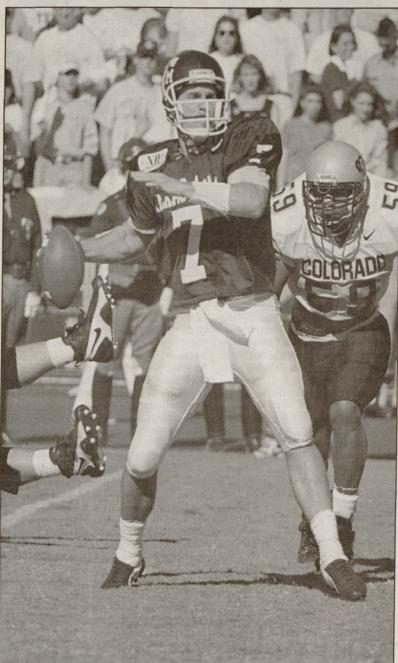
Branndon's resurrection year



A&M quarterback Branndon Stewart is being pressured by Colorado defensive end Greg

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 Branndon Stewart, the strongarmed 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 Manningtype 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

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.

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

"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

"Some people expected too much and that comes with the territory."



BRANNDON 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

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, 22year-old men. They're going to make mis-

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

"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.

OFFENSIVE DEPTH CHART

- SE 16 Aaron Oliver, 6-0, 196, Jr-2L
 - 80 Chris Cole, 6-0, 188, So-SQ,
- 73 Cameron Spikes, 6-3, 300, Jr-2L,
 - 78 Andy Vincent, 6-3, 290, So-1L,
- 62 Semisi Heimuli, 6-1, 295, So-1L, 79 Shea Holder, 6-5, 296, So-SQ,
- 69 Koby Hackradt, 6-5, 288, Jr-2L,
- 53 Rex Tucker, 6-5, 285, Jr-2L, Steve McKinney, 6-4, 285, Sr-3L,)
 - 56 Toby McCarthey, 6-2, 270, FR-RS
- 76 Chris Ruhman, 6-5, 295, Sr-3L,
- Brandon Houston, 6-5, 290, Jr-2L,)
- 87 Derrick Spiller, 6-3, 240, Jr-2L, 89 Daniel Campbell, 6-5, 260, Jr-2L,

- 88 Leroy Hodge, 6-2, 204,
 - 81 Matt Bumgardner, 6-2, 196, So-1L,
- Branndon Stewart, 6-2, 222, Jr-1L,
 - Randy McGown, 6-1, 212, So-1L,)
- RB 33 Marc Broyles, 5-11, 237, Jr-2L,
- 20 D'Andre Hardeman, 5-11, 233, Jr-2L,
- RB 8 Sirr Parker, 5-11, 190, Jr-2L,
- 34 Dante Hall, 5-8, 190, So-1L,
- Kyle Bryant, 5-7174, Sr-3L,
- Russell Bynum, 5-11, 165, Fr-RS,
- Shane Lechler, 6-2, 220, So-1L,)
- 47 Bill Johnston, 6-0, 169, Sr-1L, SNP - 63 Kyle Lednicky, 6-4, 259, Jr-2L,



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