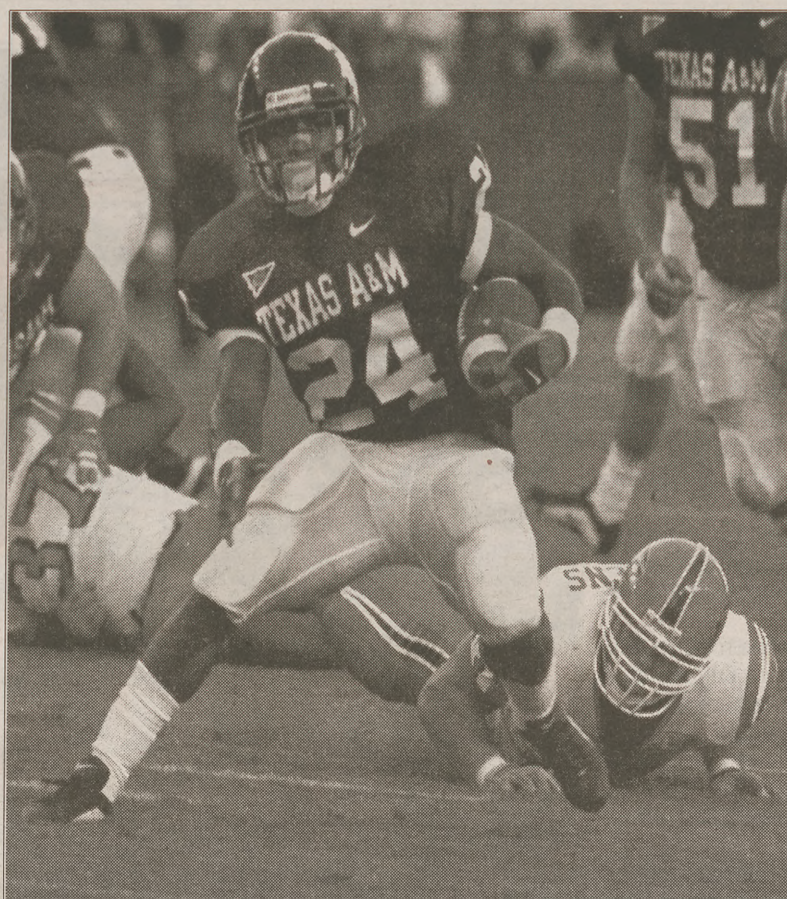


Brooks to head up A&M special teams

Scates, Brooks look to repeat 2000 seasons

By TRUE BROWN
THE BATTALION



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Sophomore running back **Richard Whitaker** will handle some of the return duties in 2001 after suffering a preseason knee injury.

Brooks, who also will start at free safety, blocked four punts last season, and all four were converted touchdowns. That earned him the Aggies' Special Teams MVP award.

"Jay is another in a long line of great special teams players we have had here," Slocum said.

The off season has not been kind to the Aggies in the place-

glas to try out. It looks as though Scates will handle the kicking chores as well as punts, which is something he has not done since high school.

"It is kind of like riding a bike," said Scates. "I know I won't fall off. I can go out there and kick field goals, but I'm not at my peak right now. It will take some time, but I will get back into it."

Back for another season as the deep snapper is junior Chance Pearce. In his career, Pearce has delivered 242 snaps and recorded only one error, something that is very comforting as a kicker.

On kickoffs, receivers Bethel Johnson and Dwain Goynes will handle return duties. When running back Richard Whitaker recovers from arthroscopic knee surgery, he probably will take Goynes' place. Last season, Whitaker averaged 21.7 yards per return.

In punt return formations, Johnson will be the mainstay. The Aggies averaged 11.7 yards on punt returns and 20.1 yards on kickoff returns last season, placing them fourth in the Big 12 in both categories.

"We put a lot of time into our special teams," Slocum said. "It is an area where we spend a lot of time practicing and fortunately it pays off."

kicker position. A&M lost the services of the most accurate kicker in school history with the graduation of Terence Kitchens.

Now the Aggies are scrambling to find a replacement for redshirt freshman Chris Sims, who was going to take over Kitchens' spot. Sims was forced to retire from football last week because of a recurring back injury, and he never saw action in an A&M jersey.

After hearing of Sims' decision, the Aggies invited transfer Matt Dou-

"He (Scates) will be a Lechler-type guy when he is finished here."

— R.C. Slocum
A&M football head coach

Questions arise about Ag defense

When examining Texas A&M's 2001 defensive squad, there are two major points to take focus on.



BRIAN RUFF

Aggie fans could argue that the A&M defense is heavily depleted at the linebacker spot with the loss of three playmakers who have all found homes on NFL squads this fall: Jason Glenn, Roylin Bradley and Cornelius Anthony. This is a huge hole in the heart of the defense, one which may be difficult to fill.

With the loss of Glenn, junior Brian Gamble will need to keep the defense alive this season. Gamble made 110 tackles last season, and with Rocky Bernard returning this season, we will need some help from Bernard as well as some of the other young linebackers looking to step into the other linebacker spots.

The Aggies also lost Michael Jameson, who led the entire secondary with 64 tackles and posted double-digit tackle games on nu-

merous occasions last season.

On the defensive front, the Aggies lost Ronald Flemons, who led the Aggie lineman in tackles last season.

Flemons tallied 38 tackles last season, and the Aggies' only hope is that senior Evan Perroni, along with the rest of the defensive front, can stay healthy.

The other argument takes a more positive look at the strengths of the defense.

The Wrecking Crew could be better than ever because of the return of almost the entire secondary and senior Rocky Bernard.

With 75 percent of the defensive backs returning this season, and with the air assaults of the Big 12 looking to be in full swing, an experienced secondary will help the Aggie defense. Add the experience and big play tendency of senior Jay Brooks, and the Aggie secondary appears as solid as ever.

Yes, this group of pass defenders may be young, but what better experience could a bunch of freshmen get than covering a national-championship-winning

See QUESTIONS on page 11

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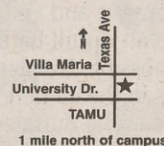
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