

Football season arrives early

A&M campus gets dose of pigskin with 7-on-7 tournament, Baytown Lee wins event

Michael Balhoff and Mark Passwaters
The Battalion

Baytown Lee required a tiebreaker to escape Friday's preliminary rounds of the 2002 7-on-7 football tournament. On Saturday, they took matters into their own hands.

The Ganders put on an offensive exhibition in the championship tournament, capping off the run by holding off a furious rally by Austin Bowie and escaping with a 34-32 victory. With a 2-1 record on Friday, Baytown Lee had to rely on a total-points-scored tiebreaker to move on to the championship tournament.

On Saturday, quarterback Drew Tate—who has received interest from Purdue University, among other schools—took full advantage of the gift, leading the team to three consecutive 40 point games, rolling over McKinney, Cy-Fair and Gladewater.

Baytown coach Dick Olin said that the 7-on-7 passing format was a definite advantage for his team.

"We're running our offense," Olin said. "We throw and we catch."

Tate, who has thrown for 4,700 yards in two years at the quarterback helm, stepped up the offense another notch in the semifinals. The Ganders beat Keller 48-34 to advance to the championship game at Kyle Field.

Austin Bowie took the opposite route in advancing through the tournament.

It used a suffocating defense that held its three previous opponents to 38 combined points. A 21-19 win over Plano in the semifinals advanced them to their final matchup with Baytown Lee.

In the championship game, they finally ran into an offense that they could

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— Dick Olin
Baytown coach

not stop.

The teams locked up in a shootout where incomplete passes were a rarity. Baytown Lee took a 27-18 halftime lead and was trying to hold on to a touchdown lead with time winding down.

After relying on offensive production all day, it was a defensive play that ensured Baytown Lee the championship. The Ganders intercepted a Bowie pass to end a promising drive

and seal the victory.

Olin hoped that the 7-on-7 championship was a sign of good things to come as the high school regular season sets to get underway.

"Maybe the kids know what it's like to be successful...there isn't a whole lot of difference between teams that win and teams that lose except for confidence," Olin said.

Baytown's coach went on to say that the format, while being different from the football they played in the fall, was still useful.

"Granted, you can't run and there's no (defensive pass) rush, but it's related to football," Olin said.

"Other sports, like baseball and basketball get to play year-round, and now at least we have something."

In consolation play earlier in the day, Abilene Cooper beat Creekview 34-32. With the game tied at 20 at halftime, Cooper was able to prevent Creekview from converting on their two second half extra-point attempts and deflected away a desperation pass as time expired.

The 7-on-7 format had several rules that differed from regular football. Along with no running the football and no pass rush from the defense, the quarterback was required to throw the ball within four seconds of taking the snap.

The teams played on a 45-yard field with a continuously running clock. Each half lasted 20 minutes.

McNeal makes memorable first impression on campus

Michael Balhoff
The Battalion

Réggie McNeal has heard all the hype. Everyone, from his high school coach to recruiting experts nationwide has compared the Lufkin senior quarterback to Michael Vick, the No. 1 overall pick in the NFL Draft by the Atlanta Falcons.

When Vick came out of high school, he was rated the top run/pass quarterback in the nation. Entering his senior year, McNeal has been given the same distinction. Vick was also rated a Top-10 recruit by ESPN in 1997; this year, McNeal is ranked third.

While the A&M recruit is flattered to be held in such high esteem, he would rather create his own identity instead of mimicking someone else.

"I'm just gonna be me," McNeal said.

"I guess I have a similar style to Michael Vick, but I want to have my own name."

He may have taken the first step to achieving his goal with an impressive performance this weekend at the 7-

on-7 state championships played on the A&M campus.

Playing in front of large crowds interested in getting a glimpse at the Aggies' most recent and highly touted 2002 commitment, McNeal did not disappoint.

This weekend, McNeal was not able to show off his speed or evasive ability, as 7-on-7 rules prevent quarterbacks from scrambling. However, he was able to show off his strong and accurate arm in the passing-only event.

In stifling heat that had taken a physical toll on the players by the end of the weekend, McNeal played almost every down on offense and defense, taking his turn at quarterback, receiver, linebacker and safety.

Lufkin got off to a fine start on Friday, compiling a 3-0 record against Bay City (27-20), Grapevine (26-19) and Pearland (41-13), a team that featured quarterback Noah Allen, who has verbally committed to the University of Oklahoma.

"We're here to compete but it's

See McNEAL on Page 6.

Duval wins British Open, removes glasses

LYTHAM ST. ANNES, England (AP) — David Duval never doubted he had the mettle to win a major championship. Now he has a silver

claret jug to prove it. Duval refused to let the British Open turn into the shootout everyone expected, seizing control Sunday with a

rock-solid game that carried him to a 4-under 67 at Royal Lytham & St. Annes and gave him his first major championship.

Maintaining a stoic demeanor behind his wraparound shades to the very end, Duval removed his sunglasses, tipped his cap to the adoring crowd and finally walked off the 18th green of a major tournament as a champion.

He finished at 274 for a three-stroke victory over Niklas Fasth of Sweden, the only one among a long list of proven players who sustained any kind of challenge.

Former Masters champion Ian Woosnam might have been

on that list. But after nearly making an ace on the opening hole, the Welshman realized he had an extra club in his bag and was assessed a two-stroke penalty.

That might have made Duval's task a little tougher at the end.

Haunted by the costly mistake, Woosnam finished with a 71 and was four strokes back at 278 along with five others.

Three of them were major championship winners — Woosnam, two-time Masters champion Bernhard Langer and two-time U.S. Open champion Ernie Els.

Now, with this victory, Duval takes his place among them. The only player besides

Tiger Woods to be ranked No. 1 in the past three years, Duval expected to be there all along.

He carried some baggage to Royal Lytham — four chances at Augusta National, two at the U.S. Open and even last year at St. Andrews.

He flew home from that British Open with Woods and got a good look at the claret jug. On Sunday, he never really let it out of his grasp.

"It's kind of a big relief," he said. "It's so pressure-packed in major championships, and then you put it on a golf course like this, where any minor mistake is magnified and it makes the pressure even greater. You just can't let up, and I didn't let up

today." He becomes the sixth American in the past seven years to win golf's oldest championship.

Another major championship passed without Woods in serious contention at any time.

Like so many others, Woods could not make enough birdies on a firm, fast links course littered with pot bunkers. He took triple bogey on the par-3 12th and wound up nine strokes behind in a tie for 25th, his worst finish in a major in nearly four years.

"I'm not thrilled that I wasn't able to contend down the stretch, but I had my chances

See DUVAL on Page 6.

U.S. OWNED BRITISH OPEN		
2001	David Duval	United States
2000	Tiger Woods	United States
1999	Paul Lawrie	Scotland
1998	Mark O'Meara	United States
1997	Justin Leonard	United States
1996	Tom Lehman	United States
1995	John Daly	United States

RUBEN DELUNA/The Battalion

Sports in Brief

Armstrong grabs lead in Tour De France

LUZ-ARDIDEN, France (AP) — Lance Armstrong bolstered his chances for a third straight Tour de France title, holding the leader's yellow jersey after the race's final mountain stage.

Armstrong finished fourth in the 14th stage Sunday, crossing the line just behind main rival Jan Ullrich of

Germany. The Texan has been the overall leader for two straight days.

This was the last big opportunity for Armstrong's rivals to challenge for the yellow jersey because the remaining flat stages make it difficult for riders to take a sizable lead.

Roberto Laiseka of Spain delighted thousands of fans from his native Basque region by winning the leg from Tarbes to this ski station high in the Pyrenees. Wladimir Belli of Italy fin-

ished second.

1 dead, 11 injured at Lorain County Speedway

AMHERST, Ohio (AP) — Two cars jumped a guard rail and hit a section of bleachers at a track, killing a wheelchair-bound woman and injuring at least 11 spectators.

Authorities said Sunday that four people were taken by helicopter from Lorain County Speedway to Metro-

Health Medical Center in Cleveland.

Virginia Wyleth, 65, was pronounced dead early Sunday, a nursing supervisor said. Her hometown was not available, the county sheriff's department said.

The accident occurred about 11:30 p.m. Saturday.

Lorain County Sheriff's Capt. Jim Drozdowski said two drivers collided just before the accident.

"Two of the cars accelerated and

bumped and the drivers lost control, went over a guard rail, took out a fence and hit a set of stands," Drozdowski said.

The two drivers were treated at the scene.

Also at MetroHealth, Ivan Zirkle, 69, of Avon, was in good condition Sunday with a back injury, and 19-year-old Jacob Webster, whose hometown was not available, was in satisfactory condition with a leg injury.

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