

Question of the week — McCown or Stewart?

Slocum insists no quarterback controversy

Stewart follows tradition of falling below expectations

By MATT MITCHELL
THE BATTALION

The Texas A&M Football Team's recent foray in Oklahoma brought more than a much-needed victory. It raised a bit of a quarterback controversy as well.

While the Aggies are still enjoying the feeling of winning a game by a large margin, the hottest topic among arm-chair Aggie quarterbacks is whether junior Brannndon Stewart or redshirt freshman Randy McCown will start Saturday against Baylor. Despite coaches' and players' best efforts to squelch the growing inquisition, rumors abound as to who will be calling the signals come game time.

"We have no controversy because I decide who plays, and whoever I decide, that's who is going to play,"

Head Coach R.C. Slocum said. "Both of them are practicing; actually, I should say all three of them. I anticipate that Randy and Brannndon will play."

Offensive Coordinator Steve Ensminger said the insertion of McCown under center early in the third quarter was an effort to give the offense a jump-start, and he did just that.

McCown led the Aggies on impressive drives the rest of the second half, but Stewart said he took his abrupt demotion to the sideline in stride.

"It wasn't a reflection of if I did this badly or that badly, it was just that they were trying to get something going," Stewart said. "A lot of people put a lot of emphasis on it because there are so many people that watch the quarterback position; they handle the ball every play. But I think it's just like any other position. Some guys have tough times during the season and someone else comes in and plays."

But the junior quarterback adds that it was disappointing not being on the field helping the team.

"I'm pleased that we won the game, and having a chance at a bowl and everything, but it's frustrating to sit there and not take part in what was going on," Stewart said.

McCown shrugs off his performance as something that was expected.

"I don't want it to be made into a big deal," he said. "They put me in there and that's what I was supposed to do, so I just want to be treated like one of the guys, just like always, instead of making a big deal out of it."

The big deal aside, the Aggies' win comes at a juncture of the season that could have a profound carryover effect to next season. According to many players, the team was beginning to think it was snake-bit, with frustrating losses to Kansas State and Texas Tech, resulting in part from breaks that would not go the Aggies way. Saturday, it was the Aggies on the receiving end of good fortune, as they capitalized on several Tech turnovers in the second half to pull away.

"The win feels good," senior outside linebacker Keith Mitchell said. "I think we're at a point like Coach was saying, where everything bad has happened to us."

When will the Texas A&M Football Team ever find the Prodigal Son that it has been looking for since the departure of former quarterback Bucky Richardson?

Sportswriter



Jamie Burch
Senior speech
communications major

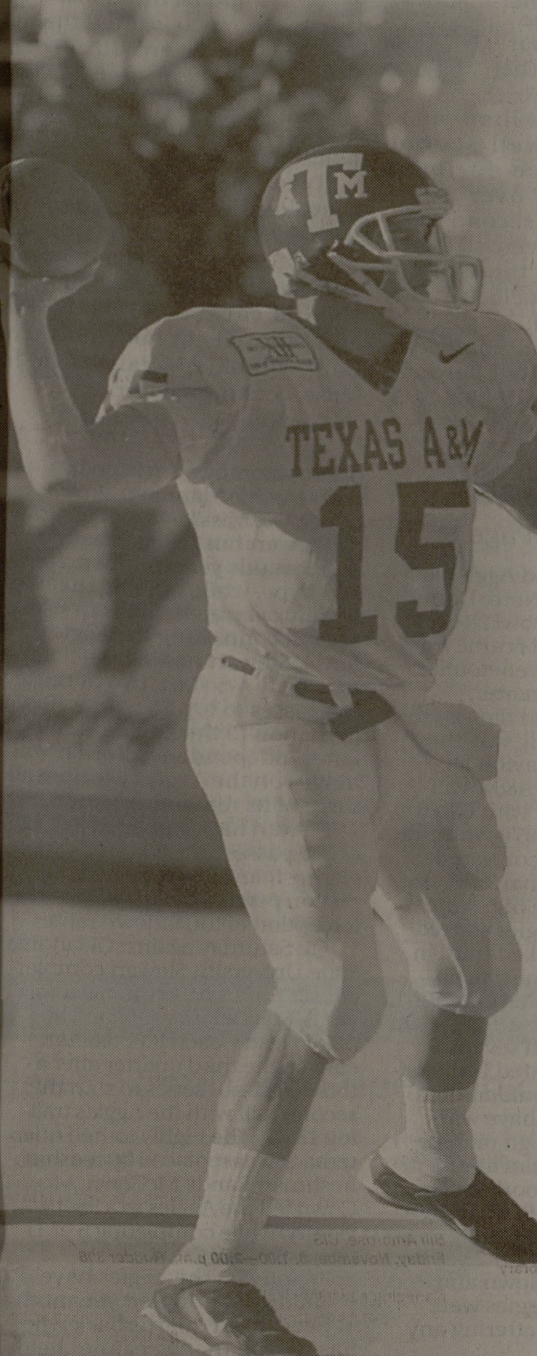
and ends with the latest godsend of quarterbacks — Brannndon Stewart.

Before these athletes have the opportunity to demonstrate and prove their talents on the collegiate gridiron, some mystical source places an enormous pressure to instantaneously metamorphosize the Aggie offense into a prolific scoring machine. Inevitably these mortal men fail to measure up to the godlike expectations imposed on them.

Granger started the 1992 season as the leader of the Aggies' offense. He led the Aggies to a 7-0 start and a 3-0 record in the Southwest Conference en route to an undefeated season. However, Granger suffered a concussion in the first quarter against Southern Methodist University and freshman sensation Corey Pullig entered the ball game.

Pullig led the Aggies to a 41-7 victory on the strength of Greg Hill and Rodney Thomas' five rushing touchdowns. Pullig ended the season 56 of 111 for 839 yards, three touchdowns, and two interceptions with an undefeated 12-0 season.

However, the freshman sensation could not carry the Aggies to a victory in the biggest game of the season.



Rogge Hefflin, Special to THE BATTALION

Freshman **Randy McCown** led the Aggies to a 38-19 win against Oklahoma State Saturday.



Tim Moog, THE BATTALION

Junior **Brannndon Stewart** is 125-245 for 1,608 yards with eight touchdowns and seven interceptions.

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Reed collapse impacts basketball programs' schedule, recruiting

By JAMIE BURCH
THE BATTALION

On Oct. 30, the construction of Reed Arena suffered a slight setback when a crane carrying a support beam buckled and subsequently caused the roof area to collapse. The A&M Athletic Department must now assess the damages not only to the arena, but to the athletic programs, which will be gravely affected by the setback.

Special Event Facilities Director Steven Hodge said the completion date of the arena is estimated to be pushed back three to six months. The previous date of completion was late 1997, which would have been during the middle of the 1997-98 basketball season. Hodge said there is not a new estimate for when the facility is scheduled to be completed or on the total cost of the damage.

The primary question now is to what degree will the collapse affect A&M athletic programs?

Both the A&M men's and women's basketball teams planned to utilize the

new facility to bolster their respective programs. Now both squads must wait until the beginning of the 1998-99 season to play in the new arena.

A&M Men's Basketball Head Coach Tony Barone said his concerns lie with the inability to schedule marquee teams.

"It will affect scheduling problems," Barone said. "We've had an impossible task of trying to bring other strong programs in here. It's really tough to do because they just don't want to play in G. Rollie White. I can't blame them. We now have to try and convince other programs to come in and play when we know we're not going to have the availability for it."

However, Barone said the delay will not hurt the squads' recruiting ability.

"It will not affect our recruiting class for this year," Barone said. "The kids who we will go after this year will have three full seasons to play in the new arena. So I don't think it will have a huge effect from that standpoint."

What the collapse might have an effect on is the A&M Women's Basketball Program.

A&M Head Coach Candi Harvey feels that the collapse

Harvey said. "We certainly hope not, but when you're in the heat of battle, people will stoop to some pretty low levels. That wouldn't necessarily be negative recruiting; it's just a fact that we're going to be a year late getting in there. But my position on that is, if a young lady is coming to Texas A&M solely for the arena, then she's coming for the wrong reasons."

While Harvey is concerned about the possible negative impacts, she said the team will only worry about what is within their reach.

"The only thing that we can control is to keep putting an entertaining basketball team on the court," Harvey said. "Hopefully our fans will enjoy so much what we do on the court that they'll continue to come regardless of whether it's in G. Rollie or Reed."

When construction plans of Reed Arena were announced, ESPN considered

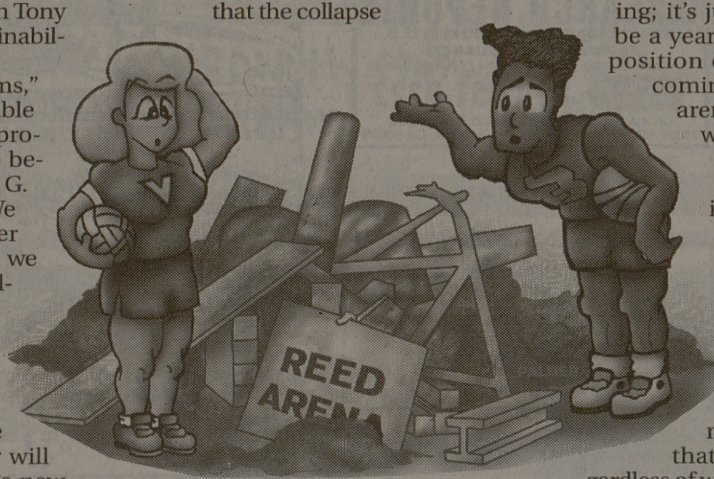
the possibility of televising an early season marquee game. But because of uncertainty as to an expected date of completion, no plans were concrete.

A&M Athletic Director Wally Groff said the Athletic Department is still hoping to attract ESPN coverage with a top game, when the arena opens for the 1998-99 season.

"Originally we were talking about opening the 1997-98 non-conference season with a big name basketball team that might be on ESPN," Groff said. "Nothing was concrete because we didn't know exactly when the arena was to be completed. Maybe we can again rejuvenate those plans and look for a marquee-type team to open the arena."

While the collapse can be seen as a negative situation, Groff looks at the situation as a blessing.

"In one respect it can be a blessing," Groff said. "It would have been difficult to sell non-conference games in G. Rollie and conference games over at Reed for the same year. This way it will push it all back to 1998-99."



could impact the recruiting program. "It might indirectly affect recruiting."

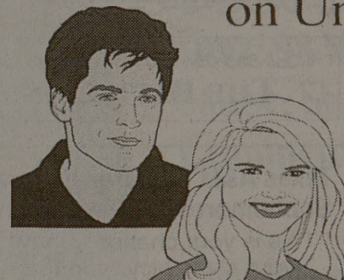
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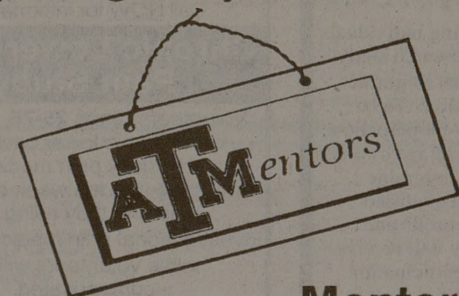
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