



the CENTER of attention

Senior Seth McKinney grabs the spotlight

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THE BATTALION

Senior center Seth McKinney has a chance to join an elite group of Texas A&M athletes in the A&M record books this fall.

At the beginning of the 1998 season, A&M linebacker Dat Nguyen stepped onto the field his senior season with 38 career starts.

Eleven wins and a Big 12 Championship later, Nguyen tied the team record for career starts with 51.

If the Aggies' prayers come true this season, McKinney will get his 51 starts and a shot at the Big 12 title to boot.

The 6-foot-3-inch, 300-pound center is a preseason All-American and a candidate for a number of national awards, including the Lombardi Award, which is given to the nation's top lineman.

Hopefully, history will repeat itself.

Nguyen won it after his senior season, and McKinney no doubt would welcome the Lombardi honors along with a Big 12 Championship trophy.

With the injury problems the Aggie offensive line has been plagued with in the past, McKinney has been the guy to count on in the last three years.

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— R.C. Slocum
A&M football head coach

“We all have to stay healthy,” McKinney said. “That is our goal to play the same five guys all season. The same five guys started in 1998, and they won the Big 12 Championship.”

With three of the five offensive linemen returning from last year's squad, the Aggies hope McKinney's consistency will spread to the other linemen for the length of the season.

McKinney received first-team All-Big 12 honors last season and was a third-team All-American. He finally will get his chance at claiming the title of the top center in the country because Nebraska's Dominic Raiola graduated after the 2000 season.

Raiola was selected in the second round of the NFL draft and was a first-team All-American for the Huskers last season in addition to being a finalist for numerous awards.

“Seth has been a very consistent leader for us and a very consistent person,” said A&M football head coach R.C. Slocum.

“He went through and got his degree

in three-and-a-half years, and that speaks a lot about what kind of person he is.”

At the end of this season, McKinney could have some bragging rights at the kitchen table if he lives up to his preseason expectations.

McKinney is the younger brother of former A&M offensive lineman Steve McKinney, who opened up holes for Aggie running backs from 1994 to 1997 and now starts on the offensive line for the Indianapolis Colts.

“There is no question that it was beneficial to Seth that he was around an older brother who went through the rigors of playing major college football,” Slocum said. “It is kind of like having a trial run of the things that go on during a college football career.”

McKinney also has no problem being the brain of the offensive line. The Austin Westlake graduate was named A&M's Scholar Athlete of the Year last spring as well as being named to the Verizon Academic All-Region team last year.

“If you had to hand pick a guy to put out there, that's the kind of guy you would want out there,” said junior quarterback Mark Farris. “He is an All-American, and he makes just as many calls at the line as I do.”

McKinney's consistency also extends into the weightroom, where in the spring, he set the A&M record for the power clean at 401 pounds, a lift that requires exceptional quickness and perfect form to succeed.

“I was real happy to do that,” McKinney said. “That has been one of the things that I have been try to work on and my main focus is to take it out on the field.”

If McKinney starts every game this season, he also will become only the fifth center in Division I history to start every game of his college career, joining 1997-2000 New Mexico State center Matt Hancock, who was a teammate of McKinney's at Westlake High School.

If the 2001 season goes the way Seth McKinney would like it to, Aggie fans will go home happy and McKinney will be recognized as one of the most decorated athletes in Aggie sports history.