*

By Wes Swift  
THE BATTALION

Casino is a gamble for Martin Scorsese. The critically acclaimed director already conquered the mobster film genre with *GoodFellas*, and film audiences may wonder why Scorsese would want to tackle another mob film.

But when Scorsese rolls the dice for *Casino*, he wins.

*Casino* chronicles the mafia's fall from grace in the Las Vegas gaming industry. Set in 1973, the film exposes the dark side of the Vegas glitz, complete with fast living, fast dying and millions of cash.

Robert De Niro plays Sam "Ace" Rothstein, the mob's most skilled bookie, who is sent to Vegas by his mafia bosses to run The Tangiers, the city's most luxurious casino.

Ace's golden touch turns The Tangiers into a cash cow for his bosses. His good fortune even spreads to women, when the former bookie marries Ginger (Sharon Stone), a casino-hustling vamp who catches Ace's eye.

To keep an eye on Ace, the mob sends his childhood friend Nick Santoro (Joe Pesci). Nicky is a genuine hood

**MOVIE REVIEW**  
*Casino*  
Starring Robert De Niro, Sharon Stone and Joe Pesci  
Directed by Martin Scorsese  
Rated R  
Playing at Post Oak Mall  
\*\*\*\* (out of five)

through and through, and it doesn't take him long to start his own Las Vegas underworld.

Things go smoothly until Ace crosses paths with some Nevada politicians who cause him to lose his gaming license. At the same time, Ginger dives into drug and alcohol addiction, putting herself, Ace and their daughter at risk.

Nicky isn't doing well either. His psychotic tirades make him a marked man in Vegas, and he begins to lose control of the city he once had by the throat.

When all three lives become too costly, the mob decides to take action with dire results.

*Casino* proves why Scorsese is one of the best filmmakers ever. The film is

riveting; the action sequences are powerful, and Scorsese tells an excellent story about high-crime.

De Niro is superb as Rothstein, adding the right blend of toughness and wisdom to make the character work. Pesci is over the top as Nicky, combining a laughable quality with an undercurrent of psychotic anger.

Stone comes through with the first good performance of her career. Ginger is greedy, conniving and unfaithful. Stone gives her a realistic quality that few actresses could.

The film does drag in places, though. Running at nearly three hours, *Casino* starts losing momentum after the first 90 minutes when it shifts the focus to the failing relationship between Ace and Ginger.

But then Scorsese flips back to the film's forte — violence. The gruesome, brutal crimes make the film believable and kill the romantic mob image. This is where the film gets the viewer — not with its high-stake card games, but with its stark violence that ingrains itself on the viewer's mind.

The images are powerful enough to leave audiences wanting more. They should come to Scorsese's *Casino*, and roll the dice. They'll win, too.



Ace Rothstein (Robert De Niro) and Ginger (Sharon Stone) share a relationship tainted with neurotic impulses in *Casino*.

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