

# Sports



Texas A&M running back Anthony Toney (with ball) takes one of his 20 carries around guard Trace McGuire (#61) against Alabama Saturday. Crimson Tide All-America linebacker Cornelius Bennett (#97) closes in on Toney, who gained 58 yards rushing on the night.

Photo by JOHN MAKELY

## Fans help 'Bama roll over A&M Tide's 'Twelfth Man' causes problems for Ags

By CHAREAN WILLIAMS  
Assistant Sports Editor

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. — At 11:15 p.m. Saturday, the lights at Legion Field were turned off. Except for a cool breeze, the stadium stood empty and quiet.

This was quite a contrast to just a few hours earlier when Alabama took the field to play Texas A&M.

From 6:50 to 9:43, Legion Field was a wave of crimson. There were crimson pompons, crimson T-shirts, crimson signs, crimson hats and crimson whatever else you could think of.

Of the 74,697 who made it to the game, it was quite obvious who the majority were rooting for. That was the difference in the game.

The final score was Alabama 23, A&M 10. But, you can credit part of the victory to "Alabama's Twelfth Man," as a Birmingham newspaper referred to them.

The Bama fans were so vocal, they dictated what A&M did on the field.

The Aggies were penalized 10 times, losing them 63 yards. Numerous times inside the 'Bama 30-yard line, A&M was set back with illegal procedure and delay of game penalties, costing them dearly on the scoreboard.

"We couldn't hear with the crowd noise so loud," said A&M quarterback Kevin Murray. "It seemed the officials wouldn't oblige us by helping us quiet them down. We tried several

times, but he forced us to go ahead with the play. Those people were so loud down in that end zone, we just couldn't hear. As a result, we ended up going backward instead of forward inside of the 25-yard line."

Under the direction of quarterbacks Murray and Craig Stump, the Aggies moved the ball up and down the field in their first game of the season.

In fact, A&M had 298 yards of offense, compared with 'Bama's 272. But, the Aggies' yardage just wasn't converted to points when it counted.

"On the goaline it was hard to hear what was going on," said A&M offensive tackle Doug Williams. "But, that's not an excuse. I don't know what the problem was. We just worked too damn hard to let this game go like this. We beat them in the stats. The only way we didn't beat them was on the scoreboard. But, that's all that counts."

A&M fullback Anthony Toney and tailback Roger Vick dispelled rumors that the Aggies lacked outside speed as they combined for 94 yards. Flanker Jeff Nelson, who had five catches for 75 yards, and wide receiver Shea Walker, who had three catches for 59 yards, proved they aren't the weak link of the team.

Which all added up to optimism for next week, but not enough for this particular week.

"We should have won," Toney said. "We thought we were better than Alabama. The penalties just

hurt us. (The penalties) backed us up where we had first and 15 and first and 20. That forced us to change the plan we had designed."

Besides the crowd, the Aggies were also beaten by a pretty good kicker, Van Tiffin, a pretty good quarterback, Mike Shula, and a pretty good team with fans who scream "Roll, Roll, Roll Tide" at the top of their lungs.

Before the opening kickoff, Alabama Coach Ray Perkins walked up to Tiffin in the locker room and told him, "I feel a record coming on."

At least that's what Tiffin remembers of the conversation.

"I don't remember the exact words he told me," Tiffin said. "But, that's pretty much what he (Perkins) said. I remember it because, well, it turned out to be true."

Tiffin did indeed break the Crimson Tide's record for the longest field goal, when he booted a 57-yarder with 21 seconds left before halftime to up 'Bama's lead to 10-3.

"I felt comfortable," Tiffin said. "Everything was perfect — the snap, the hold, the blocking — everything."

Tiffin also connected on field goals of 40 and 51 yards in the second half — both into an 18 mph wind.

As for the 'Bama quarterback, Shula just did what he was supposed to do — and more.

Shula, who completed seven of 12 passes for 86 yards, had per-

haps the biggest play of the game. Alabama was guarding a slim 16-10 lead, with 1:48 left in the game, and faced a crucial third-and-three from the A&M 44 yard line.

If the Aggies held, it would be time for a comeback try.

Shula faked a pitch right and rolled left on a bootleg that gave the Tide a first down and killed any hopes A&M had of winning.

Two plays later, 'Bama running back Craig Turner was off on a 32-yard touchdown run, leaving the Aggies 1:07 on the clock and 13 points down.

"I've got belief in these guys," Perkins said. "They're gonna find a way to win. The offense did a good job in the fourth quarter when they needed to. We broke a trap with Turner when they had a blitz on and we put it away."

Perkins, who has seen his share of alumni pressure after last season's 5-6 showing, saw his No. 20 ranked Tide do just what they had to do to improve to 2-0 on the season.

"We got beat by a fine football team tonight in Alabama," said A&M Coach Jackie Sherrill, who played at Alabama with Perkins in 1964-65. "They are a good, strong team, especially on defense. But, they showed some things on offense, too, especially there at the end."

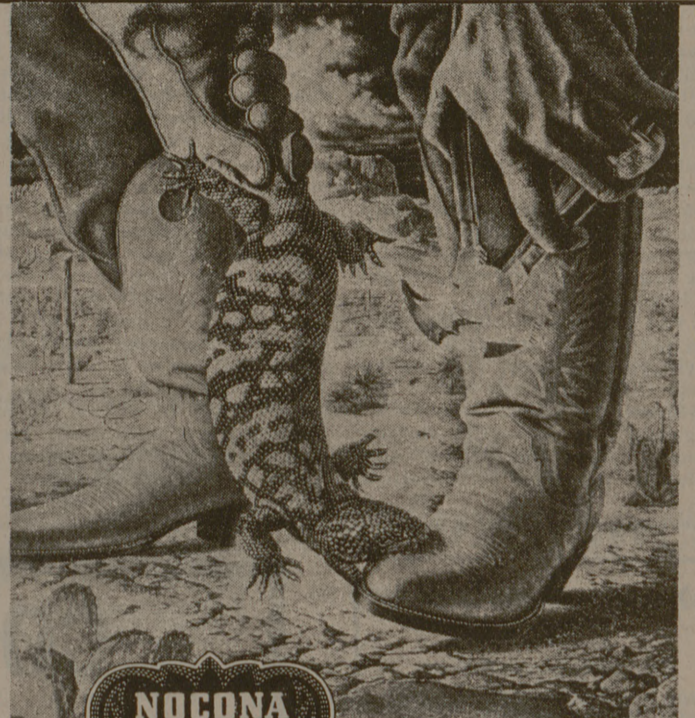
The crowd, for the most part, enjoyed the ending just as much or more than the beginning. They left yelling "Roll Tide" just as they had entered.

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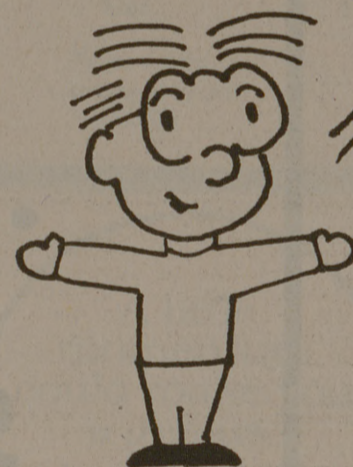
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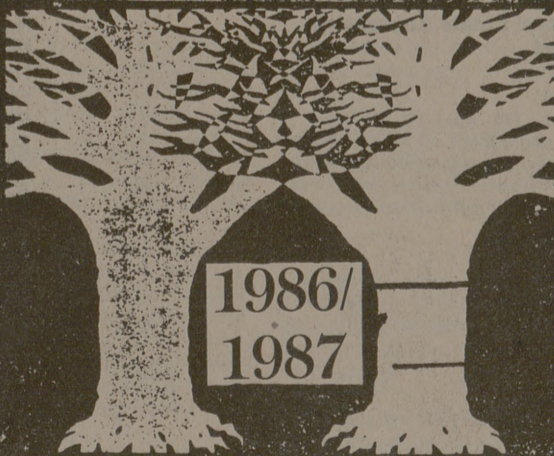
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