

Armored Escort

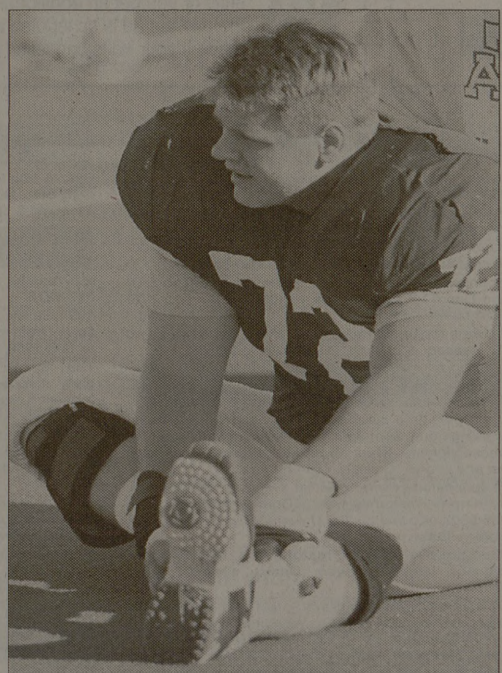
McKinney directs spotlight on underrecognized offensive line

BY KRISTINA BUFFIN
 THE BATTALION

It is not a common occurrence for a college or professional offensive lineman to be featured on the front page of a major sports magazine or newspaper. In fact, not much attention is paid to offensive linemen at all. They do not rack up impressive statistics or contend for the Heisman Trophy. However, they are an integral part of a productive offense — if the linemen fail, the entire offense suffers. One of these unsung heroes is junior Steve McKinney, an offensive guard on the Texas A&M Football Team. McKinney is a key component on an A&M offense that averages 454 yards per game and ranks second in the Big 12 Conference. McKinney said while it is nice to be recognized for his accomplishments by the media, being noticed by others is more important to him. "This is my first feature in the three years that I have been here," McKinney said. "The offensive line rarely gets credit. But that doesn't matter, because the people I want to notice

me are my family and coaches." Guard was not a position that McKinney played in high school; he actually played on the opposite side of the ball. However, A&M Offensive Line Coach Mike Sherman moved McKinney to offense during his freshman season to help out a depleted offensive line. "We really needed people on offense," Sherman said. "We had enough people on defense. Plus, I think Steve is a natural for an offensive lineman. He has the body type, footwork and speed." To make the transition a smooth one, McKinney had to work on a couple of mechanics. "Defense is different in terms of footwork," McKinney said. "On offense, you have to take shorter, choppy steps on blocking. I had longer strides, but I now have it under control." Since McKinney's footwork has been tuned to offense, Sherman said he has the ability to become one of the best technicians on the line by the time he graduates.

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Tim Moog, THE BATTALION
 Junior offensive guard **Steve McKinney** stretches before practice Wednesday.

Vengeance least of Aggs' concerns as Tech visits

BY TOM DAY
 THE BATTALION

There is no revenge factor. Last season, the Texas A&M Football Team suffered a demoralizing defeat at the hands of Texas Tech in Lubbock. When Red Raider linebacker Zach Thomas stepped in front of an errant Corey Pullig pass and returned it 23 yards for a touchdown, Tech had a 14-7 win — and the Aggies had their pride stomped on.

Their 29-game Southwest Conference unbeaten streak snapped, the Aggies suffered a cut that has yet to heal. But when the Red Raiders come riding into Kyle Field Saturday at 11:30 a.m., the Aggies won't have revenge on their minds. They have other things to worry about — namely, trying to salvage a season on the brink of all-out disaster.

With his team standing at 3-4 and facing the task of having to win four of its last five games to be eligible for a bowl game, Head Coach R.C. Slocum said it is hard to gauge what his players think about their chances of a Big 12 South Division title.

"I think they understand it," Slocum said. "Whether they see themselves as being capable of doing that is another question. I think they have a good feeling about themselves. They're frustrated about the turnovers and mistakes, but I don't think any of the players think they're not good enough to beat anyone left on our schedule."

A&M junior quarterback Brandon Stewart said he and the team are indeed frustrated.

"It's tough when you feel you're playing well and you practice hard, and then you come out in the game and have turnovers," Stewart said. "It's frustrating, and it kills all your effort."

Through seven games, turnovers have been the Aggies' Achilles' heel. A&M has given the ball away a mind-baffling 23

times this season.

However, another problem that has plagued the team this season is its inability to make big plays. During the first half of its contest with Kansas State last week, the A&M defense surrendered several first downs on Wildcat third-down plays.

Sophomore cornerback Shun Horn said that is a problem the defense is working toward correcting.

"Last year, our opponents were around 18 percent on third-down conversions," Horn said. "The other night [KSU] had a 3rd-and-19 and got the first down which led to a touchdown. We have to stop that, and we have to get better down in the red zone."

The Wrecking Crew will have its work cut out for it against the Red Raiders and their primary gun — Heisman Trophy candidate Byron Hanspard. The junior running back ranks second in the nation in rushing with 202 yards per contest and was the first player in the country to reach the 1,000-yard barrier.

Hanspard also leads the Raiders in receiving with 14 catches for 149 yards.

Slocum said slowing Hanspard will be a tougher task than it was for the Aggies against Troy Davis and Iowa State. A&M limited Davis to just 130 yards on 39 carries in their game with the Cyclones on Oct. 12.

"I think Hanspard is a little more difficult to stop because Tech has a much more diversified offense," Slocum said. "[He] is probably a more versatile player (than Troy Davis). They get the ball to Hanspard in more ways than Iowa State did with Troy."

Tech's diversified offense revolves around athletic quarterback Zebbie Lethridge. The nimble junior can elude the defensive pass rush and is at his best on the run. Lethridge has completed less than 50 percent of his passes, but has thrown for 883 yards and six touchdowns, while running for 190 yards and two scores.

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From Tonga to Texas, Heimuli displays strength

BY MATT MITCHELL
 THE BATTALION

What's in a name? Well, for those readers who don't speak Tongan, this is a pretty perplexing question. For what is believed to be the first time ever, a player from Tonga has his name on the back of a maroon Texas A&M Football jersey.

According to the man behind the name and the starting right guard for the Aggies, it's pronounced "si-MEE-see hi-MOO-lee."

Semisi Heimuli's name is familiar in his native Tonga, where he began playing rugby at a young age, as is the custom on the Polynesian island. When the younger kids started playing football, Heimuli did too, and immediately fell in love with the game.

When his mother's job with an airline moved them to the Dallas-Fort Worth area, Heimuli took up football at Eules Trinity High School. Later, when deciding on a college to attend, Heimuli elected to stay close to home and go to A&M because of its reputation as a good academic environment with

a good football program.

"When I was recruiting Semisi, he was asking how many Tongans there were on campus, and I alluded to him that the Clayton Williams building was the Tongan Student Center," Offensive Line Coach Mike Sherman joked. "He appreciated that, but I don't think he bought it."

Even as a freshman, Heimuli has impressed coaches and teammates alike with his strength and aggressiveness. He is arguably the strongest member of the team, as he led the Aggies with a 415-pound bench press in the off-season conditioning program.

"He is a good, tough guy who enjoys the game," junior left guard Steve McKinney said. "He is fun to be around and fun to play with. He is a hard worker who takes every play seriously."

With junior center Koby Hackradt falling to injury in the spring and fall camps, and Calvin Collins' subsequent move to center, Sherman said Heimuli was hurried into the starting rotation and responded well to the opportunity.

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Tim Moog, THE BATTALION

Freshman **Semisi Heimuli** blocks during practice Wednesday afternoon.

This Weekend in Sports

Friday
 A&M Volleyball vs. Kansas State at G. Rollie White Coliseum, 7 p.m.

A&M Men's Tennis will compete at the LSU Showcase in Baton Rouge all weekend.

Saturday
 A&M Football vs. Texas Tech at Kyle Field, 11:30 a.m.

A&M Volleyball vs. Kansas State at G. Rollie White Coliseum, 7 p.m.

The Battalion's 1996 Staff Picks

The Match-Ups	Tom Day	Kristina Buffin	Jamie Burch	Sara Duesing	Jeremy Furtick	Colby Gaines	Ross Hecox	Matt Mitchell	Dennis Ramirez	Nicki Smith	Consensus
Texas Tech at Texas A&M	A&M	Texas Tech	A&M	A&M	A&M	Texas Tech	A&M	A&M	Texas Tech	A&M	A&M: Zach Thomas ain't around anymore
#7 Alabama at #6 Tennessee	Tennessee	Tennessee	Tennessee	Tennessee	Tennessee	Tennessee	Tennessee	Tennessee	Tennessee	Tennessee	Tennessee: Vols wait out Crimson Tide
#2 Ohio State at #20 Iowa	Ohio State	Ohio State	Ohio State	Ohio State	Ohio State	Ohio State	Ohio State	Ohio State	Ohio State	Ohio State	Ohio State: The battle of the "eyes"
#14 Virginia at #3 Florida State	Florida State	Florida State	Florida State	Florida State	Florida State	Florida State	Florida State	Florida State	Florida State	Florida State	Florida State: Two words: De-fense
Kansas at #5 Nebraska	Nebraska	Nebraska	Nebraska	Nebraska	Nebraska	Nebraska	Nebraska	Nebraska	Nebraska	Nebraska	Nebraska: Huskers harvest Henley
Texas at #8 Colorado	Colorado	Colorado	Colorado	Colorado	Colorado	Colorado	Colorado	Colorado	Colorado	Colorado	Colorado: "Tatanka" saws horns off
Oklahoma at #16 Kansas St.	Kansas State	Kansas State	Kansas State	Kansas State	Kansas State	Kansas State	Kansas State	Kansas State	Kansas State	Kansas State	Kansas St.: Sooners come down to earth
Iowa State at Baylor	Iowa State	Iowa State	Baylor	Baylor	Iowa State	Baylor	Iowa State	Baylor	Baylor	Baylor	Baylor: Bears hide in cave from Cyclones
Oklahoma State at Missouri	Oklahoma St.	Oklahoma St.	Missouri	Missouri	Missouri	Missouri	Oklahoma St.	Oklahoma St.	Oklahoma St.	Oklahoma St.	Oklahoma St.: Cowboys lasso Tigers
San Francisco at Oilers	Oilers	San Francisco	San Francisco	Oilers	San Francisco	Oilers	Oilers	Oilers	San Francisco	Oilers	Oilers: No gold for 49ers in Houston
Cowboys at Miami	Miami	Miami	Cowboys	Cowboys	Cowboys	Cowboys	Cowboys	Miami	Cowboys	Miami	Cowboys: Jerry slaps Jimmy in face again
Kansas City at Denver	Denver	Kansas City	Denver	Kansas City	Denver	Denver	Kansas City	Denver	Kansas City	Denver	Denver: Broncos bust Chiefs
Last Week	9-3	7-5	6-6	7-5	6-6	7-5	7-5	7-5	8-4	9-3	73-47: Sports desk has jacked up week
Cumulative	61-23	51-33	48-36	57-27	52-32	52-32	54-30	52-32	55-29	55-29	433-287: Buffin jumping off band wagon

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