

THE BATTALION

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The Olympic Experience: Sights and Sounds from Atlanta

I had never planned on going to Atlanta.

The thought of standing in long lines, suffering through annoying security checks, and battling the heat and humidity among thousands of other loud and sweaty spectators never really appealed to me.

Needless to say, when it was time to apply for event tickets a year ago, I lacked the motivation and desire to sign on the dotted line.

I realized my mistake over the next few months when I thought about what I'd be missing — something truly unique and memorable.

So last week when I was offered tickets and a free place to stay in Georgia over the weekend, I jumped at the opportunity.

As we embarked on the 15-hour, 870-mile rental car trip to Atlanta this past Thursday, I thought I knew what to expect upon arrival. But as I soon found out, you can't predict or describe the feeling until you actually experience it in person.

And anyone who was there last weekend definitely got their money's worth. It was the full-package deal — an emotion-packed experience of joy, fright, disappointment and history, all rolled up into two whirlwind days.

It wasn't just the Centennial Park bombing, the subsequent bomb threats and evacuations, or the Olympic events themselves. Rather, it was all the weekend's occurrences culminating into one singular experience.

When we arrived in Atlanta at 4:30 a.m. Friday, all was calm. The freeways were empty and the streets deserted as the summer flame burned brightly at Olympic Stadium. I was taken back with how clean and pristine the city was.

Later, we experienced the full crush of hype and excitement engulfing the city. We battled the souvenir-seeking crowds and visited the Olympic booths and other attractions.

We saw the innumerable local TV reports and specials covering the hoopla, and we read the 10 sections devoted to Olympic coverage in the newspaper.

The mood was festive and all was good — then the unthinkable happened.

Everything screamed to a halt as television reports showed the sounds and images of the tragedy at Centennial Park. For over three hours, no one knew what to expect as the Games were left in limbo.

But the Olympic Committee proudly turned the other cheek and refused to let the malicious actions of some misguided individual ruin an institution that has commenced every four years for a century.

The Games went on Saturday with a renewed sense of vigor. As of yet, no one knows what sick person was behind the bombing, or what his motives were.

But one thing was apparent Saturday in Atlanta — if this person was trying to dampen the international spirit of the Olympic Games, he failed miserably.

Instead of casting a dark gloom over the atmosphere at the venues, the opposite occurred. The whole calamity seemed to bring people closer together in a celebration of the human spirit and the goodwill of the games.

Yes, there were periods of paranoia and panic Saturday in the wake of the previous night's occurrence. I was unfortunate to be in the Atlanta Underground District below Peachtree Street when a bomb threat sent hundreds of people rampaging through the shops, souvenir stands and food courts to safety — scaring us to death in the process.

The whole fiasco led to a complete evacuation of the area and another black eye to Atlanta's image.

But overall, the city and Olympic organizers bounced back valiantly. Centennial Park was closed down and flags at all venues were flown at half-mast.

We stood and gave a moment of silence for the victims Saturday morning prior to the men's volleyball matches at the Omni Coliseum.

I thought the Olympic spirit most visibly prevailed that night at the baseball game at Fulton County Stadium between the United States and Australia.

Unlike attending professional or collegiate athletic contests, there seemed to be a larger sense of excitement and importance to this Olympic contest.

There was electricity in the air as the crowd was involved in every aspect of the game beginning with the first pitch. The wave circulated around the stadium numerous times and the chant "U-S-A" was screamed several times during the course of the host team's 15-5 victory.

Even more unique was the fact that there were no bitter rivalries on the field or in the



TOM DAY
SPORTS EDITOR

Redistricting maps submitted

HOUSTON (AP) — More than a dozen maps redesigning Texas congressional districts were submitted Monday to a three-judge federal court panel working to ensure the legality of new boundaries for three districts that were found to be racially gerrymandered.

Lt. Gov. Bob Bullock and House Speaker Pete Laney submitted a pair of plans to the federal district court clerk's office in Houston during a flurry of activity leading up to a 4 p.m. deadline set by the judges.

Two others came from the plaintiffs in the case and more plans arrived from parties that included the Galveston County Republican Party, an Hispanic civil rights organization, some Houston city officials and U.S. Rep. Eddie Bernice Johnson, whose

30th District in Dallas was among the three ruled unconstitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court.

The three-judge panel also had asked the parties to submit redrawn boundaries for Houston's 18th and 29th districts. Any redesign, however, also could affect a number of other adjacent Texas congressional districts.

The judges could accept any of the plans or draw their own boundaries.

Attorneys had indicated plans under discussion between the two sides ranged from changes in as few as 10 of the state's 30 districts to as many as 26.

The judicial panel, which includes Appeals Court Judge Edith Jones and U.S. District judges David Hitner and Melinda Harmon, has indicated up to 14 districts may have to be redesigned if they do the reconfiguration.

The new boundaries became necessary after Republican plaintiffs argued successfully in a suit that racial criteria improperly were used in designing the districts.

They want new lines this year, as do GOP congressmen and party officials eager to expand their presence. The Democrats hold an 18-12 advantage in the Texas congressional delegation.

Democratic state officials and House members, meanwhile, are satisfied with the status quo and want the Texas Legislature to draw a new map next year.

Of the maps submitted Monday, one version of the Bullock-Laney plan would affect nine districts and four counties, with Dallas and Harris counties seeing the most change. The plan would eliminate fingers of the

30th District that reached into Tarrant and Collin counties.

The map also would maintain minority voting strength, the attorney representing Bullock and Laney contends. For example, the population of the 18th District, now 50.9 percent black, would be 44.8 percent.

The second Bullock-Laney plan would alter 12 districts and 10 counties, with the major changes occurring in Harris, Dallas, Tarrant, Parker, Johnson, Ellis and Navarro counties. Less extensive changes would be made in Brazoria, Fort Bend and Collin counties. Under that plan, the 18th District's population would be 46.2 percent black.

The plaintiffs filed two new proposals, one changing 13 districts, the other 17.

Regents discuss early graduation incentives

By Melissa Nunnery
THE BATTALION

The Texas A&M Board of Regents and administrators discussed incentives for students to graduate in four years on Thursday at the Board's meeting in Stephenville. Houston regent Robert Allen began the discussion by asking whether students could be required to take 15 hours instead of 12 to be considered full-time students.

"If the average (number of hours taken by students) would increase by three hours, we would see a favorable economic impact," Allen said. "Each year the number of hours taken on average has gone down. A large percentage of the student body takes five to six years to graduate."

Allen said the Board has a responsibility to encourage students to graduate in four years. "First and foremost we have a responsibility to the parents who support us and a fiscal responsibility to the System," Allen said.

Dr. Ray Bowen, Texas A&M president, said students need to graduate in four years to make room for more students to attend A&M. He agreed with Allen's suggestion of increasing the number of hours required for full-time status.

"If we can make people take more hours, we can admit more people," Bowen said. "Qualified students can't get in because there's no room."

Bowen was quoted in an article in the Bryan-College Station Eagle as saying 67 percent of A&M students graduate in five years while 10 percent graduate in six years.

"If we could get half the people who graduate in five years to graduate in four years, we would see a massive improvement," Bowen said.

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Bowen also suggested making summer school mandatory and not applying the General Use Fee to classes exceeding 12 hours as incentives for graduating on time.

Student Body President Carl Baggett said he understands the need for students to graduate on time, but he also said there are many valuable leadership opportunities students shouldn't overlook.

"I see their point, but as academically challenging as A&M is, it's tough enough for students without putting additional requirements for hours on them," Baggett said.

Allen said he knows extracurricular activities are important, but academics should take precedence.

Cary Gotcher, a senior engineering technology-electronics major, said the required number of hours will have to be raised if students are to graduate in four years, but disagreed with the suggestion to increase full-time status to 15 hours.

"They shouldn't raise it per semester to 15 hours," Gotcher said. "They can keep it at 12 for the fall and spring semesters and say you have to take 28 or 30 hours a year. A lot of people work, so they don't have time to take 15 hours a semester. What they need to do is require every freshman to take a class that will explain every major so [students] will know what they want to do and ... don't change their major three times," Gotcher said.

Bowen said other universities have been unsuccessful in their attempts to get students to graduate sooner.

"It's an issue of individuals expressing how they want to spend their time," Bowen said.



Pat James, THE BATTALION

I SPY

Scott Willingham, a junior construction science major, surveys the elevation of the land next to Zachry parking lot.

Tenneco-A&M settlement gets push

By Amy Protas
THE BATTALION

The Texas A&M Board of Regents authorized Chancellor Barry B. Thompson to move forward with an agreement with Tenneco Power Generation Co. Regents are hoping the agreement will prevent a lawsuit by the oil company.

A&M's discontinuing of negotiations to build a cogeneration power plant on West Campus on June 17, 1994, prompted Tenneco to pursue the possibility of a lawsuit.

Fred McClure, a member of the Board, said Tenneco received permission from the state legislature to sue A&M in May 1995.

"If we reach a settlement agreement, they will

not sue," McClure said. "You put together an agreement that prohibits that from happening. My involvement has only been in trying to get it settled."

Don Powell, a member of the Board, said the regents want to bring closure to the settlement.

"It's in the best interest of both parties to come up with a conclusion," Powell said. "After much consideration and deliberation, the people of the System have come to that conclusion. The regents concur with that."

System officials announced in 1994 they were discontinuing negotiations.

Terri Parker, director of communications in the chancellor's office, said in a press release an agreement could not be reached in 1994.

"The University's development agreement with

Tenneco required that an agreement regarding back-up and excess power be reached by March 31, 1994," Parker said. "This was a key element to the proposed project. Despite the University's best efforts, no agreement was reached."

Kathy Harris, a communications specialist with the System, said negotiations were halted because of necessary research.

"They discontinued negotiations because of an independent study," Harris said. "The Board decided to cancel the project until they could research it further. They were looking at a comprehensive study to assess the future energy needs of the University."

The study was conducted by Ernst & Young,

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the BUZZ on bees

Parasites kill area honeybee colonies

By Tauma Wiggins
THE BATTALION

The fact bees are not buzzing as loudly as usual while grocery prices are on the rise might not mean much to the average student at Texas A&M.

This summer, Texas A&M students haven't paused to observe bumblebees buzzing over fragrant campus flowers — because there aren't any.

As of late, honeybees are being killed off in droves.

The recent disappearance of the honeybee can be attributed to a parasite that escaped from

Asia, the Varroa mite, a reddish brown, oval shaped parasite visible to the naked eye. The parasite is now preying on innocent honeybee colonies all over the United States.

Robin Goodman, a senior wildlife and fisheries science major, said she was unaware of the honeybee parasite and explained a national law called the Cites Act, which makes the entrance of foreign bees illegal.

Though some A&M students might assume a honeybee's main importance is producing

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1996 OLYMPIC TELEVISION SCHEDULE

TUESDAY JULY 30

09 a.m. — noon

- Cycling—Men's mountain bike final
- Canoeing
- Synchronized swimming
- Tennis—Quarterfinals

6:30 p.m.—11:00 p.m.

- Gymnastics—Champions' exhibition
- Diving—Women's springboard
- Basketball—Men's quarterfinal
- Cycling—Women's mountain bike final
- Weightlifting—Super heavyweight final

11:41 a.m.—1:11 a.m.

- Volleyball—Women's quarterfinals
- Boxing—Quarterfinals
- Wrestling—Freestyle matches