

HEISMAN HERO

Crow reminisces about career in new book Heart of a Champion

By JEFF SCHMIDT
Staff writer

Part one in a three part series chronicling Texas college football legends

Texas Aggie football legend John David Crow took part in a book signing Tuesday at Barnes & Noble Booksellers. Other participants were former Southern Methodist University running back Doak Walker and former University of Texas head coach Darrell Royal. They are touring Texas this week for a series of public appearances promoting their new biographies.

Crow's book is titled *Heart of a Champion*, and was written by Dan Pate and edited by Dan Jenkins. It chronicles Crow's playing days, especially his Heisman Trophy winning year of 1957. The book also covers Crow's professional career with the Chicago Cardinals and San Francisco 49ers.

Crow had always wanted to do a book similar to this but the opportunity never came about.

"My wife and I discussed several times about the possibility of this happening," Crow said. "We felt that if Dan Jenkins was involved, it would be done properly. It's a pictorial history that goes through my life."

During the Heisman winning season, legendary head coach Paul "Bear" Bryant and Crow helped lead

A&M to the top of the college football polls for the first time since 1939 before losing their last three games.

At 6-2 and 218 pounds, Crow was a battering ram that took out his frustrations on opposing defenses. Coach Bryant called Crow "the most complete football player I've ever seen." This all-around athletic ability garnered Crow the most prestigious award college football can bestow on a single individual: The Heisman Trophy. Today, the trophy resides in front of the football offices in the Athletic Department at A&M.

Following the season, Crow was a first round draft pick by the Chicago Cardinals in 1958 and was selected to the Pro Bowl four times. He was named to the NFL all-pro team of the 1960s. He also served as Texas A&M's Athletic Director from 1988-93.

Despite his accomplishments, the self-described little country boy was just glad

to have been given the chance to play at A&M and quickly credits coach Bryant with molding him into a player.

"I was very fortunate to come to a great university like Texas A&M and have a great coach like coach Bryant," Crow said. "He was a tough disciplinarian, but very fair. He demanded the most out of you, and I think

that's why he was so successful. Coach Bryant was the biggest person in my life. He guided me through some very trying times."

Crow also credits Bryant with his pro success.

"You're pretty much a player when they draft you," he said. "I took what he (coach Bryant) taught us to the pro league."

In 1976 Crow was elected to the National Football Foundation Hall of Fame, an honor he still relishes.

"It was an awful big thrill and a tremendous honor," Crow said. "I still go up there for the ceremony nearly every year."

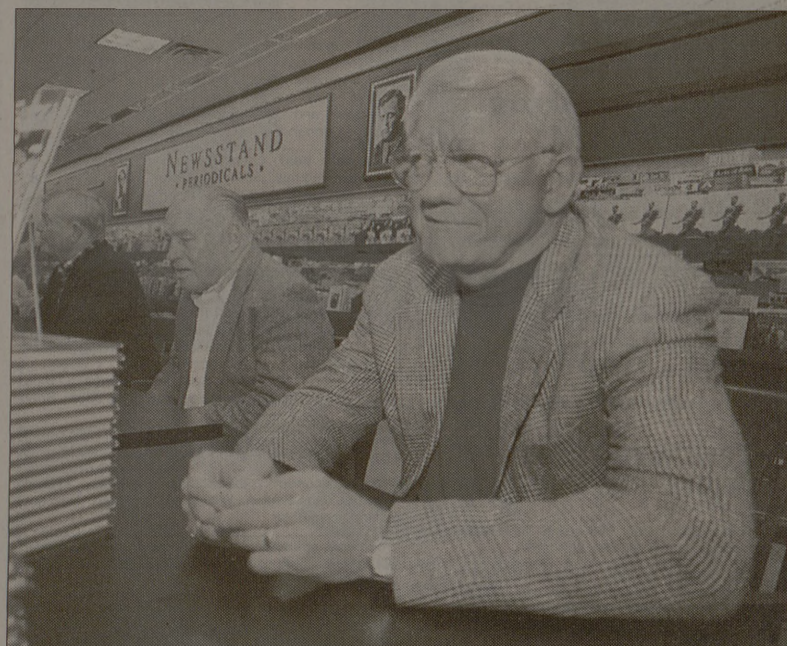
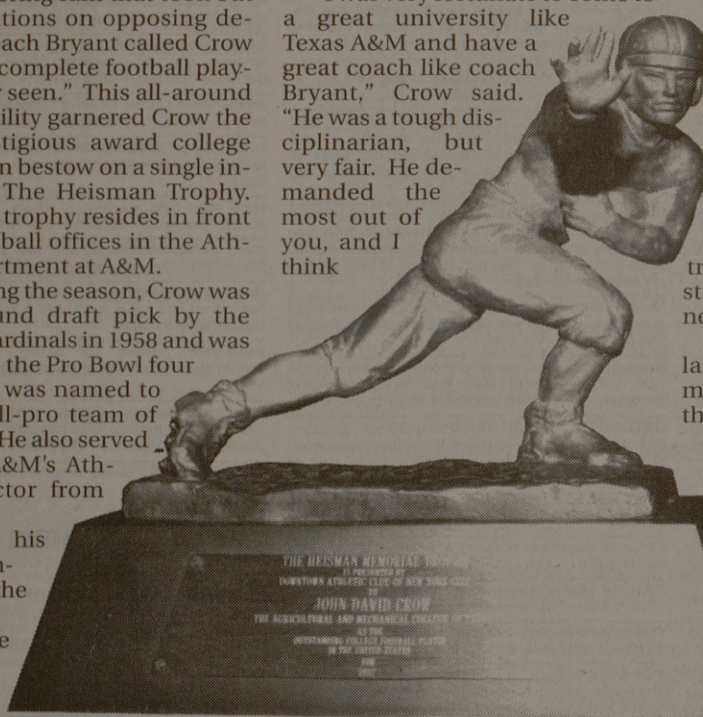
Despite the impressive accolades that Crow has garnered he may be the least known of the three legends in town.

Not only did Doak Walker win a Heisman Trophy while at SMU, but an award given to the top college running back bears his name. Darrell Royal won a national title while playing at Oklahoma and then won two titles while a coach at Texas. The Texas football stadium was renamed in his honor last year. He is also credited with inventing

the "Wishbone" offense.

However, even though these two are former rivals of Crow, Crow does not mind sharing the spotlight with them.

"These two guys are great people," Crow said. "Darrell Royal is a super human being. I've gotten to know Doak and his wife through the Heisman stuff we go to. But that doesn't make me want to win the game on the Friday after Thanksgiving any less."



Former Heisman winner John David Crow autographs copies of his new book.

Soccer becomes latest victim of Aggie postseason curse



STEPHEN BOUDREAU
staff writer

of their own destiny. It should have been an ominous sign, though, when nearly half the stadium bleachers were empty, resulting in the smallest home crowd of the season.

It was hopeless, no matter how well the Aggies executed their plays, nature had taken over and the ball would never find the back of the net. Open nets were missed, balls kissed the goal posts and the team could not seem to kick the ball away from the SMU keeper. Bottom line was that the Aggies could not finish off their plays. The syndrome had struck.

As time began to run out on the Aggies, despite the fact that the Aggies were undisputedly the more talented team, it was apparent that the Mustangs were going to ride out of town with the upset.

It was disappointing. A large sigh of grief could be felt among the 836 fans when the scoreboard showed the final 1-0 score. The team had played outstandingly and outshot the Mustangs by 13.

But SMU had managed to squeeze enough luck out of the ball to get a score. The Aggies made great passes and dominated ball control, but without putting anything up on the scoreboard, defeat is the only option.

The defense played outstanding and Melanie Wilson's short lapse of concentration was not the determining factor. It was the syndrome. It had waited until our hopes and expectations were at the apex.

It is an ugly thing, but it is just nature's way.

Offensive Player of the Year.

Don't expect any surprises here. Although it may seem trite and at this point cliché, but Bryn Blalack is one of the top players in the nation. Her 17 goals and three assists gave her the team's top point total with 37 points.

Blalack's resume for the 1997 season was extensive, capturing All-America honors, the Big 12 Player of the Year award and a nomination for the Missouri Athletic Club Sports Foundation Collegiate Player of the Year award.

Her career comes to an end as a member of the Aggie squad with her name atop the A&M all time goals, points and shots list.

Honorable Mentions.

With a team like A&M, it is difficult to overlook the abundance of talent. Alison Peters, Sharon Pickering, Diana Rowe, Katie Offutt, Nicole Shook and Becky Peterson are all incredible players and deserve as much credit.



DAVE HOUSE/THE BATTALION

Sophomore Nicole Shook kicks a ball into the goal against the University of Nebraska last week in San Antonio. Shook will be part of a strong crop of returning lettermen.

The offense was incredible, scoring 54 goals on the year, being shut out only once and scoring more than one goal in all but six games.

Defensive Player of the Year.

Without a doubt, Melanie Wilson is one of the nation's best keepers. Wilson allowed a mere 15 goals on the season, five of which were off penalty kicks. Her 0.70 goals against average was second best in the Big 12, behind Nebraska keeper Becky Hornbacher. One can say without much hesitation, though, that Wilson's keeping is tops in the conference.

Wilson recorded 8 shutouts on the season and served as an amazing last line of defense. Goal keeper is not a position that is often in the limelight. It is a position where errors are much more glaring than success. What people forget

is that the ball has to get past 10 other players before it gets to the goal. Wilson's consistency has been extraordinary and key to the Aggies success.

Honorable Mentions.

Wilson's job is made a whole lot easier with the talented group she has in front of her.

The entire defensive line of Emily Elias, Claire Elliott, Stefani Chaney and, of course, injured players Ashley Fendley and Elizabeth Pavlas has once again outdone themselves. The defense allowed a mere 17 goals to get past them and into the back of the net.

Defenders do not achieve success through statistics so much as they do through the flow of the game. Because of the Aggies' incredible line of defense and stingy domination of opposing teams, the A&M offense is given the opportuni-

ty to control the ball and put up impressive scores.

The Midfield.

Soccer is about playing as a team. Everyone touches the ball and each player is instrumental to the outcome of the game. The forwards need to put the ball in the back of the net and the defense needs to keep the ball away from the other team.

The midfield, though, has to get the ball to where it needs to be. I do not often give the midfield the credit it deserves.

Nicky Thrasher, Gillian Gandy, Heather Wiebe, Mandy Davidson and Sonia Ibanez orchestrate an impressive high ball-control and aggressive offense that was one of the best in the nation. Although not always the goal scorers, this group is the key to getting the ball to the front and past the opposing defense.

And Finally...

Every player on this team deserves recognition. It is unfortunate that the season had to come to such an abrupt and disappointing end, but the Aggies cannot afford to wallow in the depths of defeat.

For there is only one way to overcome the Aggie Syndrome. There is only one way to get over the hardship the disorder brings and that is to learn from mistakes, not forget them.

The Aggies are poised to bring Texas A&M University a national championship. The elements are all there. Confidence, not cockiness, teams from the players, one of the finest soccer facilities in the nation provides an excellent training environment and one of the nation's top coaching staffs graces the team with its guidance.

There was a lot of talk of a national title this year, but talk needs to be backed up when it counts most.

The team has to want it. This year the team did not want it bad enough. Perhaps that sounds harsh and some will disagree, but it is true. Once the Texas A&M Soccer Team as a whole determines and believes they are the nation's top team, the national championship can and will be theirs.

Until then, the Aggies will have to see the sun set on their season prematurely and watch other teams accept the glory and national respect that could be theirs.

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