

Running back Weber headed for Aggieland

BY JEFF SCHMIDT The Battalion

The last time Texas A&M picked a top running back from a California high school, the Aggies picked now-senior Sirt Parker, who played a major role in A&M's victory against Kansas State University in the Big 12 Championship.

A&M picked up another potential standout with the commitment of San Bernardino-Pacific High School senior Joe Weber. Weber reportedly told A&M running backs coach Lawrence Livingston Tuesday that he was going to be an Aggie.

"It was the best decision for me to be in," Weber said. "I think I can make it and get a lot of playing time if I do the things I have to do, and work hard."

Other schools Weber considered were the University of Southern California, the University of Colorado, and UCLA.

The 6-foot-1-inch, 225-pound running back used his 4.5-second time in the 40-yard dash to run for 2,694 yards and 30 touchdowns his senior year.

Weber said his combination of size and speed has enabled him to succeed.

"That's what people tell me my greatest point is," he said. "I've got enough foot speed to run away, but if you want to challenge me, I'll run you over and get a couple of yards."

Weber, who grew up 20 minutes outside of New Orleans, joins an already impressive stable of running backs to commit to A&M.

Other backs to commit to A&M are Oschler Fleming from Denton (Ryan), Richard Whitaker from Jacksonville, Maurice Harris from Aldine (Nimitz), Jesse Hunnicutt (already enrolled at A&M for the spring semester and will count against last year's scholarship allotment) from Canyon (Randall) and Reggie Duncan from Killeen (Ellison).

Despite A&M's plethora of running backs, Weber said he welcomes the opportunity to compete against them.

"If you go somewhere, you're going to compete," he said. "No one gets better when you don't compete."

Weber, who said he eliminated any team that wanted to play him at fullback, is rated as the 37th best player in the country by Bobby Burton of the National Recruiting Advisor.

Counting down to Super Sunday

Big game features Aggie connection

BY DOUG SHILLING The Battalion

When the Denver Broncos and Atlanta Falcons kick off the Super Bowl this coming Sunday in sunny Miami, both will have Aggies ready to contribute. Two will have a direct outcome on the field, while another will do his damage from the coaches' box.

Fullback Detron Smith and offensive coordinator Gary Kubiak will attempt to help the Broncos become only the sixth team in NFL history to repeat as Super Bowl champions, while guard Calvin Collins and the rest of the "Dirty Birds" look to win in the franchise's first Super Bowl.

Collins, drafted in the sixth round by the Falcons in 1997, came into his own this year, winning a starting spot on the offensive line at the beginning of the

year. With his fellow line-mates, he helped Falcons running back Jamal Anderson lead the NFC in rushing with 1,846 yards.

Collins arrived at Texas A&M in 1993 and started all four years he attended the school. He was named All-SWC First Team in 1994 and All-Big 12 First Team in 1996.

Along with Smith, he helped pave the way for Aggie running backs Greg Hill, Rodney Thomas and Leeland McElroy.

Drafted in the third round by the Broncos in 1996, Smith has become an integral part of the Denver team. He serves as the main backup to starting fullback Howard Griffith and is the Broncos' leader on special teams. Smith arrived in College Station in 1992 and served as the Aggies' primary fullback for four years.

By now, the Super Bowl should be no big deal for Kubiak — this year will be his sixth appearance. As

the Broncos back-up quarterback, he was a part of Super Bowl teams in 1986, 1987 and 1989. His other three appearances have come as an assistant coach — in 1994 with the San Francisco 49ers and the past two years with the Broncos.

Kubiak began his career with the Aggies in 1979. During his tenure at A&M, he set school passing records that still stand. He holds the A&M record for most touchdowns passing in a game with six against Rice University in 1981 and the single-season touchdown pass record with 19 in 1982.

Drafted in the eighth round by the Broncos in 1983, he spent his career as the backup to John Elway. After his playing days, Kubiak returned to A&M in 1992 to serve as running backs coach. After two years at A&M, he left for a one-year stint with the 49ers before settling down as the Broncos offensive coordinator.

Pro-Aggie

Texas A&M standouts who will play in the Super Bowl this Sunday in Miami:

Calvin COLLINS

HEIGHT: 6'2" WEIGHT: 307 lbs. YEARS PRO: 2 POSITION: OG TEAM: ATLANTA FALCONS



COLLINS

Detron SMITH

HEIGHT: 5'9" WEIGHT: 231 lbs. YEARS PRO: 3 POSITION: FB TEAM: DENVER BRONCOS



SMITH

Falcons, Broncos enjoying year of change

MIAMI (AP) — For more than three decades, Super Bowl Sunday meant little to the Atlanta Falcons. It was a day to spend almost anywhere but in front of a television set, watching two other teams vie for the NFL title.

For more than two decades, Super Bowl Sunday was downright painful for the Denver Broncos. It was a day for fans to stay away from their TV sets to avoid the carnage.

When they meet at Pro Player Stadium on Sunday, both teams might spend a moment reflecting on just how far they've come in the past year.

For the Broncos, their sixth Super Bowl is entirely unlike all the others. They've come here as champions, carrying a self-confidence and, yes, a swagger that they gained by finally winning the big game.

The Falcons, never before a championship factor, finished 7-9 in 1997. Yet now they've come to Miami with the highest of expectations, a slight sense of awe mixed in with a heavy dose of innocence, and the recognition of how different things are this January.

While both are playing for the same reward, they are approaching the chance to be atop their profession from entirely different perspectives.

Happily for Denver, that means not having to

answer all those "Why did you lose?" questions.

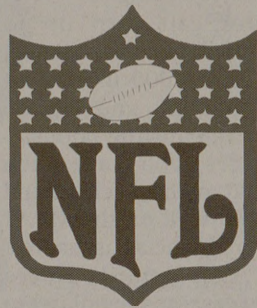
Now the questions are about repeats and dynasties. The Broncos are so self-assured that they have no problem dealing with those topics. In the past, they merely hoped they could win a Super Bowl. Now, they know they can.

"Whenever you get into a game of this magnitude and lose four in a row, it definitely takes some wind out of your sails," said Mike Lodish, who went through his own Super Bowl trauma (0-4) with Buffalo before joining Denver and getting that first title 12 months ago. He was not in the league when the Broncos lost their fourth Super Bowl in 1990.

"To win it is something you can't measure, the feeling you get is so great."

That feeling has bred a boldness and created a confidence in the Broncos that is immediately noticeable. Where previous AFC champs from Denver seemed to fear what might happen in the Super Bowl, these guys cannot wait to prove their mettle once more.

"Last year, we had all the questions about never having won a Super Bowl," placekicker Jason Elam said. "We were big underdogs to the Packers and no one gave us a chance against them. I think there was more pressure on us in that game."

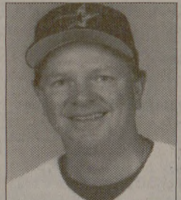


Eight enshrined to hall

WACO, Texas (AP) — Five-time Cy Young Award winner Roger Clemens and Negro League stars Duke and Bill Foster were among eight athletes inducted into the Texas Sports Hall of Fame Wednesday night.

Houston Rockets star Hakeem Olajuwon and former teammate Clyde Drexler also were among the inductees honored at a banquet at the Waco Convention Center.

Clemens, who remains with the Toronto Blue Jays, but is expected to be traded before the season, won his fifth Cy Young Award last season after going 20-6 with a 2.65 ERA.



DIERKER

Houston Astros manager Larry Dierker, who compiled a 139-123 record as an Astros pitcher, also was named to the Hall.

The Foster brothers, natives of Calvert, are both in the National Baseball Hall of Fame.

Bill Foster won 137 games and helped the Chicago American Giants win Negro League titles in 1926, 1927, 1928 and 1933.

Rube Foster was a pitcher and manager and founded the Negro National League in Kansas City in 1920.

Sandra Meadows, who coached Duncanville to four girls basketball championships, also was inducted posthumously. Meadows died of cancer in 1994.

Judy Rankin, who won 28 LPGA tournaments and was named LPGA player of the year in 1976 and 1977, also was enshrined.

Ceballos signs deal with Mavs

DALLAS (AP) — Forward Fred Ceballos, who failed to land a big-money contract in the free-agent market, returned to the Dallas Mavericks with a one-year contract Wednesday.

Ceballos had said after last season that he wanted to test the market. But the flurry of free-agent signings last week did not leave much open for him.

"As the market spoke and he didn't receive first offer of all one of the big free-agent contracts... pretty soon we were back in the ball game," said Mavericks coach-general manager Don Nelson, who only last week rejected the notion of Ceballos returning to Dallas.

"So it got to a point where again, you know, the number was right and we jumped on it."

Terms of Ceballos' one-year contract were not released.

Nelson had penciled in rookie Dirk Nowitzki as his starting small forward after Ceballos turned down a three-year offer worth \$6.75 million.

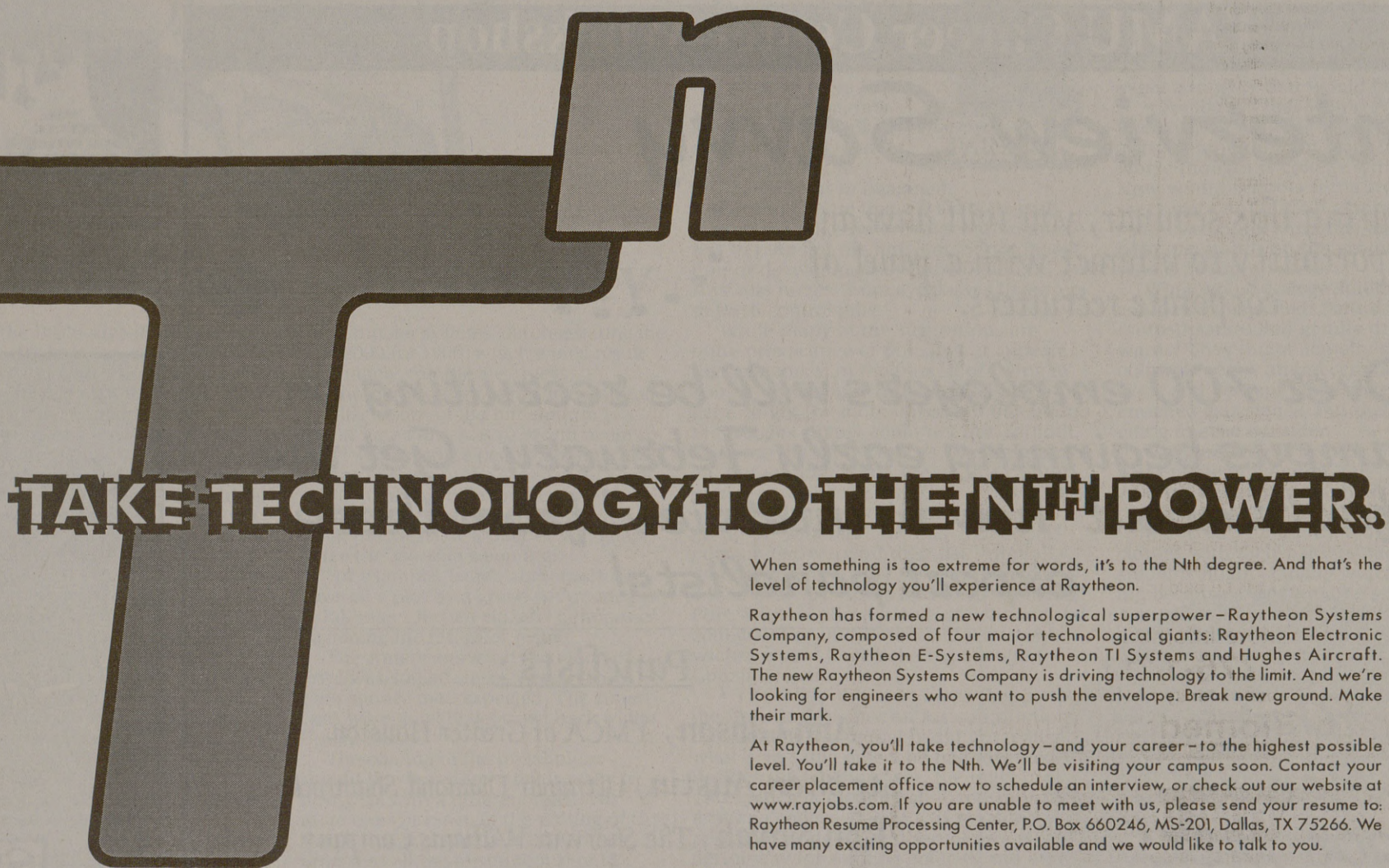
The 6-foot-11 Nowitzki will now split playing time with Ceballos.

Ceballos, 29, was acquired from Phoenix last season. He averaged 16.9 points and 6 rebounds in 12 games with Dallas before suffering a season-ending knee injury.

In a nine-game stretch in March, Ceballos combined with Mavericks guard Michael Finley for an average of 41.6 points a game. The two led Dallas to a 4-5 mark during those nine games, giving the team its best run of the season.



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