

Signing Day 2004

Two-sport athlete picks Aggies

By Brad Bennett
THE BATTALION

JORDAN CHAMBLESS

96 MPH
FASTBALL

2,015
YDS PASSING

48
TOTAL TD

1,027
YDS RUSHING

Whether a baseball contract will pan out doesn't seem to be worrying Chambless. "This is the most relaxed I've seen him in several months," said Asa Chambless, Jordan's father. "He knows where he's going to school, and he's healthy. He is real thankful for that."

Calallen head football coach Phil Danaher said Chambless is a versatile player, throwing for 2,515 yards and 25 touchdowns while rushing for 1,027 yards and 23 touchdowns. Chambless also started at defensive back his freshman year, punted, returned punts and blocked downfield on option plays.

"(Chambless) is a complete football player," Danaher said. "He is one of the best athletes to come through Calallen."

Danaher said Calallen adjusted to a pro-set throwing offense to take advantage of Chambless' passing abilities.

"He has great downfield vision," Danaher said. "He can throw off the run when he scrambles."

Chambless was almost overlooked by A&M which, at the end of last semester had three quarterbacks - sophomore Reggie McNeal, junior Dustin Long and incoming freshman Stephen McGee, who enrolled at A&M in January after graduating from Burnet High School.

This all changed in January when Long left for Sam Houston State and McNeal underwent surgery that took him out of spring training.

"We felt that with our scholarship situation at the quarterback position we needed to recruit another one," Franchione said. "I think we really got a good one in Jordan Chambless."

Asa Chambless said he remembers hearing the news of Long's departure and that he hoped that meant his son had a renewed shot at going to A&M instead of Rice, where they were visiting when the news broke.

"(My wife and I) were sitting in a hotel room in Houston and we heard on the news that Long was transferring," Asa Chambless said. "And I said 'we'll see.'"

Asa Chambless said Aggie recruiter Melvin Smith was at Calallen to talk to them two days later.

"It was exciting to know he's wanted," Asa Chambless said.

Asa Chambless said they cancelled their three remaining visits to other schools after they visited A&M.

"When we visited the campus (Jordan) said, 'How could I not want to go here,'" Asa Chambless said.

Jordan Chambless said the campus visit convinced him he wanted to be an Aggie.

"I met a lot of great people (in College Station)," Chambless said. "It reminded me of (Calallen)."

Chambless said meeting Franchione sealed his commitment.

"(Franchione) is really down to earth," Chambless said. "He is committed to winning."

Chambless said he isn't worried about being redshirted or any possible quarterback battles between McGee, McNeal and him.

"I've been through the process before," Chambless said.

Chambless will move to A&M on July 4th and start classes second summer session.

Aggie fans will have to wait till the major league baseball draft in June to know for sure if Chambless will be wearing Aggie maroon or a professional ball cap.

The return of the Wrecking Crew

By Jon Gilbert
THE BATTALION

Rebuilding the famed Wrecking Crew defense will be no easy task. Yet, Texas A&M head football coach Dennis Franchione is off to a great start with the corps of solid linebackers bound for Aggieland.

The Aggies signed seven linebackers on Wednesday: Alton Boudreaux, Aaron Brown, Lee Foliaki, Kedrick Goins, Renuel Green, Terrence Smith and Mark Young.

"(The linebacker recruits) can come in and make an impact," Franchione said. "They play with speed and power and can come in and improve our defense."

During last year's 4-8 season, the defense was the weakest spot on the field, even though A&M prides itself on its strong Wrecking Crew defense.

Senior Jared Morris was lost for the season, and sophomores Archie McDaniel and Nhurada Manning were thrust into the rotation with little experience. With walk-on senior linebacker Scott Stickane filling out the position, the situation was tough.

Whenever you have a walk-on trying to tackle University of Texas quarterback Vincent Young, you're fighting an

uphill battle.

Four of the recruits are junior college transfers, each a top-30 junior college player. Brown, Foliaki and Smith are three of the most highly ranked junior college players in the nation; each has four-star status, according to recruiting Web site rivals.com. One thing all the recruits has in common is speed.

"After last season, we knew that a priority with this defense is speed," Franchione said.

Brown and Smith are linebackers with exceptional speed. Brown, 6 foot 3 inches and 245 pounds, is from Compton, Calif. and runs the 40-yard dash in 4.4 seconds. He is an all-around athlete who was offered a basketball scholarship to play at University of California Los Angeles coming out of high school.

Last season, he had 88 tackles and 19.5 sacks in seven games for Compton Community College. He has played primarily outside linebacker, but can also play inside. Smith, 6 foot 3 inches and 245 pounds, earned J.C. Gridwire All-American status as he collected 144 tackles.

"He has great speed," said Northwest Community College defensive coordinator Jeff Byrd, Smith's junior

college coach. "He makes plays all over the field. He can flat out fly."

Foliaki is fast, but his former coach said he was more known for his power and coordination.

"He's a seek-and-destroy type of linebacker," said Euleless Trinity head coach Steve Lineweaver, Foliaki's high school coach. "He has a nose for the football and he's real coordinated. He's capable of making the one-handed interception and actually works on plays like that."

Green is a player who was signed out of high school by Franchione to play at Alabama, where Franchione was head coach, but Green didn't not end up going to Alabama.

He had a stellar junior college career where he made the MAJCA All-State team. All of these transfers, more so than the high school players, will be able to give immediate help to a position where A&M struggled last year.

Franchione was positive about the recruiting class.

"This coaching staff has a history of successfully rebuilding programs," Franchione said. "Our coaches did a great job."

With the new linebackers, fans may see a return of the Wrecking Crew or even Linebacker U. status.

Fall Signees

- 4 290 (San)
- 0 175 (John Ehret)
- 3 230 (Lafayette)
- 3 245 (CA University / Compton CC)
- 1 185 (TX (Duncanville))
- 4 245 (Lufkin)
- 20 227 (TX (Calallen))
- 19 177 (TX (Dunbar))
- 11 180 (Waco)
- 2 185 (LaMarque)
- 5 304 (Tyler JC)
- 3 240 (Euleless Trinity / Butler County CC)
- 11 185 (West Orange-Stark)
- 10 168 (S)
- 5 235 (Spring Springs)
- 0 205 (Brazosport)
- 0 180 (Memorial)
- 3 221 (McAdory / East Mississippi JC)
- 4 210 (Burnet)
- 2 195 (DeWitt Clinton / San Francisco CC)
- 2 280 (Beebe)
- 4 245 (Pearland)
- 7 260 (Belville)
- 5 265 (S)
- 0 195 (S)
- 3 245 (Hightower / Northwest Mississippi JC)
- 0 212 (S, TX (The Woodlands))
- 3 218 (S, TX (Mount Pleasant))

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SOURCE: AGGIEATHLETICS.COM

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Aggies take on Longhorns in 15 match-up

Today is the last day for six Texas A&M players to do one thing they've never done in their careers - defeat the Longhorns. The Aggies' No. 13 A&M men's swimming and diving team will take on the Longhorns' largest obstacle of the season Friday at 3 p.m. They take on No. 2 (4-1) at the Texas natatorium. The Aggies (8-1) will need the fan support to try to upset their longtime rival and the team is hoping for a type of maroon out.

Basketball seeks win at Baylor

Texas A&M men's basketball team will seek its first Big 12 conference win against Baylor this Saturday at 5 p.m. at the Ferrell Center in Waco. The Aggies (7-11, 0-7 Big 12) are in the midst of a seven-game losing streak, and with the Bears (6-14, 1-6) rebuilding after a controversial off-season, this is a game that can get the Aggies back on track.

Blair tries to win second in a row in Norman

After earning its first conference win Wednesday night, A&M women's basketball head coach Gary Blair will take his troops on the road to Norman, Okla. to face No. 21 Oklahoma Saturday at 12 p.m. The Aggies (8-12, 1-8 Big 12) are hoping to start a winning streak against the Sooners (13-6, 3-5) who beat A&M 65-56 in overtime at Reed Arena in College Station on Jan 14. The game will be televised by Fox Sports Net at 12 p.m.

Fran watching



Fans watch A&M head football coach Dennis Franchione during his signing day press conference Wednesday afternoon on the jumbotron at Kyle Field from the south end zone bleachers. Art Wright • THE BATTALION

Aggies add two more from Tyler Lee

By Ryan Irby
THE BATTALION

After coming off a 4-8 disappointment, a horrifying 77-0 loss to University of Oklahoma and trials within the team unit, the Texas A&M football staff has responded with force.

A&M's 2004 recruiting class is hailed as one of the top 15 in the nation, as Franchione has wisely infused junior-college standouts from across the country with fresh high school talent. When the Aggies kick off Sept. 2 at Utah, a particular pair of Aggie recruits will recognize at least one familiar face: each other's.

Running back Keondra Smith and defensive back Quentin Gardner were teammates at Robert E. Lee High School in Tyler, Texas, which in the past has churned out Aggie standouts such as All-American punter Cody Scates, running back Derek Farmer (who recently transferred to Stephen F. Austin) and freshman All-American linebacker Justin Warren.

Lee's season ended last year in a triple-overtime semifinal defeat at the hands of The Woodlands High School. However, Smith and Gardner are two men looking to become champions on the next level.

"(Gardner) is probably the best cover guy to come

through since I have been here," Owens said. "He swallows them up. It's tough to do that man-to-man."

"(Smith) is a great receiver, real smart, tough, good runner ... and a big time player. He scores touchdowns."

From a defensive standpoint, Owens' news is more than desperately needed. Watching a season marred by the lack of defense and the defaming of the Wrecking Crew last year, Gardner carries high hopes to return prestige and glory to the once-feared A&M defense.

"Quentin is a guy who plays with great energy," said A&M cornerbacks coach Chris Thurmond. "He is a good tackler in the open field and he plays the ball down field."

Smith, on the other hand, will help fill the shoes of Lee alum and recently departed Derek Farmer. With the dangers of the A&M freshman All-American Courtney Lewis already looming in the backfield, the addition of a power runner like Smith should terrorize opposing defenses.

"Keondra is a very intelligent player and runs very smart," said A&M running backs coach Lee Fobbs. "He is similar to Barry Sanders in that he has great ability to change directions."

Gardner and Smith also bring intangible factors to the game.

"Quentin Gardner can be just about whatever he wants," Owens said. "Keondra Smith is definitely an impact player, a difference-maker. He can do so many things. Anytime you are inside the 5-yard line, he's the guy you hand the ball to."

Gardner and Smith never shared the spotlight at the same time as one plays defense and the other offense. However, that fact has not stopped them from bringing a unifying spirit to the Lee Red Raiders, and hopefully to the Aggies' locker room.

"They never see each other in practice," Owens said.

"But I know they are friends."

Coaches know expectations can be a dangerous thing. However, Franchione's efforts this recruiting season have made it safe to at least hope the Aggies are on the road to recovery. At least one football coach believes that the Smith-Gardner duo will play a key role in the Aggies' future.

"They should be elite players before its all said and done," Owen said.

Most high school athletes spend at least four years together bonding as a team, sharing experiences and growing together before the elite are catapulted to the next level. For Smith and Gardner, it looks as though four years simply wasn't enough.

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