

Mamas, let your Aggies grow up to be Cowboys

Former students look forward to greatness as they ready for the next Dallas football season

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The Battalion

The Dallas Cowboys are entering the 2000-'01 season with unanswered questions about a new coach, a new offense and a new philosophy which highlight this year's "Camp Campo" in Wichita Falls, Texas.

Dave Campo became the fifth head coach of the Cowboys. He was promoted from defensive coordinator after Chan Gailey was fired. Coaching changes are not the only differ-

ences this year for the Cowboys. With Randall Godfrey's departure, second-year linebacker and fan favorite Dat Nguyen has an opportunity to step into a starting role.

Nguyen played college ball at Texas A&M, following the role set by linebackers such as Quentin Coryatt and John Roper. Drafting Nguyen in the fifth round of the 1998 NFL Draft, the Cowboys picked up a player who fans can love.

In a world where professional athletes consider themselves to have a god-like status, Nguyen stays humble, thanking others for his success.

Nguyen said he is fortunate to have this opportunity to play in the NFL.

"Zack Thomas, Dexter Coakley, guys like that have proven themselves," he said. "Guys that have paved the way for me to have this opportunity. Those guys are pro bowlers, and any time you get a chance to play with those guys, you learn a lot."

Nguyen has always had critics. At only 5'11" and 231 pounds,

Nguyen is small by NFL standards. Despite overcoming the odds, Nguyen still does not feel like a role model to young players who are told they cannot play their sport because he still looks up to the players who paved the way for him.

"As far as the kids, it is all those guys that have set the stone," he said. "For the kids that are not too big, not too fast, not big enough to play this game. As long as you work at it and give 100 percent, you never know what is going to happen. You are always going to dream, and you have aspirations of doing something."

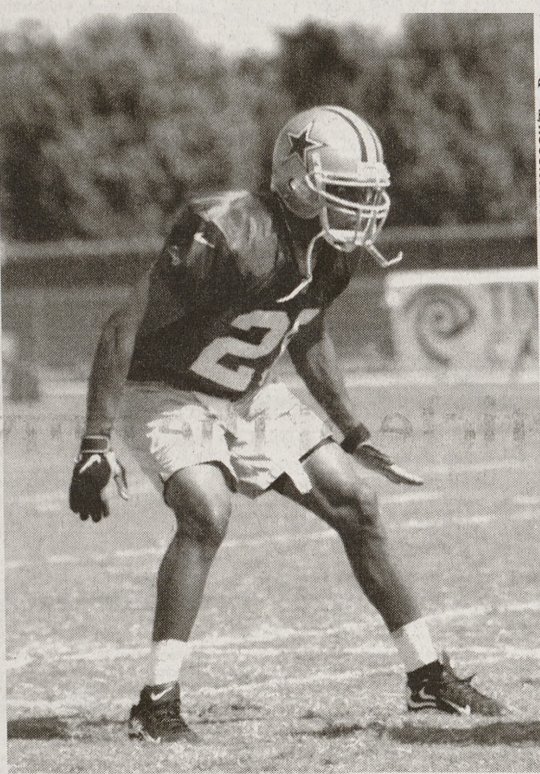
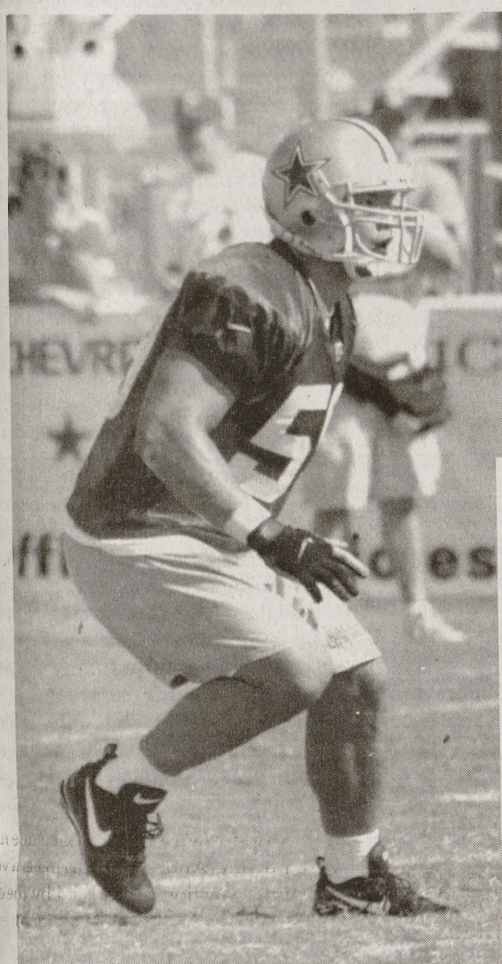
When it comes to the difference between college football and the NFL, Nguyen believes "it is speed. A lot of it is speed. The guys are a lot bigger and stronger. But the game is a job,

you look at it as a job. It is a business. A lot of guys are working hard just to compete and perform for the kids. The mental part is tough. A positive feeling is important."

Mike Zimmer, the new defensive coordinator, was full of praise for Nguyen, but said Nguyen has work to do.

"So far as Dat (Nguyen) is doing, he is doing a nice job," Zimmer said. "He is a very instinctive player. Right now he is overrunning some plays. He needs to slow down a little. He tries to make every play. He is very competitive and tries to do everything, but he needs to let things come to him."

Nguyen is not the only former Aggie player to don the Cowboys' blue star. Former A&M receiver Kevin Smith has started the last eight seasons — all with the



PHOTOS BY ANDY HANCOCK/THE BATTALION

Two former Aggie football players are taking part in the Dallas Cowboys' training camp in Wichita Falls, Texas. Above: Dat Nguyen reads the offensive play while waiting for the ball carrier running his direction. Right: Kevin Smith runs through a one-on-one defensive drill against wide receiver Joey Galloway. Top right: Smith takes part in a first-team offense against the first team defense scrimmage. Camp is scheduled to end Aug. 18.

Cowboys.

Selected in the first round of the NFL draft, Smith has been a cornerstone of the defensive secondary. The last few seasons, Smith has teamed up with "Primetime" Deon Sanders. Since Sanders' departure from Dallas, Smith has become the "primetime player" in the secondary.

Smith does not feel a huge burden from Sanders' departure.

"I don't know if it is pressure," Smith said. "We have some young guys that are really looking good."

Smith is more concerned with the mental aspects of his position, adding, "The scheme has changed. The game has changed, so the schemes have changed. We try to put more corners on the field instead of in the past with safeties underneath in our nickel package. We have a whole group of guys that can play. We need to find that mental aspect of the game."

This year, the Cowboys made a commitment to improving the secondary. Three of Dallas' draft choices were cornerbacks. Being the oldest and most experienced cornerback for the Cowboys, Smith has taken the role of teacher.

"I have to be (a role model)," Smith said. "We were talking about just knowing that the game is a situational thing. It's not that you just go out and play football anymore. It's the red zone, between the two 40s (yard lines) and the nickel package. After you break it down, it is a mental game, almost like a chess match, and you have to know that. That's the point that they must understand."

With two Aggies on the team, and only one University of Texas Longhorn, a little trash talking might be expected. Wayne McGarity, a second-year wide-receiver who played against Nguyen in college, seems outnumbered, but Smith has found someone else to harass.

"We are up with A&M's victory," Smith said. "I think Dat and Wayne go at it more because they played against each other. Actually, I give Jason Tucker (from Texas Christian University) more heat than anything. I think they are ranked 25th in the nation right now, and even higher than us (A&M). That is hard to see, but I take my hat off to them."

Smith also commented on his alma mater. "A&M is at a point right now where they can go either way," Smith said before adding, "Just jig 'em, A&M."

Joey Galloway joins the receiver corps, taking over Michael Irvin's role as the go-to guy. Raghieb Ismail and Jason Tucker, who ran a 4.26-second 40-yard dash a week before camp, join Galloway to create the fastest receiver corps in the league.

Emmitt Smith comes off a year in which he rushed for more than 1,300 yards, and Troy Aikman still has the talent to lead the team to Super Bowl gold.

The defense was spectacular last year, finishing ninth in the league for opponents' third-down conversion percentage. The defensive line is the strong point, and the entire linebacker group is solid.

Sports in Brief

Summerall to leave NFL broadcasting

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Pat Summerall will celebrate his 50th year of involvement with the NFL next year, and it might be his last.

Summerall announced his retirement as an NFL broadcaster, effective after the 2001 season, at a news conference Monday, but left the door open to the possibility that he will announce games after that.

He will have completed 50 years of involvement with the NFL following next season — 10 as a player and 40 in broadcasting.

Summerall's final assignment for Fox Sports, at least right now, will be the play-by-play call of the Super Bowl in January 2002.

"This will be 50 years in the NFL. I don't know if anyone's ever done that before," he said. "That's the story. I was sure that next year would be the end of 50 years."

Summerall also pointed out that he will be working with John Madden for the 20th season this year. The Arkansas alumnus and former NFL kicker, who lives in the Dallas-Fort Worth suburb of Southlake, has aired games for CBS and Fox since the end of his playing career in 1962.

"I'm not retiring from broadcasting," Summerall said. "I'll miss it, but I'm not sure I'm going away from it. I want to take another look. I'm not sure what I want to do at the end of two years. My health is good. There might be other sports I might be getting involved in."

Johnson is done with the 200m this year

AUSTIN (AP) — For a world-champion sprinter, Michael Johnson is backpedaling pretty fast.

Johnson, who bowed out of the

U.S. Olympic trials last week with a severe leg cramp during the 200-meter final, is backing off statements he would never run the distance again.

His coach, Clyde Hart, also chimed in, saying Johnson was probably finished with the race this year but could run it in years to come.

On Monday, Johnson said on NBCOlympics.com he was finished with the event in which he owns the Olympic gold medal and world record at 19.32 seconds.

"There's nothing for me to gain from it, so no more 200s for me," Johnson said. "There's no reason for me to run 200s."

Rodriguez undergoes surgery on hand

ARLINGTON, (AP) — When Ivan Rodriguez's right thumb crash-landed into the barrel of Mo Vaughn's bat, there went the last bit of hope from an already disastrous season for the Texas Rangers.

Losing the reigning AL MVP and the team's only All-Star for the rest of the season with a broken throwing hand ended any remote chance of Texas retaining the AL West title it has won the last two years.

Rodriguez was scheduled to undergo surgery Tuesday on the broken bone.

Rangers general manager Doug Melvin is getting more than consolation calls from his counterparts. With Texas 11 1/2 games out, contenders are combing Texas' roster in search of players to put them over the top.

John Wetteland, David Segui and Luis Alicea are the most likely to leave. All are free agents after this season, meaning the Rangers could lose them anyway. Dumping them now would bring something in return and help trim a payroll that is among the highest.

Tiger Woods is not the greatest

Last weekend, Tiger Woods reprised his role of steamroller at the British Open by crushing the field at St. Andrews. The dust had not yet settled from Woods' eight-stroke victory — the golf version of a massacre — when supposed "experts" declared Tiger the greatest golfer of all time.

That is true only if you discount that very large Golden Bear moving off into the sunset. Tiger Woods made astounding accomplishments by the age of 24; however, he should not be titled the greatest to ever play the game when considering Jack Nicklaus, who is still the unquestioned god of golf.

Woods won the career grand slam at the age of 24, two years younger than Nicklaus was when he did. Then again, Nicklaus did not play in the British Open until 1965, when he was 25. He won his first of three Claret jugs one year later. Woods has won each of the majors once; Nicklaus won each major event (the Masters, U.S. Open, British Open and the PGA Championship) at least three times.

One major advantage the Tiger has over the Bear is equipment. Woods' scores — he holds the scoring records for the U.S. Open, Masters and the British Open — are remarkable. But he is playing with clubs and balls that were merely dreams a few short years ago. The great Bobby Jones said Nicklaus "plays a game with which I am not familiar," when woods were really made of wood, not titanium. Nicklaus out-drove his competition by comparable amounts in his youth, with equipment inferior to Woods'. Last weekend, at age 60, Nicklaus' drive on 18 passed the gravel road, a shot of 280 yards. The U.S. Amateur Champion, David Gossett of Texas, could not do the same.

Perhaps the thing that separates the Bear from the Tiger the most is the King. Arnold Palmer was the man who made golf hip in

America long before Tiger was a gleam in Earl Woods' eye. Palmer was the most dominant player in golf and in the prime of his career in 1961.

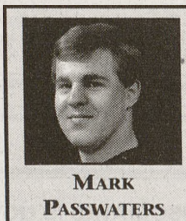
One year later, Palmer was relegated to secondary status. A chubby 22-year-old from Ohio appeared on the scene and began beating Arnie like a drum. After the arrival of Jack Nicklaus, Arnold Palmer won

who wilts like a flower in heat on Sundays? Ernie Els, who has admitted that he does not think that he can compete with Woods? These players do not compare with Palmer, or even Tom Watson, Johnny Miller or Gary Player, whom Nicklaus bested in his quest for greatness.

While golf equipment has improved, the quality of player has waned. Woods is a dominant player, but his success is increased

by his lack of quality competition. If the Tiger is truly to be greater than the Bear, all he has to do is win 15 more major championships, win a major at age 46 and come in fourth at the Masters at the age of 58 — while playing with an arthritic hip. Until he does those things, Woods is simply the greatest mortal ever to play golf. Nicklaus will remain a Titan.

Who would win a head-to-head competition: Tiger at age 24 or Jack at age 24? Considering the two would be playing with identical equipment, the competition would be truly intense. Considering the levels of competition the two faced in their careers, the growl of the Golden Bear would probably be too powerful for the Tiger to ignore.



MARK PASSWATERS



only one more major. Palmer was a truly great player — certainly one of the first names that people consider when thinking about golf. Jack Nicklaus made his game seem inferior. Tiger Woods owns golf right now, but who is his Arnie? David Duval,

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