

Babe Ruth— One for the ages

The face of professional sports in America has changed dramatically over the past century. But two things have remained constant: baseball and its records. Statistics from the early 20th century still mean something in baseball today, while other sports have a hard time making that claim.

In 1927, Babe Ruth hit .356 with 60 home runs and 138 RBI. A year later, Ty Cobb finished his 24-year career with 4,189 hits and 892 stolen bases, both modern day baseball records.

In 1956, Mickey Mantle won the Triple Crown with a .53 batting average, 52 home runs and 130 RBI. About 20 years later, Lou Brock swiped his 893rd base, breaking Cobb's 49-year-old record. And in 1989, Rickey Henderson surpassed Brock. In 1985 saw Pete Rose collect his 4,190th hit, breaking another Cobb record. And more recently, Barry Bonds captured 1993 National League MVP honors for hitting .336 with 46 home runs and 123 RBI, numbers similar to Mantle's '56 campaign.

Looking at these statistics from three generations, one thing stands out: baseball hasn't changed. The stars of the early NBA and NFL would be icky to be water boys today, but Cobb and Mantle would still be All-Stars in baseball. But one layer from the game's storied past could step on the field today and rewrite the entire record book—George Herman "Babe" Ruth.

The legacy this slugger left on baseball has been passed down for decades. But most people only think of him as a free-swinging, overweight drunk who made a name for himself by hitting home runs. He's thought of as a player who won a few World Series titles playing for the most dominant franchise in the history of professional sports. But much has been lost in the translation of Ruth tales, from father to son, in the past 60 years.

People have forgotten that Ruth didn't just play for the Yankees, he created them, and he didn't simply break records, he set them. Babe Ruth revolutionized the Great Game more than any social movement, rule change or equipment improvement. He was that good.

But he could have been better. The Sultan of Swat finished his career as the all-time leader in five offensive categories: home runs (714), RBI (2,213), walks (2,056), on-base percentage (.474) and slugging percentage (.690). He has since been passed by Hank Aaron in home runs and RBI, and by Ted Williams in on-base percentage while still standing second to Cobb in walks (2,174) and is sixth all-time in batting (.342).

PLEASE SEE FURTICK ON PAGE 8.

THE FIRST LINE OF DEFENSE

Marcus Heard's emergence has been vital to the Wrecking Crew's success

BY CHRIS FERRELL
Sports editor

When A&M defensive line coach Bill Johnson was told Marcus Heard was looking for him the week of the Texas A&M-Southwestern Louisiana football game, Johnson couldn't help but smile.

At the end of 1997 spring training, Johnson had set forth a challenge to Heard — get his weight back down to 278 pounds, and he would be in the starting lineup. Heard's weight had climbed over 300 pounds and Johnson feared the excess pounds would limit Heard's football abilities.

"Marcus is a guy who gained a little weight," Johnson said. "We were real concerned in the spring as far as his performance was concerned because of his weight. We told him, if you don't get down to 278 pounds, you're not going to be able to help us. He didn't start the first football game this year because he was not quite down to that point yet."

Heard said Johnson's challenge forced him to rededicated himself to football.

"Coach J. came up with a weight of 278 pounds and he told me that if I got to 278 pounds, I would be the starting nose-tackle," Heard said. "I was like, 'Man, I haven't been 278 pounds since maybe my sophomore year.' It was really hard for me but I worked hard."

Heard walked up into the training room and stepped on the scale.

"It surprised me because I just went into the training room and got on the scale and it said 277.3," he said. "I got off, kind of

shook my head, and got back on and it still said 277.3. I said 'somebody go get coach.'" So when Johnson discovered Heard, who is not one of the more vocal members of the team, was looking for him, he knew it was good news.

That Saturday, Heard made his first start for the Aggies and has been a force in the middle ever since, posting 18 tackles, including three for losses, through six games at a position which sees him face constant double teaming.

"It [starting for the first time] was a tremendous rush," Heard said. "I was fired up and excited to get my chance to be in the starting lineup. It was one of my greatest thrills at A&M."

The road to the starting lineup has been a long one for Heard as well as his fellow starting senior defensive linemen Brad Crowley and Zerrick Rollins.

"[Former A&M defensive end] Brandon [Mitchell], Marcus and I all got here the same year," Crowley said. "Me and Marcus redshirted and Brandon didn't. Marcus and I played on the scout team together when we were both freshmen. We always talked about how it was going to be when we ran the show. It's a lot of fun now seeing all of our dreams now that we're the big dogs."

Crowley and Heard, along with Rollins who transferred from Oklahoma in 1994, were forced into backup roles while Mitchell, Edward Jasper and Pat Williams starred for the Aggies. All three are on NFL rosters.

"All three of those guys took a role of they were just the backups to three really good players," Johnson said. "I think that might have been some motivation



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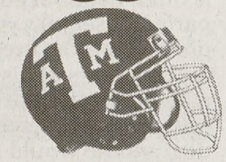
Senior Marcus Heard has battled his way into the starting lineup for the Aggies.

to those guys. "They sat around all those years and heard about how good those other guys were and they've got pride about themselves. They have feelings and egos and they knew they could get the job done. We're probably not as talented as in years

past, but we've got some fight about us." Heard said all of the questions surrounding himself and the other defensive linemen served as motivation for this season.

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Aggies limp into Lubbock to battle Red Raiders



NOTEBOOK



CHRIS FERRELL
Sports editor

Back a lunch and a change of clothes. Kids, it's time for a road trip. The 20th-ranked Texas A&M Football Team travels to BFE (also known as Lubbock) to take on the Texas Tech Red Raiders this

weekend in a Big 12 showdown.

Tech has developed into a strong program over the past decade, not just on the gridiron, but on the basketball courts and baseball diamonds as well.

It's been a miraculous climb, leaving many to wonder how they've accomplished such a feat.

Maybe it's the fans. They try so hard to have traditions, but tortillas, good one guys.

Maybe it's the campus. Mmm, maybe not. After all, when God created the Garden of Eden, surely Lubbock was the furthest thing from his mind.

So if it's not the ambiance of our exotic neighbor to the North which draws

athletes to town and its not the student body, what could it be? A few months from now the NCAA will probably tell us exactly what it was.

Banged up Aggies

Along with the beating the Aggies took on the field at the hands of Kansas State last Saturday, they also took a beating from the trainer's point of view.

Sophomore tailback Dante Hall will probably not play this weekend after suffering a deep bone contusion to his knee on the first play of the 36-17 loss to the wildcats.

Hall underwent an MRI on Monday which showed no ligament damage. He

also had 35 cc's of fluid drained from the injured knee.

Junior Surr Parker will play an even bigger role than usual in the A&M ground attack which ran for minus 35 yards last week.

The Aggies will also be without starting tackles Cameron Spikes and Chris Ruhman. Spikes did not play last week after tearing his retina against Iowa State. Ruhman injured his knee during the first series against KSU.

Ruhman, a senior from Houston, has started 34 games over his career for the Aggies. Ruhman's team-high run of 30 consecutive starts will end against Tech.

PLEASE SEE FERRELL ON PAGE 8.

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