

Brannndon's resurrection year

With the media spotlight turned off, Stewart prepares for a better year

By CHRIS FERRELL
Sports editor

A lot can change in a year. Last season, at this time, the legend of Brannndon Stewart, the strong-armed savior spread like a wild fire throughout Aggieland. The savior had returned to his home state to turn the Texas A&M Football Team, a team known for defense and its ground game, into an aerial spectacle that would make the Blue Angels jealous.

He battled neck-and-neck with everyone's All-American Peyton Manning at Tennessee and now he was going to put up Manning-type numbers for the Aggies.

"It kind of got to a point where they (expectations) were over exaggerated I guess," Stewart said. "Some people expected too much and that comes with the territory. When you get a new guy in, people have high expectations."

As the season progressed, the expectations dropped.

Stewart and the Aggies both struggled through a '96 campaign which produced the team's worst record since 1983.

As A&M's woes continued, the hype turned into pressure and much of the blame for the team's offensive trouble fell upon Stewart's shoulders.

Stewart averaged 39 pass attempts per game in the Aggies first four games of the season, including a school-record 34-for-64, 385 yard performance against Colorado. A&M went 1-3 over that stretch and changed its offensive philosophy to a run-oriented attack.

"I think the coaches just lost some confidence in the passing game," Stewart said. "It's discouraging when you can't go out there and run a totally balanced offense, but we were just trying to win."

Head Coach R.C. Slocum said Stewart tried to do too much at times last season.

"I think there were some times early in the season or during the season where he took too much of a burden on himself to make it happen," Slocum said. "I think part of the fanfare may have lead him to believe that it's

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BRANNNDON STEWART
A&M QUARTERBACK



his job to make it all work and that's unfair."

"We tried this year to convince him to make those plays that he can make, play within himself and don't feel like he has to make it all work. Those other guys have responsibility too."

So far, Stewart has responded well to the hard lessons of 1996.

"He's more at ease with himself right now," Slocum said. "He's got a lot more experience. He's seen the ups and downs, both sides of it."

To help with the progress, Slocum brought in new quarterback coach Ray Dorr.

With a pupils list that includes Warren Moon and Chris Chandler at Washington and Rodney Peete, Todd Marinovich and Rob Johnson at Southern Cal,

Dorr has implemented new drills and brought a positive attitude to encourage the development of all the quarterbacks.

"When they've made plays, I've tried to be positive," Dorr said. "Everything we do at our position is positive. The same when they make a critical error, and they're just 21, 22-year-old men. They're going to make mistakes."

An off-season of hard work and memories of last year have helped Stewart grow and mature.

"He's a year older and maturity is a big thing," offensive coordinator Steve Marshall said. "He's understanding that the highs aren't so high and the lows aren't so low either and you've got to stay consistent over a period of time to be successful."

PLEASE SEE STEWART ON PAGE 11.



FILE PHOTO/THE BATTALION

A&M quarterback Brannndon Stewart is being pressured by Colorado defensive end Greg Jones last year at Kyle Field.

OFFENSIVE DEPTH CHART

SE — 16 Aaron Oliver, 6-0, 196, Jr-2L	FL — 88 Leroy Hodge, 6-2, 204,
80 Chris Cole, 6-0, 188, So-SQ,	81 Matt Bumgardner, 6-2, 196, So-1L,
RT — 73 Cameron Spikes, 6-3, 300, Jr-2L,	QB — 7 Brannndon Stewart, 6-2, 222, Jr-1L,
78 Andy Vincent, 6-3, 290, So-1L,	15 Randy McGown, 6-1, 212, So-1L,)
RG — 62 Semisi Heimuli, 6-1, 295, So-1L,	RB — 33 Marc Broyles, 5-11, 237, Jr-2L,
79 Shea Holder, 6-5, 296, So-SQ,	20 D'Andre Hardeman, 5-11, 233, Jr-2L,
C — 69 Koby Hackradt, 6-5, 288, Jr-2L,	RB — 8 Sirr Parker, 5-11, 190, Jr-2L,
53 Rex Tucker, 6-5, 285, Jr-2L,	34 Dante Hall, 5-8, 190, So-1L,
LG — 72 Steve McKinney, 6-4, 285, Sr-3L,)	K — 3 Kyle Bryant, 5-7174, Sr-3L,
56 Toby McCarthy, 6-2, 270, FR-RS	37 Russell Bynum, 5-11, 165, Fr-RS,
LT — 76 Chris Ruhman, 6-5, 295, Sr-3L,	P — 6 Shane Lechler, 6-2, 220, So-1L,)
74 Brandon Houston, 6-5, 290, Jr-2L,)	47 Bill Johnston, 6-0, 169, Sr-1L,
TE — 87 Derrick Spiller, 6-3, 240, Jr-2L,	SNP — 63 Kyle Lednick, 6-4, 259, Jr-2L,
89 Daniel Campbell, 6-5, 260, Jr-2L,	



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