

SPORTS

THE BATTALION

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Aggies set for Fran-tic practice

By Dallas Shipp
THE BATTALION

Texas A&M football coach Dennis Franchione takes another step toward his first season today when the Aggie football team begins fall practice.

One hundred and five players reported to camp Tuesday night and were ready for Wednesday's first practice, Franchione said.

"I think they're excited," Franchione said. "They've been anxious for a couple of weeks now, and you get to a point in the summer where the buildup is getting to you and you're ready to get out there and get started."

That excitement may fade a bit after a few hours in triple digit temperatures, not to mention the fast-paced, high-repetition workouts the new staff will require.

"Our camp will be demanding and tough," Franchione said. "We've got to develop some mental toughness into this football team. We're not gonna slow down a whole lot."

Franchione said the team caught a glimpse of his style of practice in spring workouts, but the fall would be a little different.

"They haven't gone through Fran's two-a-days," he said. "I think there are some days we don't need to be as tough as we are, but there is rhyme to our reason and we're trying to get them mentally and physically prepared for the mental toughness issues that develop in a football game."

That mental toughness is what the Aggies lacked last year late in ball games, including an 18-point fourth quarter lead that was blown at Kyle Field against Texas Tech in a 48-47 overtime loss.

Franchione said he hopes to make changes so that it doesn't happen again.

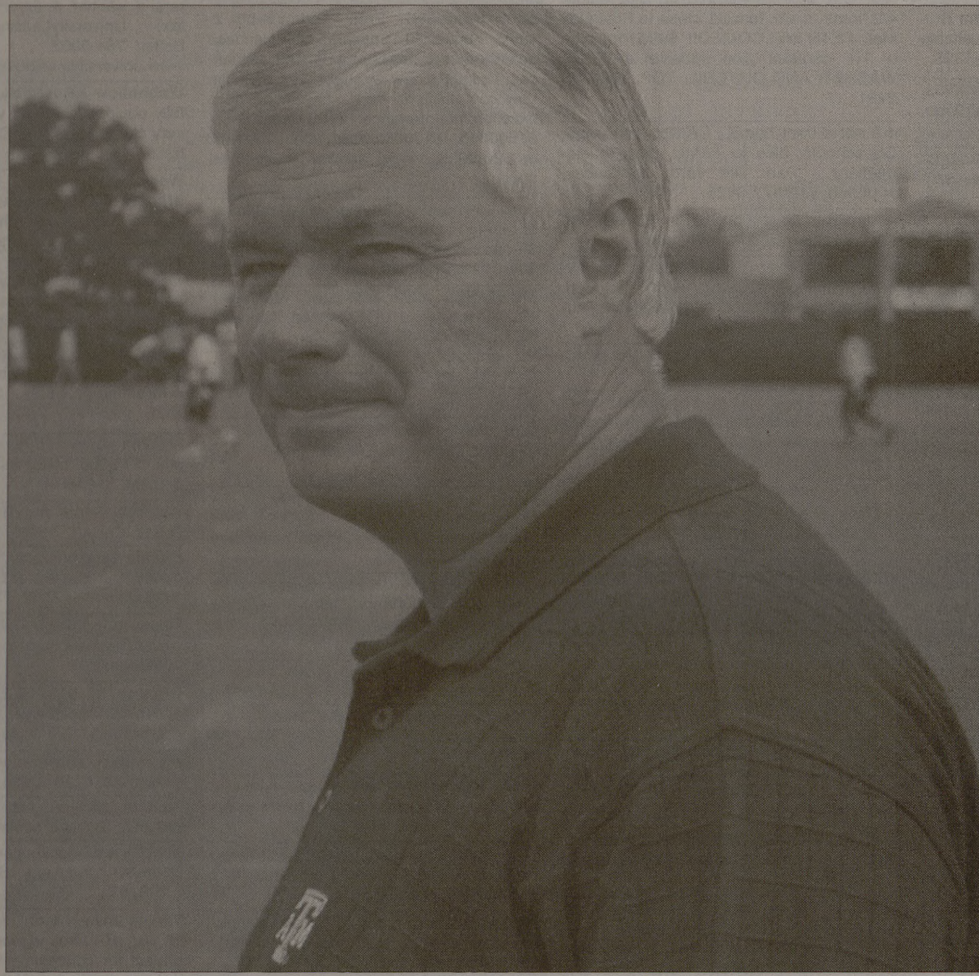
"We have to get developed in practice so we can finish the fourth quarter and finish the game," Franchione said.

Freshmen Joey Thomas and Tate Pittman did not report to practice due to injuries. Both players can report once school begins. Franchione said Thomas could report before school starts if a spot on the 105-man roster opens up.

Quarterback Competition Begins

The race for the starting quarterback position is one of a slew of positions that will be up for grabs beginning Wednesday. But Franchione is quick to point out that there is no controversy at quarterback for the Aggies.

"We have competition, not controversy," he



BRIAN RUFF • THE BATTALION

Texas A&M football coach Dennis Franchione begins his first fall camp at A&M today. Wednesday's practice is the first chance Franchione and his staff have had to evaluate the team in practice since April.

said.

Sophomore Reggie McNeal and junior Dustin Long both played last year and will both see playing time this year.

"Both men are going to play in the first game," Franchione said. "The guy that moves the chains will get the job."

Offensive coordinator and quarterback coach Les Koenning Jr. said both quarterbacks will compete in practice for the job.

"We chart every pass play, every run check, pass check, completion and incompletion when we go to practice and that's a lot that helps determine which of the kids we feel like will start,"

Koenning said. "You've got to base it on performance and the only way you do that is through practice."

Webb dismissed from team

Franchione announced at a press gathering Monday that junior linebacker Randall Webb was dismissed from the team due to a violation of team policy. Franchione had suspended the linebacker this spring indefinitely and made the move permanent earlier this week.

No details were given as to the specific team rules that were violated by Webb.

Byrne announces changes in athletics

By Jeff Allen
THE BATTALION

Preparations for the 2003 football season have been underway for several months, but with practices starting Tuesday and the first game in the Franchione Era of Aggie football later this month, the Athletics Department has been busy putting the finishing touches on the long off-season.

Athletics director Bill Byrne recently summed up those final details in an address to the public via the Internet recently, something he says on the will become a weekly ritual this season.

Byrne announced that the Aggies' first two games against Arkansas State and Utah will be televised but are only be available on pay-per-view basis. Both games will start at 7 p.m.

"The change (was) made to take advantage of a significant difference in temperature and heat index," Byrne said. "We believe (it) will reduce the frequency of heat-related medical situations for our fans and players."

In addition, fans can now purchase tickets online. The 12th Man Foundation, which took charge of all athletic ticket sales this summer, introduced a new system of 360 degree virtual tours of the seating areas at Kyle Field. The new system will allow potential ticket purchasers to get a panoramic view of their potential seat.

With the good news also came a few new complications for the department. Kyle Field was recently declared a high-rise building, causing the structure to fall short of certain fire and safety codes.

The building must meet Federal Disability Standards. The press box was cleared of any possible asbestos violations.

The renovations, which will cost the department an estimated \$8 million, and the hike in tuition, which Byrne estimates will require \$890,000 more per semester to cover athletic scholarships, are two reasons Byrne cited for raising football ticket prices this fall as well. On two smaller notes, the A&M football media guide has gone through a transformation this year. It is now a hard-covered "collectors item, coffee-table style book." The new name reflects the shift away from the media guide style of the past; it is now called the "Official Guide to Texas A&M 2003 Football."

Byrne also addressed the issue of the start time for the Aggies' showdown with Texas Tech this year in Lubbock. As it stands, the game will begin at 9 p.m. ABC or TBS could pick up the game for an earlier time, but that isn't likely with the other marquee matchups on the Big 12 schedule that day.

The late start time has made some A&M fans reconsider the trip to Lubbock after the melee that occurred in 2001 when Tech fans tore down the goal post and carried it into a section full of A&M fans following Tech's 12-0 win over A&M.

"I was going to go out there, but now I'm not sure," said senior finance major Lucas Kempke. "I've heard bad things happen there when the sun goes down...look what happened last time in broad daylight."

Police still looking for gun in Dennehy murder

FORT WORTH, Texas (AP) — Neither of two guns found during the investigation of the death of Baylor basketball player Patrick Dennehy is the weapon that killed him, the Fort Worth Star-Telegram reported Tuesday, citing an unnamed law enforcement source.

McLennan County Sheriff Larry Lynch declined any comment on the whereabouts of the gun that was used to shoot Dennehy, who was missing about six weeks before his decomposed body was found in a field July 25.

Lynch said: "We're not going to comment on anything in this case. We're not comfortable in doing that."

But a law enforcement official who asked not to be identified said forensic tests on a firearm found near Dennehy's body showed it was not the gun used in the slaying.

The 21-year-old player, a 6-10 center, was last reported seen on campus June 12, and his family reported him missing June 19. His body was found July 25 and his head was found July 27 near a rock quarry three miles southeast of Waco. He died from gunshot wounds to the head, according to a preliminary autopsy report.

A 9mm pistol, which was found July 17 under a rock on the grounds of an apartment complex near Baylor, was not connected to the case, the law enforcement source told the newspaper.

Police said the gun was loaded

except for one chamber. According to a search warrant affidavit, Carlton Dotson, who played basketball at Baylor last season, told a relative that he shot Dennehy with a 9mm gun. Dotson, who was arrested July 21 in his home state of Maryland, remains jailed without bond and is awaiting transfer to Texas.

The source also was quoted as saying investigators have cleared two acquaintances of Dennehy and Dotson who lived in the apartment complex where the 9mm gun was found.

Police also have talked to and cleared the person or people who helped Dotson get from Virginia Beach, Va., where Dennehy's Chevrolet Tahoe was found abandoned June 25, to Dotson's hometown of Hurlock, Md., the source said.

The Dallas Morning News reported that Dotson, in a jailhouse interview last week, suggested that he acted in self-defense during a confrontation.

"If someone points a gun at you and shoots and it doesn't go off, what would you do?" he said. The Waco Tribune-Herald, citing an unnamed source, reported last week that the gun found near Dennehy's body was his own .32-caliber revolver and that it had not been fired.

Authorities found a number of live rounds from a .32 that had been spilled from a .32-caliber ammunition box, and they also recovered nearby shell casings from a 9mm pistol, the Waco newspaper reported.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Smith apologizes to team for comments

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — Darren Woodson didn't have to hear the clarification from Emmitt Smith, but the Dallas Cowboys safety got a phone call from his former teammate with three Super Bowl championships.

Smith, now with the Cardinals after being released by the

Cowboys last spring, said last season was the worst in his career. The comments by the NFL's career rusher included his diamond-among-trash reference that he has since tried to clarify publicly.

"He called me up and we talked for a while. He didn't have to put the record straight," Woodson said Tuesday. "I just knew it wasn't a big deal."

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True Brown
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