Sports

Page 9 • Thursday, September 17, 1998

Catching up with ...

k Spiller redefines the tight end position at A&M

BY JASON LINCOLN

The Battalion

season the brunt of the Texas A&M Foot-Team's receiving did not come from one e wide receivers, but from a tight end. g the Aggie offense in catches, receivand receiving touchdowns, senior piller established himself as one of the

ends in the Big 12 Conference. Javier Valdes r started at A&M as a true freshman in mental design laying in every game. However, he studies may only one pass for 20 yards.

at yesterdays: then Spiller's role in the Aggies' passing bration at Rims become significant. As a sophomore, rught 14 passes for 194 yards.

oubled his yardage in 1997 with 25 **DONORS** for 436 yards and 4 touchdowns. er offers much more to the A&M of-Continued an his receiving. At 6 feet 3 inches and "We have inds, he brings a formidable blocking

e to the line despite being relatively or his position. surgeries ha el that I can play better than 280ight ends," Spiller said. "I feel like my

in advantage.

Last weekend against Louisiana Tech, Spiller came through for the Aggies with three receptions for 20 yards including a two-point conversion, using his speed to break open and make the plays.

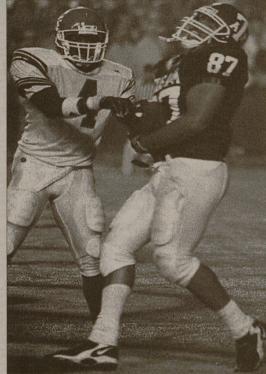
'It was a big play in the ball game," tight ends coach Tam Hollingshead said. "We were sitting on 19 points and we needed to get the game to 21 points, so we went to Derrick on a two-point situation.

"It was an excellent play, and he ran a really good route to free himself up. So that was a really big play for us.

Spiller was selected to the second-team All-Big 12 Conference in 1997.

With 659 career yards in 36 games and an average of over 15 yards per reception, he has consistently come through for the Aggies when called upon. According to Hollingshead, Spiller's strength, size, and speed make him an "extremely fine athlete" that gets the job done when its needed.

With Spiller teamed up with either tight end Dan Campbell and RoDerrick Broughton, the Aggies have a formidable option with tight ends.



SEE SPILLER ON PAGE 11. Derek Spiller caught three balls against La. Tech.

"However ickland battles back from injury for playing time

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BY ABBY LITTLE The Battalion

n injury can ruin a career, or it can make a career stronger. In junior outside hitter Summer Strickland's case, her ankle injury has made her a stronger player.

During her freshman year, she badly sprained it, knocking off a bone fragment, and underwent two surgeries to repair the damage.

It was frustrating to Strickland to not be able to play much her freshman or sophomore year, but Strickland said she thinks she has overcome the injury.

"I started playing again this season and it was still bothering

could only do one practice a day during two-a-days.

That was really frustrating. It's feeling really good right now and I think it is almost to full strength." A&M Volleyball Team coach

Laurie Corbelli said she thinks Strickland took her injury in stride. "It's too bad that it has been such a long-term injury," Corbelli said. "She has managed it well. I think be-

ing an athlete is a lot about injury management and mentally not letting it distract you. I think she has made great strides in learning how to manage it. It doesn't appear that she is letting it bother her anymore and I'm real proud of that.

Because of her ankle injury

me a lot," Strickland said. "I Strickland saw limited action for the past two years. She is starting more this season and she said she likes her new role.

"It's been pretty good," Strick-land said. "I think I'm playing OK. I like starting more than sitting on the bench, that's for sure. I like my role a lot. I'm having fun out there, which is probably the most important thing.

With her starting more, she has improved and set new career highs. She bettered her career high for digs twice this season, the first time against Georgia Tech with 14 and the second time against Southwest Texas State with 16.

SEE STRICKLAND ON PAGE 11.

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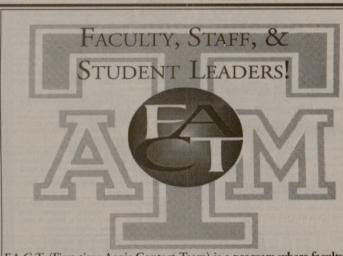
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F.A.C.T. (First-time Aggie Contact Team) is a program where faculty, staff & student leaders contact new Aggies to welcome them to the University and ask about their experiences at A&M. F.A.C.T. will be conducted Mondays through Thursdays, September 28 - October 15 from 6:00 - 9:00 PM.

Please volunteer your time and energy to help our new Aggies feel at home. You should be able to find a sign-up brochure in your department. If not, feel free to call Yvonne Pena at 845-5826. The sign-up deadline is September 21. Thank you in advance for your time and commitment.



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