

# Sports

## Texas A&M vs. Texas: The Rivalry The Aggie-Longhorn games of the past 4 years

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Dec. 2, 1984, Austin: The Aggies

ain't got nuthin'.  
The only mystery about the first of three consecutive Texas

### Analysis

A&M victories over Texas is why more people didn't see it coming.

A&M had a team picked by most sportswriters in Texas to finish third in the conference before the season started. However, disaster struck in the third game of the season, as quarterback Kevin Murray went down against Arkansas State.

The team sputtered behind Craig Stump for most of the season, but it was beginning to come on. An upset over a Texas Christian team that had Cotton in its eyes had put the Aggies in a winning state of mind.

Texas, picked by many to win the conference, was still reeling from stunning losses to Baylor and Houston. UT Head Coach Fred Akers had long carried the reputation of not being able to motivate his team for big games, and this game was not going to change that. The team closely resembled a balloon slowly losing its air.

But no one expected the Aggies to jump on top so quickly and so decisively. Aggie scores on four of their first five drives resulted in a stunning 20-0 halftime score.

It looked like Texas may have regained its composure during the intermission, because the third play of the half was a Jerry Gray interception of Stump, giving UT the ball deep in A&M territory.

The drive stalled, and kicker Jeff Ward took the field to get UT on the board. A&M safety and designated big-play man Domingo Bryant had other ideas.

Bryant blocked the kick, and the ball flew right to senior linebacker Scott Polk, who returned it 76 yards. The rout was on.

Stump wound up going 11 for 22 with two touchdowns and 168 yards of passing offense. Akers said, "I

hope he doesn't have any more games like that against us." As it turned out, Akers would not be around long enough to see Stump's only other attempt.

Final score: Texas A&M 37, Texas 12.

Nov. 28, 1985, College Station: The Aggies got lucky.

The 1987 Texas seniors admit now that they really did not think they were going to win in 1985. And with good reason.

Undoubtedly many people looked at the game on paper and thought, there's no reason in the world this game shouldn't be even more one-sided than last year.

The A&M defense that was good the year before had become the best in the Southwest Conference, leading in most statistical categories.

The offense had Kevin Murray back, handing off to fullbacks Anthony Toney and Roger Vick and throwing to Jeff Nelson, Shea Walker and Rod Bernstine.

But UT knew, statistics aside, a UT victory meant an orange Cotton Bowl. And it did not die easily.

The game was a scoreless tie until early in the second quarter. Punt returner Eric Metcalf fumbled, setting up a Murray-Nelson TD pass.

Again, a big play broke Texas' spirit, as star running back Edwin Simmons was stopped on fourth down for a two-yard loss inside the A&M one-yard line. Three Aggie touchdowns in the third quarter closed the door on the stubborn Longhorns, who wound up long on desire but short on talent.

Final score: Texas A&M 42, Texas 10.

Nov. 27, 1986, Austin: We sure hope we play as well as John Hagy talks.

The Aggies were trying to do what no SWC team in the 1980s had done — repeat as Cotton Bowl representatives.

The Horns were trying to do what they had not been able to do despite years of effort by their alumni — fire their coach.

Hagy, with his remarks, seemed to

be trying to give A&M more incentive to win, the last thing the heavy favorites needed.

Akers, despite winning 74 percent of his games, had more than worn out his welcome in Austin. Surviving by the skin of his teeth the year before, he had coached Texas to a 5-5 record up to the A&M game. A win was considered vital, and possibly not enough, for him to stay.

A&M had practically all of the previous year's team back, including Murray and the front seven starters on defense. That seven included now-professionals Rod Saddler, Todd Howard, Larry Kelm and Johnny Holland.

The Longhorns played well. Extremely well. When UT took a 3-0 lead the partisan crowd joyfully pelted the field with oranges, hoping the Aggies would lose and have to settle for an Orange Bowl invitation.

A&M tied the game before halftime, and more oranges flew. Perhaps it was because they were happy to hold the Aggies to a field goal. Perhaps it was because they could sense even that early that if they didn't throw them then, the fruit would stay pocketed.

No doubt Texas looked so much worse in the second half partially because the Longhorns knew they had played the best half of football they could, and they were not ahead.

Akers may have said it best: "We were forced to play a perfect game, and we didn't."

By the end of the third quarter, A&M was well on its way to its second Cotton Bowl in as many years. Texas was on its way to its first losing season in, well, forever. Akers was on his way to Indiana to coach the Purdue Boilermakers.

Final score: Texas A&M 16, Texas 3.

Nov. 26, 1987, College Station: We've got a new coach.

Once again, it comes to this. One game to decide the undisputed conference championship. Winner take all. Loser pick Bluebonnets.

Stump, again at the helm for the Aggies, finally has established him-



Battalion file photo

A&M linebacker John Roper moves in on UT quarterback Bret Stafford during last year's 16-3 win over the Longhorns in Memorial Stadium. The win put the Aggies in the Cotton Bowl for the second straight year.

self as the full-time A&M quarterback. Metcalf is the most explosive offensive threat in the SWC and a legitimate Heisman Trophy candidate for next year.

The strong UT linebacking corps, led by senior Britt Hager and last year's SWC Freshman of the Year Duane Duncum, will try to compensate for devastating injuries on the line. Tackles Ken Hackemack and Steve Llewellyn are injured. Hackemack is out for the year, while Llewellyn is postponing surgery to play Thursday.

It will be interesting to see if A&M

can exploit the line situation with its running backs. Fullback Matt Gurley is probably the surest two yards in the conference, and freshman Darren Lewis is making a legitimate play for SWC Newcomer of the Year.

The weak Aggie passing game plays into Texas' hands, as the UT secondary has been shaky this year.

Texas will no doubt try to exploit the A&M blitz with quick patterns from quarterback Bret Stafford to Metcalf and wide receiver Tony Jones. Whether or not it will be successful remains to be seen.

After graduating everyone but

noseguard Sammy O'Brien from the starting front seven, many thought the Aggie defense would suffer. Instead it has improved.

Linebacker John Roper is a good bet for SWC Defensive Player of the Year. New UT Head Coach David McWilliams must be worrying about him getting to already-ailing quarterback Bret Stafford.

However, the group looked lax last week at Texas Christian. Look for the Longhorns to use the shuttle-pass play that the Horned Frogs utilized so effectively.

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