



Photo by JOHN MAKELY

Crowning the 'King'

SMU quarterback Don King (8) tightens his hold on the football as A&M defensive end Jay Muller

(82) and noseguard Sammy O'Brien (90) converge on their target during Saturday's game.

Aggies on road to Cotton Bowl?

The Texas A&M football team's bus pulled up to the intersection Saturday, hesitated for a moment, then the driver flipped on his blinker and turned the Aggie bus onto "College Bowl Avenue."

Eric Franklin's 48-yard field goal with 1:48 left in Saturday's game against Southern Methodist University may have pushed the Aggies around that corner.

It also may be responsible for keeping every chiropractor in the Brazos Valley busy for the next few weeks.

The football cleared the crossbar at the south end of the field by what seemed to be no more than half an inch and caused severe back problems for anyone wearing maroon in the stands.

When the fans who sat on the west side of the stadium left the game, they were walking with a hard lean to the right. The students, who stood on the other side of Kyle Field, weren't in any better shape. They walked down the ramp leaning hard to the left.

But Aggie fans can recover while watching their team get ready for postseason football.

A&M's 19-17 come-from-behind victory over the SMU Mustangs virtually assured the Aggies of a bid to play football over the Christmas holidays. The Aggies are now 6-2 overall and 4-1 in the Southwest Conference with an outside chance at going to the Cotton Bowl.

Even if the Ags don't make it to Dallas for a New Year's Day game, they will most likely get a bid to one of the bowl games that have representatives conspicuously occupying the press box at Kyle Field.

The list of people wearing loud blazers with bowl emblems to be seen in the press box during the remaining home games will most likely include representatives of the Holiday, Sun, Bluebonnet, and Liberty bowls.

That sounds fine and good, but of course, the bowl game A&M fans want is the Cotton Bowl.

PETE HERNDON Sports Viewpoint

How do the Aggies' chances of going to the Cotton Bowl compare with the other teams in the SWC that still have a road open to Dallas?

Baylor, Arkansas, Texas and Texas A&M are still in the running. And if you rated the teams' chances of making it on a scale of one to four, with one being the highest, A&M would carry No. 4.

This isn't because A&M is the weakest of the four teams; the inconsistent Texas Longhorns hold that honor.

It is because the Bears, Razorbacks, or Longhorns can go to Dallas if they win the rest of their games. The Aggies, however, have to win the rest of their games and depend on other teams to win before they can claim the SWC crown.

For the Aggies to go, Arkansas would have to beat Baylor next week and then Texas would have to beat Baylor the Saturday before Thanksgiving. If Rice upsets the Bears, then the Aggies wouldn't have to depend on Texas and Arkansas.

The advantage that A&M does have is that both of its remaining big games, against Arkansas and Texas, are at home. Baylor gets Arkansas at home, but has to play Texas in Austin, where the Longhorns are unbeaten this season.

Arkansas and Texas each play Baylor the week before the Aggies face the Hogs and Longhorns. Arkansas and Texas, then, have a greater incentive to beat Baylor because they're still in the SWC race before they play A&M.

There is still a chance the Aggies could be in "Big D" in 1986 — certainly more of a chance than there usually is at this point in the season.

TOURNAMENT

Aggie spikers post impressive victory against Tennessee

By CHAREAN WILLIAMS Assistant Sports Editor

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. — For the second time in four days the Texas A&M volleyball team played UT.

Wednesday night the Aggies lost an important Southwest Conference match to the University of Texas. But Saturday afternoon, the Ags defeated UT — that's the University of Tennessee.

Against the Volunteers, the Aggies played their best match since an upset win over Purdue on Oct. 12.

A&M looked impressive in its 15-6, 15-6, 15-5 victory. As a team, the Ags hit .378 and held the Volunteers to .116.

"I think we're finally starting to jell," A&M Coach Terry Condon said. "I don't know if they were bet-

ter prepared or if they were handling things better when they got down. But when they really want to play, they play."

It seems that when outside hitter Stacey Gildner goes, so go the Ags. Gildner led A&M in hitting percentage at .533 and had 10 kills.

"We flowed well together," Gildner said. "We're trying to figure out why we play so well in some matches and so poorly in others. I guess it's just different with different teams."

Middle blocker Sherri Brinkman had 12 kills for a .423 percentage with seven blocks.

"This one felt really good," Brinkman said. "We were due for a big win."

Margaret Spence, who just started playing in the middle seven matches

ago, continues to improve. The junior hit .364 with five kills.

"Sherry played well," Condon said. "She's blocking really well in the middle. Stacey played well, and so did Maragaret. Laura (Hoppe) came in and dug some balls for us. The setting was also a lot better."

And freshman outside hitter Cheri Steensma, starting for only the second time this season, hit .500 and had seven kills.

"I know it's not going to be a solid starting position for me," Steensma said. "I know I'll have to work hard for it, but it felt good to start. Michelle (Whitwell) and I give each other a lot of support. We want whoever is out on the floor to do good."

However, good isn't a good word to describe Friday night's match against LSU.

After an easy win in the first game, the Ags fumbled and stumbled their way through the next three games to lose 15-4, 4-15, 9-15, 9-15.

"The first game we looked unstoppable," Spence said. "It seemed like we couldn't do anything wrong. Then we quit talking, communicating, setting, hitting — we stopped doing everything."

Spence had another good night in the middle, hitting .411 with nine kills. And Brinkman hit .309 with 14 kills.

But besides that, the Aggies did little else right.

"The LSU match was a big disappointment," Condon said. "Hopefully that won't hurt us much (for a NCAA bid)."

In a Saturday morning match,

A&M had a few problems with Pittsburgh but won anyway 18-16, 12-15, 15-4, 15-5.

Brinkman covered the entire floor, at times all by herself or so it seemed. With the match she had, the All-American could have almost crushed Pitt by herself. Brinkman had 19 kills, a .405 hitting percentage, 8 digs and 12 blocks.

But the Mt. Prospect, Ill. native wasn't totally pleased.

"Once we lose, we get in a losing state of mind," Brinkman said. "We need to take it for what we are. We're good, we've just all got to believe it. It takes six players, not just four or five."

The Aggies (21-6) have got to believe it Wednesday night when they host Texas Tech in a crucial SWC match.

Southwest Conference race still close

Associated Press

Texas A&M, Arkansas and Texas stayed alive while the Southwest Conference-leading Baylor Bears hibernated for a week.

A&M upset SMU 19-17, Arkansas rolled over Rice 30-15 and Texas dropped Texas Tech 34-21. All three winners have just one SWC loss and are still very much alive in the league race.

The Aggies had to come from behind twice to beat SMU, snapping a five-game losing streak against the

Mustangs. Eric Franklin got a second chance after it appeared he would be the game's goat with a missed extra point.

"I thought I had cost us the game," said Franklin. "It was redemption."

Trailing 17-16, the Aggies moved to within range for Franklin's 48-yard field goal with less than two minutes to play for the victory.

"It was a very big win for us," said Aggie Coach Jackie Sherrill. "We beat a great team out there."

Scouts from the Sun, Bluebonnet,

Liberty, Holiday, Independence and Cotton bowls were on hand.

The Aggies have never been to a bowl under Sherrill.

However, Ted Nance, director of the Bluebonnet Bowl, said, "The Aggies are really looking good. They have a very attractive team this year and really draw a lot of fans where they go. We're taking a hard look at them."

A&M's lone conference loss has been to Baylor. The Aggies host Arkansas in two weeks.

In the other SWC game, Houston,

the defending Cotton Bowl representative, won its first SWC game, downing Texas Christian 26-21.

Baylor, leading the SWC with a 5-0 record, sat back and watched the scramble for survival in the SWC.

All eyes will be on Little Rock Saturday as the Arkansas Razorbacks try to derail the Bears' Cotton Bowl express. The game will begin at 2:30 p.m. Saturday before a national television audience. Baylor has games against Rice and Texas remaining after Arkansas takes its shot.

In other games, TCU is at Texas,

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