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Sanders to face Dallas on Sunday

IRVING (AP) — Emmitt Smith says there is no Dallas vs. Deion scenario. But there is no avoiding the obvious. The flamboyant Deion Sanders could never go unnoticed, especially when Dallas plays Monday night at Washington and he lines up against his former team.

"It ain't got nothing to do with Deion; it really don't," Smith insists. "Deion just happens to play for a team that we are playing up against and happens to be one of our biggest rivals."

Washington (1-1) signed the high-profile free agent after the Cowboys (0-2) decided against re-signing the All-Pro cornerback in the offseason.

"It will be different. I'm sure he will be out there running his mouth and saying a little bit of stuff," said Dallas tight end David LaFleur. "It ought to be fun. He's a great player, a great cornerback, a great returner and able to turn around a game at any time."

The Cowboys did not think Sanders was worth \$23.5 million over the next two years. The Redskins, meanwhile, hope he can help lead them to the Super Bowl, like he did at San Francisco after the 1994 season and Dallas the following year.

"It's better playing with him than having to play against him twice a year," said Washington quarterback Brad Johnson. "He's going to make some plays for us and he's already made a huge impact on our team, on the field and in the locker room with his leadership — him being a winner and winning two Super Bowls."

Cowboys coach Dave Campo said a game against the

Redskins would be a battle under any circumstances. But the Sanders factor can not be avoided.

"Any time you play against friends, there's added significance," Campo said. "Deion's been a big part of us winning a Super Bowl, and having a good football team with him here."

"It's better playing with him than having to play against him twice a year."

— Brad Johnson
Washington Redskins quarterback

When Sanders arrived in Dallas at the start of the 1999 season, his five-year, \$35 million contract was the largest in free-agent history.

Sanders signed a five-year, \$51 million contract last year, but the Cowboys decided not to exercise their option for the final four years. They cut him June 2 and avoided the \$23.5 million he would have been guaranteed had he been on the roster another day.

Just like that, after four All-Pro seasons in five years at Dallas, Sanders was no longer with Dallas and on his way to playing with its biggest rival.

FERGUSON

Continued from Page 7



FERGUSON

"If you come together as a team and you're winning, individual goals take care of themselves," Ferguson said. "The main thing is to just focus on trying to win. To me,

if I catch a pass, I'm just as excited as when Dwain Goynes catches a pass. That's just the type of person I am."

That kind of team attitude can make a player special, but Ferguson said he has a long way to go.

"Actually, I thought I had a so-so game (against Wyoming)," Ferguson said. "As far as the stats go, it wouldn't be so chunky if it weren't for that one 93-yard pass. I know I have a lot of improvement to work on."

His coaches feel the same way. In

almost the same words, head coach R.C. Slocum, assistant head coach Larry Kirksey and offensive coordinator Steve Kragthorpe said that, while Ferguson shows tremendous potential to be a big-time playmaker for the Aggies, he will have to turn his potential into results on the field.

Kirksey can perhaps have the most influence on how Ferguson develops as a receiver due to his background. He has coached NFL superstars such as Emmitt Smith while he was at Florida in the mid-80s, and J.J. Stokes, Terrell Owens and Jerry Rice.

"He's (Ferguson) a good player, but he can be a better player than what he is," Kirksey said. "He's got skills that he needs to get better at as far as technique-wise, but he's got the tools to be a good football player."

Kirksey said that, with hard work, Ferguson could become the playmaker the Aggies have been looking for the past few seasons.

"He may look like an NFL-type

player right now, but he's not," Kirksey said. "There's still a lot of things he has to do yet, but the qualities are there. I think his work ethic is outstanding. Here's a guy that I don't have to prod to work — that's what a great receiver does."

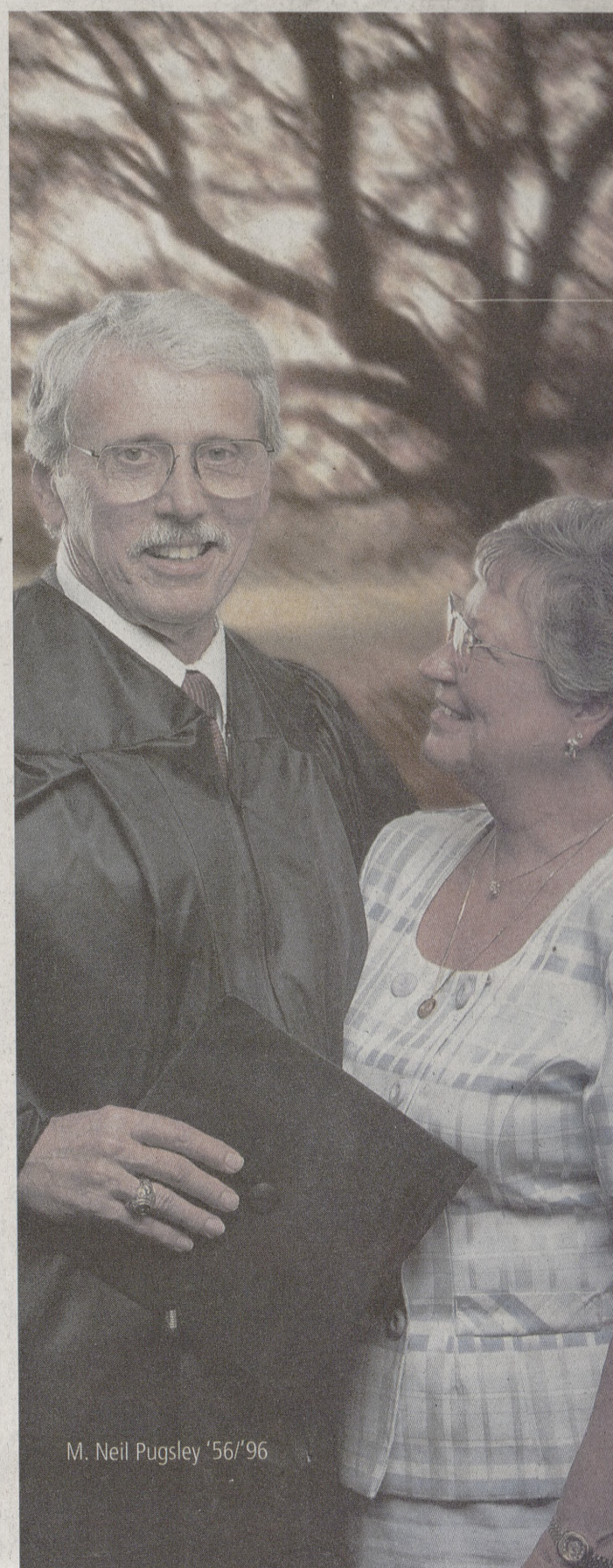
That work ethic could mean success in football, and Ferguson said it came from one source.

"My mentality of working hard — I got that from no one else but my grandma," Ferguson said. "She just had a no-die attitude."

He plans on taking his no-die attitude even farther with the Aggie football team. Ferguson wants not only to excel on the offense, but he wants to try his hand as a member of the famed Aggie defense.

"I think I'd be a better defensive player," Ferguson said. "I have more fun on the defensive side of the ball. We haven't really discussed it yet, but growing up, it was one of my dreams to play for the Wrecking Crew."

Becoming An Aggie Was Well Worth The Wait



M. Neil Pugsley '56/'96

Some things are truly worth the wait. For me, nothing more so than my Aggie Ring. Some students are on the decade plan, but me, it took 40 years before I finally got it. I first enrolled at Texas A&M as the Class of '56, but did not have the money to remain in school. That ultimate possession, the Aggie Ring, eluded me -- but it was never out of my mind.

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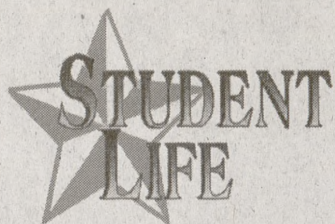
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