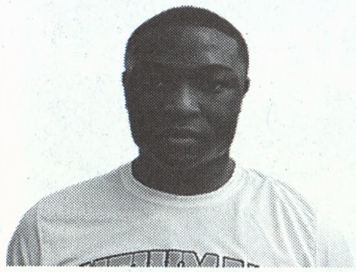


New class. New Kyle Field. New world of Aggie football.

Twenty-five players fired up fax machines and sent in letters of intent Wednesday to play football at Texas A&M. Kevin Sumlin spanned the country, bringing in players from Arizona, Louisiana, Mississippi, Florida and Texas that will take the field under the lights of the fully renovated Kyle Field. Among their ranks could be future leaders of Texas Aggie football.



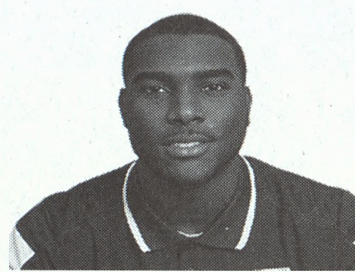
KENDALL BUSSEY
RB | NEW ORLEANS, LA



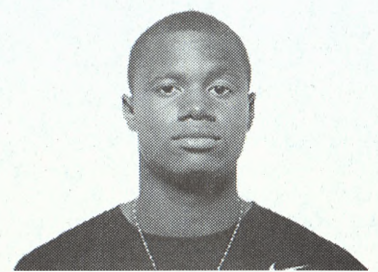
DESHAUN CAPERS-SMITH
DB | NEW ORLEANS, LA



JAY BRADFORD
RB | SPLENDORA, TX



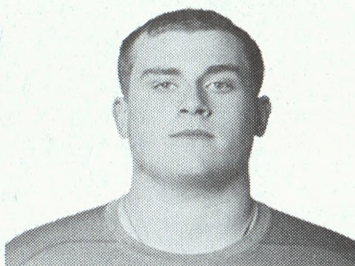
JORDAN DAVIS
TE | TEXAS CITY, TX



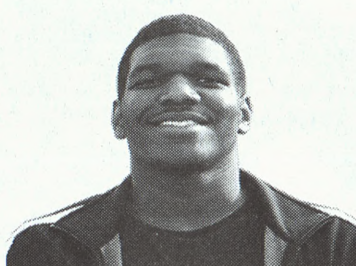
JUSTIN DUNNING
DB | WHITEHOUSE, TX



RONNEY ELAM
DB | NEWTON, TX



TREVOR ELBERT
OL | ROCKWALL, TX



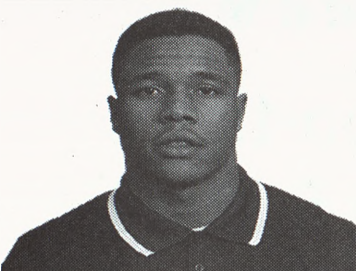
LANDIS DURHAM
LB | PLANO, TX



CLAUDE GEORGE
LB | LAFAYETTE, LA



CONNOR LANFEAR
OL | BUDA, TX



JUSTIN EVANS
DB | WIGGINS, MS



RILEY GARNER
LB | COLLEGE STATION, TX



KINGSLEY KEKE
DL | RICHMOND, TX



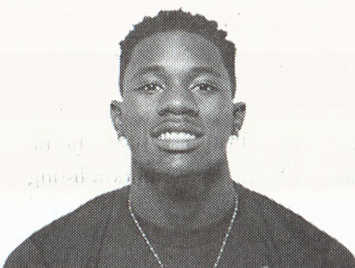
DANIEL LACAMERA
PK/P | TARPON SPRINGS, FL



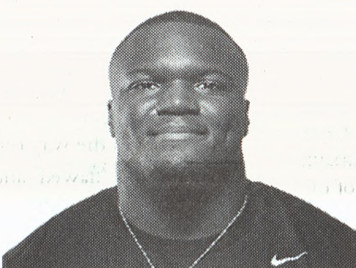
DWAINE THOMAS
LB | BOUTTE, LA



JAMES LOCKHART
DL | ENNIS, TX



KEMAH SIVERAND
WR | CYPRESS, TX



DAYLON MACK
DL | GLADEWATER, TX



ERIK MCCOY
OL | LUFKIN, TX



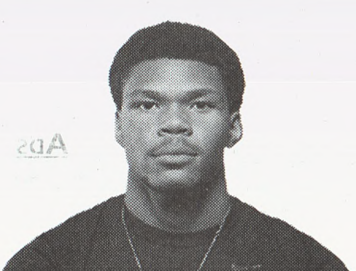
KEATON SUTHERLAND
OL | FLOWER MOUND, TX



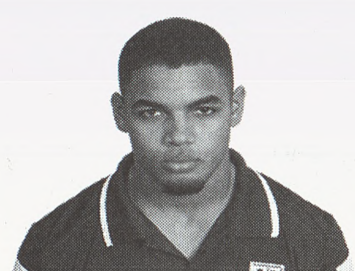
RICHARD MOORE
LB | CEDAR HILL, TX



KYLER MURRAY
QB | ALLEN, TX



LARRY PRYOR
DB | SULPHUR SPRINGS, TX



DAMIEN RATLEY
WR | YOAKUM, TX



CHRISTIAN KIRK
WR | SCOTTSDALE, AZ

OPINION

Signing day probably doesn't matter all that much

Better players,
better team.
But it takes
more than
stars and
rankings.



Mark Doré
@Mark_Dore

► We got Daylon Mack. Kyler Murray, too — the Texas high school football GOAT.

I was up early like the rest of you recruiting nuts, watching oversized high schoolers pull on hats to choose schools and wondering which brand of fax machine Sumlin prefers.

We hover over the recruiting world because we want the best for the football team in which we've invested. Buying tickets is an investment. Watching the team win and lose is an investment. So, too, is attending a school that champions that team and its culture. But what if it doesn't matter all that much?

It's okay to want the Aggies to win. And, by all accounts, despite what we want to believe about underdog stories, the team with the best players wins most of the time. Recruiting rankings probably aren't so indicative a measure of how players will pan out as we think, though. No former five-stars played in the Super Bowl, and the Seahawks and Patriots roster averaged 2.4 stars coming out of high school. But, doubtless, there is a correlation. A four-star player is, on average, more likely to succeed than a two-star. And so on.

So it's okay to care. I do. I want the Aggies to win just as I want the Longhorns to lose. That means I want guys like Mack to come to A&M, even though his recruitment was a soap opera. But I used to care a lot more.

In 2013 I was sports editor for *The Battalion*. I remember one weekend as the peak of my involvement in following recruiting news. I was studying for finals in Evans Library one evening. At one point I

put all my books aside so I could stream the recruiting announcement of Justin Manning. I caused a scene when he picked A&M. I threw a packet of study guides above my head and whooped. (Forgetting, of course, that the packet wasn't stapled. It took 15 minutes to get it back in order. People stared.)

That Saturday Johnny won his Heisman. A day later Ricky Seals-Jones committed. I later wrote in the signing day edition of *The Battalion* that the weekend marked a turning point for A&M. The biggest headline of that edition read, "The future has arrived." You would have thought we won the SEC. Looking back, I probably thought we did. I thought that group would turn the program upside down.

It didn't. Not yet. Manning redshirted and had three tackles in 2014 (though I imagine his day is yet to come). Seals-Jones lost a year to injury and played well last season, with 465 yards and four touchdowns. The rest is a mixed bag. Darian Claiborne and Isaiah Golden looked like stars before being dismissed from the team. Kam Miles was dismissed, too.

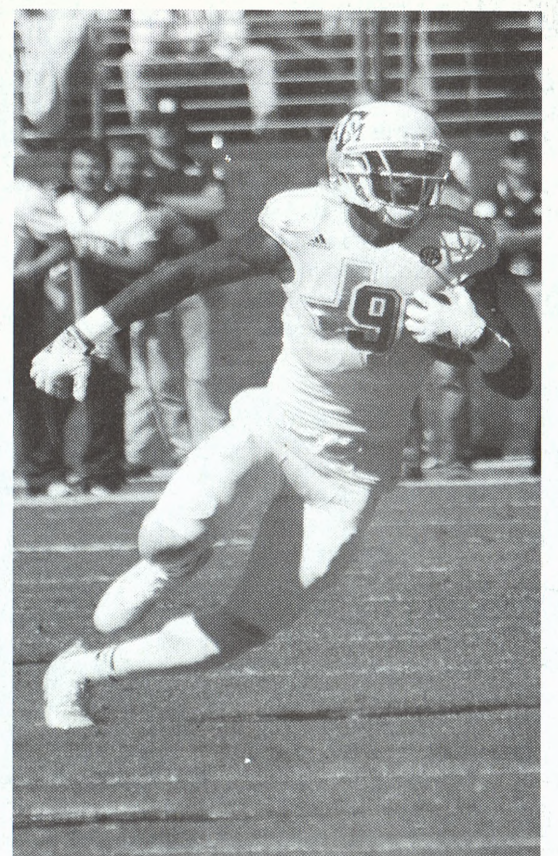
The wideout haul was supposed to be a strength. But other than Seals-Jones, the rest of that group combined for 13 receptions in 2014. Two have transferred.

Still, the comparison falls short. Manning is no Mack or Myles Garrett, as talent goes. I fully expect Mack to be a star. (I heard someone describe him as "a real toilet-clogger;" I'm not sure what that means.)

But maybe he won't pan out. Maybe you shouldn't call in sick for signing day. Maybe combing for recruiting clues in the color tie an 18-year-old wears is a weird way to spend your time.

Or maybe I'm crazy. Who's ready for next year?

Mark Doré is an English senior and editor-in-chief of *The Battalion*.



FILE

Ricky Seals-Jones, the star of the 2013 class, scored four touchdowns in 2014. The rest of the class has yet to make much of a mark.