

Illegal motion

A&M cleans up act with tough compliance program

BY JEFF WEBB
The Battalion

magnified the situation. But in my opinion, our academic people should have caught it."

Hardeman's ineligibility has been the only smudge on an otherwise clean record for A&M athletics since the 1993 case.



BRAD GRAEBER/THE BATTALION

January's biggest party at Texas A&M University will most likely be thrown by the Athletics Department, but not necessarily on New Year's Eve.

There will be a reason for the department to celebrate when A&M is finally released from probation instituted by the NCAA stemming from 1993 infractions connected to five student-athletes receiving payment for work performed.

"We will be extremely happy," A&M Athletics Director Groff said. "Whether there will be a public celebration, I'm not sure."

However, times have changed and, according to many athletics directors like Louisiana Tech University's Oakes, the A&M compliance department has evolved into one of the nation's best. Groff said he was surprised when A&M forfeited its Sept. 24 victory over the Bulldogs because of the ineligibility of senior running back D'Andre "Tiki" Hardeman.

"A&M has a reputation for having one of the best departments in the nation," Oakes said.

Groff said the posting errors in Hardeman's grades, while made within the Registrar's Office, should have been caught by the Athletics Department.

"The blame was placed on the registrar, already the entire blame should not have been on them," Groff said. "They are here to catch it. They were the people who should have caught the problem, but they didn't. Our academic staff dropped the ball. They should have known going in he wasn't eligible."

But if we made a mistake, the registrar will be the next check and balance. As it turned out, they made a mistake and it

violations in October 1990, the Aggie athletics program was eligible for the so-called "death penalty," which could eliminate competition in football for an entire season.

However, since the NCAA cited A&M attempts to bring its athletics program into compliance with NCAA guidelines, and the violations occurred in connection with one booster, the death penalty was eliminated as a possible punishment.

The NCAA handed Southern Methodist University the death penalty for giving extra benefits, including cash payments, to student-athletes in 1986 and was banned from participation in football in 1987.

Illegal cash payments made to student-athletes were not uncommon just three decades ago.

Bob Hollier, an A&M offensive lineman from 1963-65 who played under coach Hank Foldberg, said it was nearly impossible to prevent players from receiving payments.

"After games, we would go back to Henderson Hall, which was the athletic dorm at the time," Hollier said. "There would be envelopes on the bed. There would be \$50 in the envelope if we lost and \$100 if we won. Back then, that was a lot of money. You could go out and have a good time."

"Soon, there was an NCAA investigation. There were 90 kids that left the program, including me. But now, they're trying to do the right thing. They're not going to cheat."

With the new NCAA rule allowing athletes to hold jobs during the semester, Groff said compliance methods have already been activated to ensure guidelines are followed.

"The compliance office handles jobs for student-athletes," Groff said. "Any athlete working must fill out a form, and the employers are given the rules and guidelines."

SEE NCAA ON PAGE 8.

Quesada's injury leaves questions about lineup

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Texas A&M senior center Dario Quesada said his bad back will keep him from completing his college eligibility, but might not end his playing career.

"I don't think this will end my career," Quesada said. "It is the end of my college career. I plan on healing my back, but I don't know how long it will take to do that. My eligibility is over."

Quesada, who first suffered the injury in September 1997, said he will have a Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) test and will then start a rehabilitation program.

"When we started the conditioning program, it just gave up on me," he said. "I guess I'm used to it after a year. I'm not going to sit out like last year and gain 20 pounds."

New men's basketball coach Melvin Watkins will now have to fill the spots of two front-line players. In addition to Quesada's injury, senior forward Calvin Davis also will not play in 1998 because of back problems.

"At this point, going on what the doctors say, I don't look for Calvin to play anymore," Watkins said. "Only time will tell. Dario's problem was that he got to a point where we had to try it out. We went through individual workouts, and it just wasn't working."

With the dismissal of guard Steve Houston from the team, Watkins will have to deal with the loss of three returning scholarship players.

The majority of playing time at the guard positions will fall to sophomore Michael Schmidt, senior Chris Clayton and sophomore T.J. Brown. Front-line returners include senior Chris Richards, junior transfer Jason Boeker, sophomore Aaron Jack and senior Shanne Jones. Junior Jerald Brown could play at either the guard or forward positions.

Watkins recruited guards Clifton Cook and Shelton Wise, and forwards Paul Jacobs and Larry Jackson. Forward-center Joe White signed with the Aggies when Tony Barone was coach.

Alfred named starting quarterback

WACO, Texas (AP) — Jermaine Alfred, who guided Baylor's second-half comeback that fell just short against Texas Tech, will be the Bears' starting quarterback against Kansas.

Baylor coach Dave Roberts said Alfred "earned the right" to start ahead of sophomore Odell James, but both quarterbacks will play.

"I talked to (James) after the game and said, 'Hey, I thought you played fine, but Jermaine gave us a spark,'" Roberts said Monday. "And that's what we need right

now. We need a spark offensively. And (Alfred) deserves a right just like Odell deserved the right after spring."

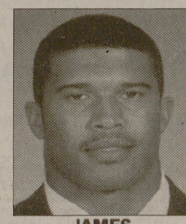
In Saturday's 31-29 loss to Texas Tech, Alfred came

off the bench late in the third quarter and completed 14 of 23 passes for 225 yards and one touchdown. "We haven't seen him

play that way since we've been here," Roberts said. "We were thrilled that he gave us that spark, because it gave us a chance to get back in the game. And maybe he can continue to do that. I certainly hope so. He's capable of doing that. He can sure throw the ball well enough."

Alfred, a junior, is 3-5 as a starter. Two of his wins came as a true freshman in 1995.

Baylor (1-3, 0-2 Big 12) will be taking on a Kansas (2-3, 0-3) team coming off a hard-played 24-21 loss to Texas A&M.



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