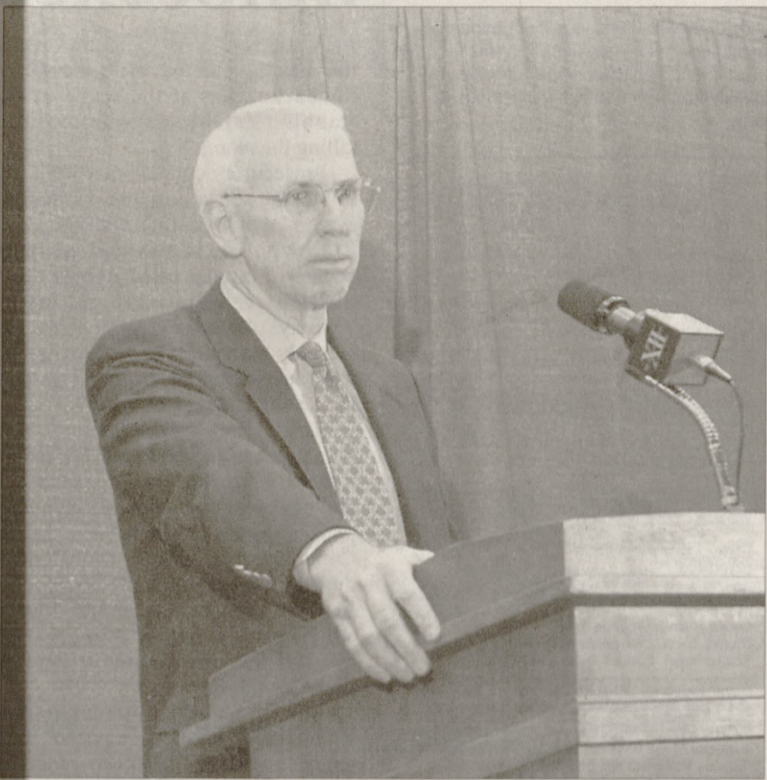


A&M football team signs 22 players



GUY ROGERS/THE BATTALION

A&M coach R.C. Slocum announces the Aggies' signing class yesterday at a press conference at Cain Hall.

BY DOUG SHILLING
The Battalion

National Signing Day was good to the Texas A&M football team for the second straight year as 22 players signed letters of intent to play for the Aggies in the fall.

The 22 players consisted of 20 high school seniors and two junior college transfers.

A&M signed nine offensive players and 13 from the defensive side of the ball.

"I was pleased with our class," A&M coach R.C. Slocum said. "Of course we wouldn't offer guys if we didn't like them. The guys we got were ones we feel good about."

The strength of the Aggie class once again came from the defense.

Defensive linemen and defensive backs were two of the major target areas for A&M when recruiting began, and the players they signed did not disappoint.

Defensive linemen Eddie Brown from Aldine, Linnis Smith from Tyler and Marcus Jasmin from New Orleans, La., bolstered the line and helped the Aggies reach their goal of becoming a bigger unit.

Smith is the smallest of the bunch at

260 pounds, with Jasmin at 292 and Brown weighing in at 295.

"We had to get bigger on the defensive line," Slocum said. "We play in a physical conference, and we felt it was an area of concern. We aren't a big defensive line across the board so we made an emphasis of trying to get some bigger guys."

The Aggies helped their depleted defensive back field by signing six DBs.

Adam Black of Houston, Jonte Buhl of Pflugerville, Dawon Gentry of Denison, Keeland Jackson of Garland, Kevin Mangum of LaMarque and junior college transfer Mike Pinesette from Blinn College all signed to play defensive back for A&M.

With three starters lost to graduation, the Aggies recruited people who could come in and step in right away.

"We signed several defensive backs," Slocum said. "We need immediate help in the secondary. We signed most these guys based on the hopes they were man coverage guys."

On the offensive side of the ball, the main area of concern was wide receiver. After not signing any wide receivers last year, A&M wanted to try and emphasize that position this year.

See SIGNING on Page 11.

2000 Texas A&M Football Signing Class (22)

| Name | Position | Ht. | Wt. | Cl.-Exp. | Hometown (High School/JC) |
|--------------------|----------|------|-----|----------|-----------------------------------------|
| Adam Black | DB | 6-0 | 175 | Fr.-HS | Houston, Texas (Cy Falls) |
| Eddie Brown | DL | 6-2 | 295 | Fr.-HS | Aldine, Texas (Eisenhower) |
| Jonte Buhl | DB | 5-9 | 170 | Fr.-HS | Pflugerville, Texas (Connally) |
| Ricky Cardoza | OLB | 6-5 | 220 | Fr.-HS | Mission, Texas (High) |
| Kasey Cheshier | OL | 6-5 | 270 | Fr.-HS | Duncanville, Texas (High) |
| Eric Crutchfield | ATH | 6-1 | 185 | Fr.-HS | Galena Park, Texas (North Shore) |
| Robert Ferguson | WR | 6-2 | 220 | Jr.-TR | Houston, Texas (Spring Woods/Tyler JC) |
| Dawon Gentry | DB | 6-0 | 180 | Fr.-HS | Denison, Texas (High) |
| Mathus Gill | FB | 5-11 | 230 | Fr.-HS | Brenham, Texas (High) |
| Geoff Hangartner | OL | 6-6 | 280 | Fr.-HS | New Braunfels, Texas (High) |
| Keeland Jackson | DB | 6-0 | 195 | Fr.-HS | Garland, Texas (High) |
| Marcus Jasmin | DL | 6-4 | 292 | Fr.-HS | New Orleans, La. (De La Salle) |
| Keith Joseph | RB | 6-3 | 220 | Fr.-HS | Houston, Texas (Lamar) |
| Dustin Long | QB | 6-3 | 185 | Fr.-HS | Port Neches, Texas (Port Neches-Groves) |
| Kewin Mangum | DB | 6-0 | 176 | Fr.-HS | La Marque, Texas (High) |
| Joey Perot | TE | 6-4 | 255 | Fr.-HS | Petal, Miss. (High) |
| Mike Pinesette | DB | 5-11 | 185 | Jr.-TR | La Marque, Texas (High/Blinn JC) |
| Cody Scates | P | 6-2 | 180 | Fr.-HS | Tyler, Texas (Lee) |
| LeBrandon Sheppard | LB | 6-1 | 210 | Fr.-HS | Lufkin, Texas (High) |
| Chris Sims | K | 6-0 | 170 | Fr.-HS | Garland, Texas (High) |
| Linnis Smith | DL | 6-4 | 260 | Fr.-HS | Tyler, Texas (John Tyler) |
| Brian Thompson | LB | 6-2 | 220 | Fr.-HS | Tyler, Texas (Lee) |

Underneath solid class, problems lurk for Aggie recruiting

Another signing day has come and gone here in Aggieland, and as usual, A&M coach R.C. Slocum put together another solid class for the Aggies. All the needs have been filled and A&M has another top-25 class signed, sealed, delivered and on its way to campus in the fall. So everything is nice and rosy for the Aggies, right?

Well, in the immortal words of Lee Corso, "Not so fast my friend."

Despite the fact this class "filled needs," there were some things that were lacking.



DOUG SHILLING

The most glaring was A&M's inability to sign more playmaking wide receivers this year. After not signing any wide receivers during last year's recruiting season, the Aggies targeted the position as a major need this year. And with what was supposed to be the best wide receiver class to come out of Texas in some time, A&M expected to do well.

The Aggies did not do so well, however, only landing junior college All-American Robert Ferguson. A&M lost out on the "Big 3" wide receivers B.J. Johnson, Roy Williams and Sloan Thomas, who all went to Texas, and many other of the state's top receivers.

Speaking of Texas and the recruiting freight train named Mack Brown, they managed to do

well against the Aggies in head-to-head recruiting battles.

Including the "Big 3," the Longhorns beat out the Aggies for the services of players like tight end Brock Edwards from Fort Worth, who went to school and is friends with A&M quarterback Vance Smith.

Texas also nabbed quarterback Chance Mock from the Woodlands who was a heavy A&M lean during the summer.

So, while the tendency is to look on the bright side of this year's class, there are some underlying problems with it. That being said, one has to wonder why problems are there.

Pessimists' first reactions would be to blame Coach Slocum and his staff.

Well, let me be the first to debunk this theory. Coach Slocum is a good coach who has done a wonderful job at A&M. You don't become a school's winningest coach and win championships by being a bad coach. And as far as recruiting goes, he and his staff are known throughout college football for being wonderful recruiters.

The problem with the Aggies is something that unfortunately the coaching staff has nothing to do with. The problem is with perception.

Unfortunately for A&M, some recruits' perception of the Aggies isn't what the A&M staff would like.

One explanation some wide receiver recruits gave for not signing with A&M is that they

thought the Aggies didn't throw the ball enough.

This after a year in which Randy McCown came within 89 yards of breaking the school's single-season passing record and, as a team, A&M posted the second-highest passing total in school history. But since the perception was that the Aggies didn't throw, that's what recruits thought.

Probably the most important, and overlooked, perception recruits have is that the Longhorns have superior facilities compared to the Aggies.

Geoff Ketchum of Rivals100.com said that he has not talked to a player who has visited

See PROBLEMS on Page 11.

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