

Sports

UT wards off A&M in Austin Aggie volleyball team falls to third place in SWC

By CHAREAN WILLIAMS
Assistant Sports Editor

AUSTIN — The fans showed up here at Gregory Gymnasium Wednesday night in costume. The Texas volleyball team showed up with its guns cocked and loaded.

And Texas A&M? The Aggies were there, too — sometimes. The No. 13 Longhorns mauled the No. 17 Aggies, 15-7, 15-9, 15-13, to hold on to first place in the Southwest Conference standings.

The Aggies didn't do a whole lot wrong. The 'Horns just did everything right.

"We played good defense," A&M Coach Terry Condon said. "Sherri (Brinkman) played well. The setters did a good job. Their selection of sets was very good."

A&M started off every game of the match like the house was on fire.

The Aggies built a 4-0 lead in the first game, a 5-1 lead in the second and had an 8-1 and 10-4 lead in the third game.

"They (the 5-0 Longhorns) have it, unless five of their starters get hurt. Nobody will beat them now."

— Texas A&M Head Coach Terry Condon on the Aggies' loss to No. 13 Texas Wednesday night in Austin

But the 'Horns squelched the Ags fire with strings of unanswered points. UT got eight straight points in the first game, six straight in the second game and eight straight in the third game, to break A&M's back.

"It's just what I thought," Condon said. "We were just too weak in two rotations."

Due to a knee injury to starting middle blocker Stacey Smith, A&M's Margaret Spence, who earned sec-

ond team All-SWC honors as an outside hitter last year, played only her third match as a middle blocker against UT.

And Aggie outside hitter Michelle Whitwell, playing in Spence's vacated position, started only the third match of her entire career at A&M.

"Michelle and Margaret didn't play bad," Condon said. "We just lost a lot of points there. Margaret is new to that position and she's having her problems — same thing with Michelle. We made a lot of mistakes there."

"We started serving for points and, as soon as Sherri (Brinkman) went back (away from the net), we had trouble putting the ball away. It's just really disheartening because Stacey was playing so well in the middle, and Margaret was so strong on the outside."

And that's where UT won the match — on its outside game.

'Horn outside hitters Laura Neugebauer and Diane Watson con-



A&M Coach Terry Condon

stantly put the ball on the floor for points.

In fact, with her .632 hitting percentage and 14 kills Watson almost singlehandedly beat the Aggies.

"They're real good," A&M setter Chris Zogata said. "They hit the ball hard. They hit it down and it makes a lot of noise when it hits the floor. They just have some real good hitters."

Texas, now 14-5 overall and 5-0 in the SWC, has a one game lead over Texas Tech and a two game lead over A&M, which fell to 18-5 and 4-2 in SWC play.

With five SWC matches to go, it appears the 'Horns have all but wrapped up their fourth straight title.

"They (the Longhorns) have it," Condon said, "unless five of their starters get hurt. Nobody will beat them now."

But an NCAA tournament bid is not out of the question for the Aggies.

"In order to have a chance at the conference (title) and at an NCAA bid, we can't afford to lose another one," A&M setter Lesha Beakley said. "We just have to keep our heads up."

Saturday, the Aggies fly to Athens, Ga. to take on the highly-regarded Georgia Bulldogs (28-3). Immediately after that match, A&M flies to Knoxville, Tenn. for the Tennessee Invitational.

Ags' defense looks to 'lock up' Mustangs

By PETE HERNDON
Sports Writer

Texas A&M linebacker Walter Lee "Todd" Howard has come a long way since the days when he was locked in the equipment room during halftime at Aggie home games.

No, Howard wasn't locked in the equipment room because he had any problems with the coaches or players. As a matter of fact, he used to get "locked up" in Kyle Field before he was ever given a chance to play football for the Aggies.

You see, Howard's grandfather used to be a maintenance man at Kyle Field, putting the flags up at the stadium in the mornings, and he would take his grandson to see the Aggies play.

"He used to lock us in the equipment room at halftime to keep us from getting lost," Howard said. "It wasn't any big deal. We had fun in there."

But now, it's the 6-foot-2, 228-pound Howard, and his A&M teammates, who have opposing ball carriers wishing they could lock themselves in the equipment room.

Howard is the Aggies' third-leading tackler, with 66, behind linebackers Larry Kelm, with 91, and Johnny Holland, with 85.

Although things look good for him now, Howard, an All-District and All-State player at Bryan High School, didn't expect instant success when he decided not to stray too far from home and play for A&M.

"My goal was to come in my freshman year and just get a chance to play, then start my sophomore year — which I did," Howard said.

Howard may not be the only Aggie defender who's been locked in the equipment room before. Several times over the last two seasons A&M football followers have wondered where the Aggie defense had gone.

But, like Howard, the defense seems to have "grown up" on Kyle Field.

"Ears that were once wet are now dry," Howard said, referring to the experience that the Aggies' defense has gained in two years. "Everybody's watching the ball and we're getting after it. Everybody has to take care of their own job. One of our goals is that we want to be one of the best defenses in the nation."

Although A&M's defense hasn't made the national standings yet, they're third in the Southwest Conference in total defense, behind Arkansas and Baylor, giving up an average of 304 yards a game.

The Aggie defense hasn't played an offense like No. 20 SMU, though.

The Mustangs rank second in the SWC, behind the Aggies, in total offense. With the Ponies bringing in people like tailback Reggie Dupard, a Heisman Trophy candidate, and quarterback Don King, Defensive back Alex Morris knows it will be A&M's toughest test so far this season.

"I don't think that we will be in awe of SMU's offense, but we must have a tremendous amount of respect for them," Morris said. "They certainly have one of the best offen-

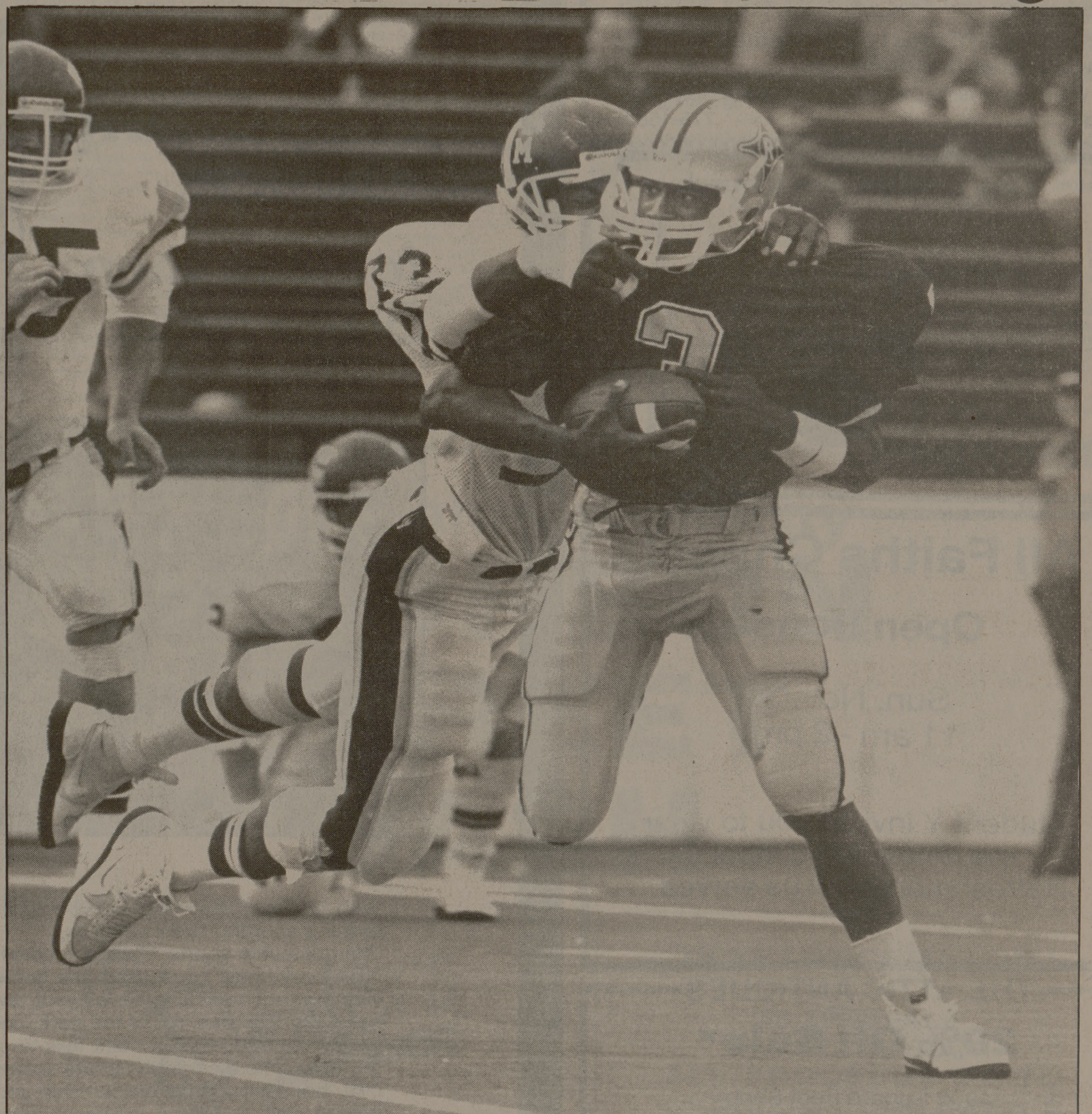


Photo by JOHN MAKELY

A&M linebacker Todd Howard (above sacking Rice quarterback Quantis Roper) — "Everybody's watching the ball and we're getting

after it. Everybody has to take care of their own job. One of our goals is that we want to be one of the best defenses in the nation."

sive teams in the country. When we line up, it will be a contest at Kyle Field."

Morris realizes that A&M has a tendency to give up "the big play." The Aggies have not scored first in any of their five wins this season.

"I don't know what to say about

that," he said. "You can prepare and prepare, but the big play is going to come sometimes. It just happens and we go from there. We try not to dwell on the big plays (other teams) make, but (rather), our reactions to them."

Watson Brown's Rice Owls gave

the Aggies trouble, offensively, and made some "big plays." However, SMU also has something the Owls haven't found yet — defense.

A&M tight end Rod Bernstine, one of Howard's teammates at Bryan, has seen the SMU defense

from a different angle. "It's going to be a good exciting game," said Bernstine. "I played SMU as a freshman at halfback. That was when they had (All-Americans) Russell Carter and Mike Carter. They have always had good talent defensively and they still do."

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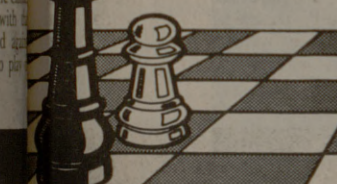
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