

## Making a Splash

### Ags' Howard breaks onto world scene

BY JASON LINCOLN  
The Battalion

Most athletes know what they want, constantly striving for their elusive goal. That goal varies from personal bests to single victories to national championships.

Texas A&M swimmer Devin Howard is no exception. However, Howard is striving for something not limited by a single win or fast time — he does not want to lose, period.

"Everybody likes to win, but it's the ones that hate to lose that take it to the next level," A&M men's swimming coach Mel Nash said. "Devin hates to lose and that is huge."

That attitude does not always work well in a sport that is geared more to training for a specific race rather than competing at top form in each competition.

Nevertheless, Howard strives to swim each race faster than the athletes in the adjacent lanes.

The determination, which Nash calls the X-factor, that has seen Howard through three seasons with the Aggies is now making its presence felt on the world circuit.

Today, the senior participates in the FINA-Swimming World Cup in Sheffield, England, where he will debut his college talents against the best swimmers in the European theatre while representing the USA National Team.

After two days of competition in England, Howard will travel to the next World Cup on Feb. 5-6 in Berlin, Germany.

"It will be good to swim against European competition along with some world competition," Howard said. "It re-



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A&M senior Devin Howard is taking a break from NCAA action to focus on USA National Team competitions throughout the world.

ally makes a difference competing against the different styles [of swimmers]."

The A&M swimmer is slated in six events for his European tour — the 50-, 100- and 200-meter butterfly, 200- and 400-meter individual medley and 200-meter freestyle.

Howard will choose only a handful of those events to compete in at each stop, allowing him to perform at his best.

Due to his focus on world competition in the 1999-2000 season, Howard is sitting out this season to focus on the World Cup and Olympic trials.

It will also allow the senior to compete in his final NCAA Championships in 2001, when the competition comes to College Station.

Howard will focus on the world circuit, trying to establish himself as a top-contender in every venue of the sport.

Currently, Howard is conditioning for the World Championships to be held in Greece during March. The World Cups are merely being used to

get competition experience in a variety of environments.

"I'm really happy to get to compete over there, but, to be honest, I'm not sure how I'm going to swim," Howard said. "But it will be helpful to get used to swimming on someone else's soil."

His apprehension is largely the result of the unknowns. The World Cup will be his first competition overseas and his debut against the best of Europe's swimmers. Yet, according to Nash, it should not phase him a bit.

"The ability to not look at them in awe, and expect to get up and race them head to head allows him to compete with anyone," Nash said.

After it is over, Howard will start his training cycle once more — to prepare for the Olympic Trials in August, a mere two weeks before the Sydney Games. Only two swimmers per event are chosen.

The A&M swimmer plans on making a run for it.

## Warner provides 'Super' drama

On Sunday, the Super Bowl was not available on ABC. Instead, the network attempted to fool viewers by showing the Kurt Warner Highlight Show.

Of course, they ran expensive commercials and tried to pass it for the Super Bowl, but nobody has ever seen a Super Bowl like this.

Super Bowls are supposed to have teams like the San Francisco 49ers, the Green Bay Packers, or the Dallas Cowboys.

Super Bowls are supposed to be over before halftime even starts. If that

was really the Super Bowl we were watching in Atlanta, one of the teams would have looked like General Sherman destroying everything in sight.

None of these things happened though. The St. Louis Rams, who were 4-12 just one year ago, were the favorites to win.

Their opponents, the Tennessee Titans, were led by a quarterback from Division I-AA named Steve McNair. The 49ers and Packers didn't even make the playoffs, while the Cowboys bowed out in the first round.

Instead of the Super Bowl, viewers were presented with a tightly contested battle between two teams with exciting offenses and talented defenses.

The Rams took the lead 16-0, but the Titans came back following the injury of safety Blaine Bishop, who was leading the Titans defense with four tackles at the time, and tied the game up at 16 behind the play of Steve McNair and running back Eddie George.

Immediately after the Titans scored on a two-yard touchdown by Eddie George, Warner came back and threw a 73-yard touchdown pass to Isaac Bruce

with less than two minutes remaining.

Warner finished the day with 414 yards passing, breaking the Super Bowl record that was previously held by Joe Montana. Joe Montana! His name is practically synonymous with the words Super Bowl.

The Titans were not done yet however. Focusing on the running game, and assisted by 25 yards in St. Louis penalties, the Titans marched down the field. With six seconds remaining at the ten yard line, McNair passed over the middle to Kevin Dyson, who was stopped one yard short of the end zone by linebacker Mike Jones.

Warner came through in a big way. He completed 24 of 45 passes with two touchdowns and no interceptions.

He was named Super Bowl MVP and even kissed his wife immediately

game and force Warner to beat them (which he did), and Faulk finished with only 17 rushing yards.

McNair never gave up during the game. Down 16 points with 1:18 left in the third quarter, he ran 23 yards to set up a George touchdown run.

He was out of his element in the first half, throwing a lot of third and long passes and not running the ball as much as he normally has this season. McNair didn't begin to look like himself until the third quarter, when the Titans offense began to combine George's power running game with McNair's speed.

George was the driving force behind the Titans' offense. He set the tone for the game by catching a screen pass and proceeding to run over Rams linebacker London Fletcher in the first quarter. He spent most of the night running over opponents, gaining 95 yards and scoring both touchdowns for the Titans.

In the wake of this offensive firepower, the defenses tried desperately to hold their ground. Tennessee, who was without defensive leader Marcus Robinson, found it impossible to contain Warner's passing game with their man-to-man defense. The Rams ran slant patterns all night to run away from the Titans secondary.

The shining moment for the defensive side of the ball came on the final play, when linebacker Mike Jones made the defensive play of the year by peeling off from his man and tackling Kevin Dyson at the 1-yard line.

I planned on watching the real Super Bowl after the Kurt Warner Highlight Show ended, but after the excitement that the Rams and Titans provided, I simply turned my TV off. I decided I liked the Kurt Warner Highlight Show better than anything the Super Bowl could have produced anyway.

Richard Bray is a freshman journalism major.

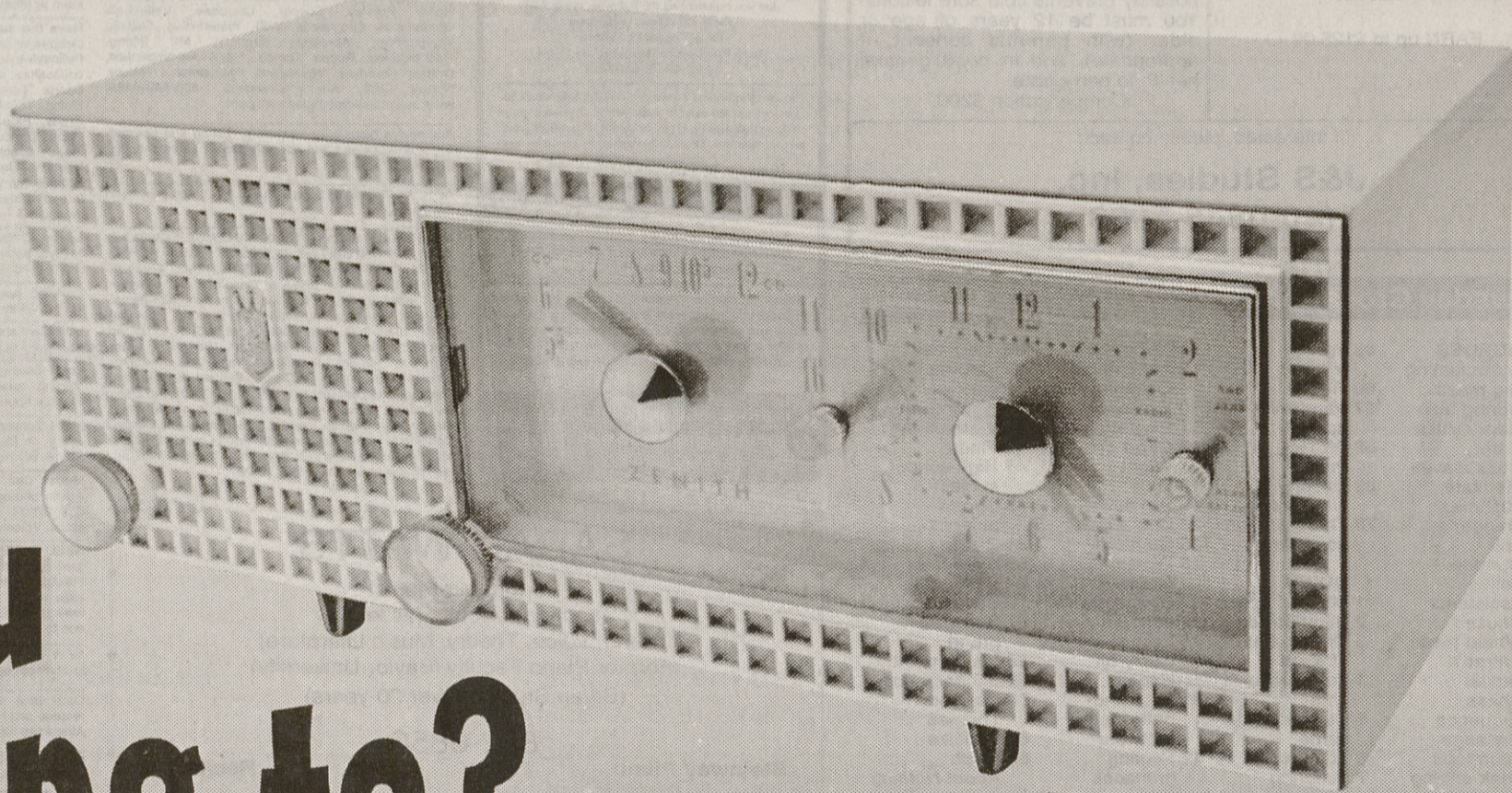


RICHARD BRAY

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