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Good ol' boys

Junction Boys return to Kyle Field 50 years later

By Jordan Meserole
THE BATTALION

For a few moments before half-time Saturday at Kyle Field, football wasn't important, at least for the men. When the 65,000 fans in the stands roared at a great defensive play by the Aggies on the field, the men didn't even seem to take notice — they had more important matters at hand.

After a good number of handshakes and hugs, the men took their places on the sidelines. They were comfortable and confident, and not a look of fear was any shown. As the famed Junction Boys stepped onto Kyle Field together once again, they did so in unison as men, as friends and most importantly, as teammates.

"It was quite exhilarating and quite moving," said Bill Schroeder about being on Kyle Field again. "Of course the stands were a little smaller back then, but there's still a great sense of being when you're out there."

The men on the field Saturday were members of the famed Junction Boys, celebrating their 50th anniversary of the first practices in Junction, Texas. The team was recently made popular by a book by Jim Dent and a made-for-television movie by ESPN. The story of the team is focused around legendary coach Paul "Bear" Bryant who arrived in College Station in 1954. He took his squad of 115 players to Junction to prepare for the season and, after a grueling 10 days, came back with only 35. Those 35 who remained on the team became known as the Junction Boys for their physical toughness to endure the 100-degree, nearly daylong practices on less than favorable playing surfaces.

"One of the greatest things I learned in Junction was perseverance," said Lawrence Winkler, who was a lineman in his Aggie playing days. "Coach Bryant showed us that

sometimes suffering can give you strength and hope. We all learned a lot under him."

As the crowd cheered on its feet for the men, smiles flashed across their faces, and energy seemed to pulse through their bodies. They were back home in the house they helped build and make so famous.

Don Watson, a former running back for the team, said the stadium and the game had changed a lot since their playing days but noted that one thing would never be absent from Kyle Field.

"Games these days have a little more dog-and-pony feel to them. Too much time is wasted — let's just line up and play," Watson said. "But A&M will always have great crowds, and the Spirit will always be there. That will never change."

The 2002 television movie was received by audiences and critics with mixed feelings, earning above average reviews from most. The true Junction Boys weren't as impressed as many others were with the

movie, however.

"There were some things that weren't historically accurate," Schroeder said. "But I do understand that when you're trying to condense an experience like Junction into a short time, you can't do an extensive job and have to juice some things up for the public."

Watson echoed Schroeder's feelings in a stronger response.

"They blew some things way out of proportion that made some people, especially Coach Bryant, look bad," Watson said. "That movie was sensational, all for the public."

As the men walked off the field in unison and headed back toward the exit, the crowd gave them a last cheer. And as they disappeared into the tunnel, their moment on Kyle Field was officially over, along with their reunion. But their story isn't over and never will be. It will be one that lives on in the echoes of Kyle Field, in the hearts of Aggie faithfuls and in the whispers of the winds in Junction, Texas.



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Twenty-seven members of the Junction Boys team from 1954 celebrated their 50th reunion Saturday. The former Aggie football players were honored on Kyle Field at halftime.

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