

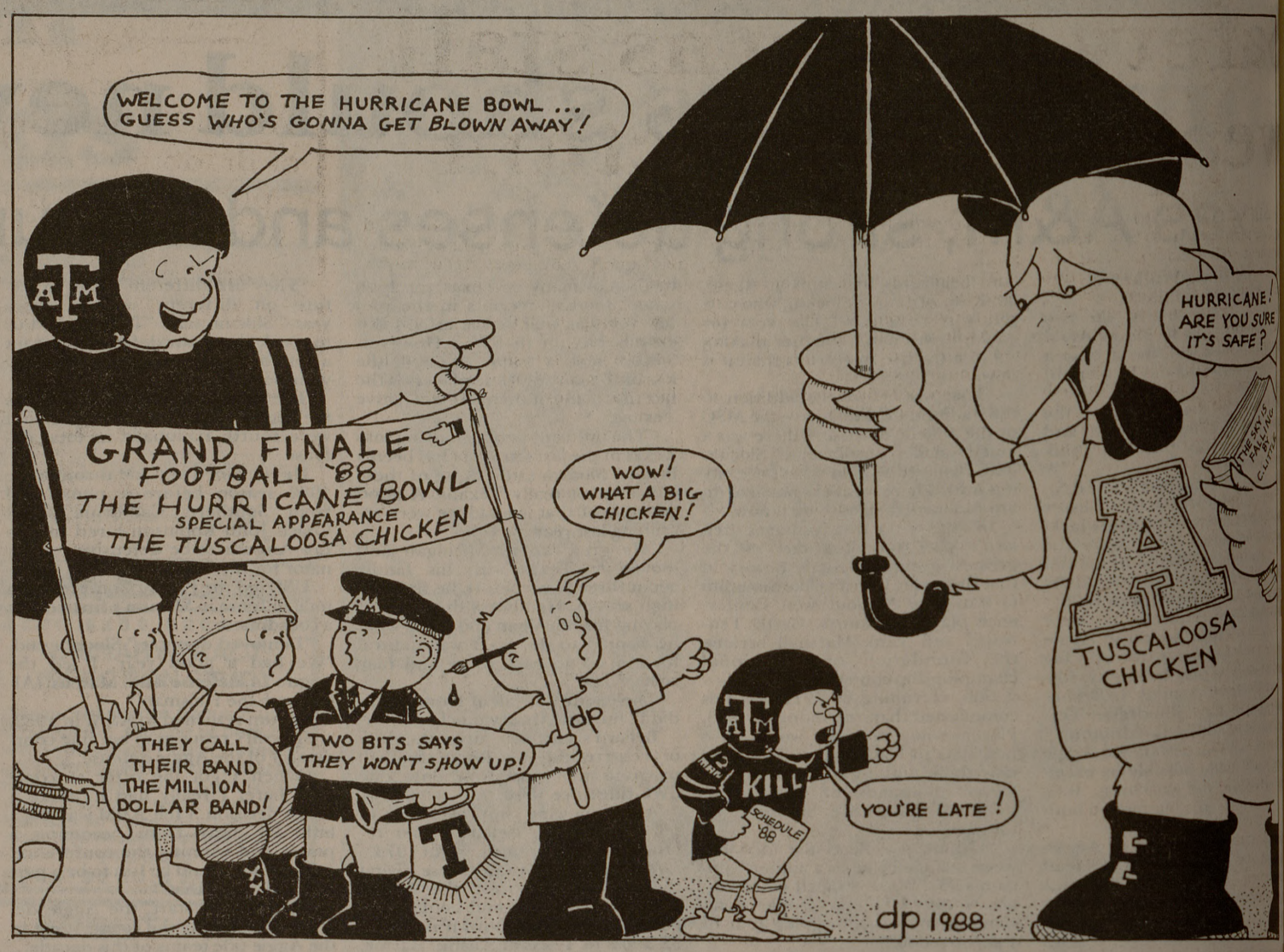
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Alabama game more than just the end

With the conference schedule out of the way and the annual war against Texas over with, there appears to be little reason for the Aggies to care about tomorrow night's game against Alabama.

True, this game is meaningless from the standpoint of bowl possibilities and national title aspirations. However, that point will not matter to the Aggies. They have proven they play as much for pride as anything else.

If ever a football team faced imposing emotional challenges in a season, the current Texas A&M football team is it.

From the toughest schedule in Aggie history to the recent controversy surrounding former player George Smith, the Aggies have had several opportunities to throw up their hands and say, "Why bother? We have nothing to play for, so why risk getting injured?"

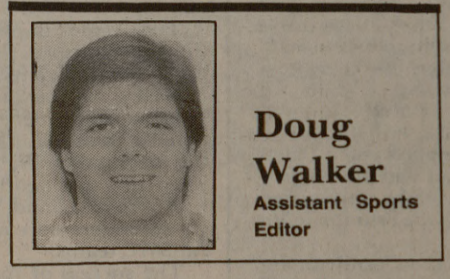
After all, the Aggies have known since the Louisiana State game they wouldn't be playing in a postseason bowl game. It hasn't affected their performance this year. Each game they have been emotionally ready to play.

Whether it's the coaching staff or the players themselves, someone deserves credit for keeping this team together in a situation in which other teams would have crumbled.

A win would give A&M an outside chance of entering the national polls to close the season.

There are several interesting sidebars to Thursday's game.

One of the interesting matchups involves Alabama outside linebacker Derrick Thomas and A&M's "Blitz Brothers".



Thomas was named the winner of the Butkus Award Tuesday as the nation's best linebacker. A&M's John Roper gets a chance to show how he stands in comparison to Thomas and possibility help his All-America chances as well as his prospects for the National Football League draft.

Several statistical marks are also being pursued by Aggies.

A&M running back Darren Lewis, the nation's second-leading rusher with 1,564 yards, needs 180 yards against the Tide to catch Earl Campbell's record for rushing yardage in a single season (1,744) set in 1977.

Lewis, who missed the LSU game and half of the Nebraska game with injuries, averages 156.4 yards per game and 5.5 yards per carry.

Lewis will probably make a good run at the record against a banged up Crimson Tide unit. The Aggie defense has been the heart of this team. They have held opponents to under 15 first downs in six of the last eight games, and held opponents to less than 250 yards total

offense in three of the last four games. The Wrecking Crew will probably have another good outing this week. If you like your defense, you should enjoy this week's game.

It could be a sloppy, low-scoring battle for several reasons.

There should be little scoring because the defenses are solid. The Crimson Tide defense has performed well in one of the nation's top conferences, and the Aggies haven't faced a linebacker like Derrick Thomas all year.

With either Chris Osgood or Lance Pavlas starting in place of the injured Buckey Richardson, the Aggies may have trouble dealing with the pressure a player of Thomas' ability provides.

It should be interesting to see if Pavlas or Osgood can step up and provide the balanced attack A&M has been lacking in the past two seasons.

You all know about the Aggie defense. A&M has what has become a typical end to the season. A&M did not allow an offensive touchdown from the second quarter of the Louisiana Tech game until the second quarter of the Texas game (13 quarters).

Don't be surprised if Alabama resorts to some trick plays against the Aggies. They're going to have trouble moving the ball on the ground without star running back Bobby Humphrey, who was lost for the year early on with an injury.

Finally, the game provides one more opportunity for the Aggies and the A&M student body to put on a good show for a national television audience.

Lewis among AP honorees

DALLAS (AP) — Texas A&M's Darren Lewis and Robert Wilson copped individual honors, but it was the Cotton Bowl-bound Arkansas Razorbacks who hogged the honors on the Associated Press 1988 All-Southwest Conference football team.

Lewis was named the offensive player of the year, while Wilson was given newcomer-of-the-year honors. Eight Razorbacks players were named by the conference coaches to the first team.

John Roper, Aaron Wallace, Matt McCall and Jerry Fontenot joined Lewis on the first team.

Arkansas' Ken Hatfield was selected as Coach of the Year in balloting that had Jack Pardee of Houston a close second.

Hatfield's team was the first one

in five years to win all its SWC games. It was only the fifth time in history Arkansas had won 10 regular season contests.

The Hogs meet UCLA on Jan. 2 in the Cotton Bowl.

Defensive tackle Wayne Martin of the Razorbacks was picked the SWC's Defensive Player of the Year.

Razorbacks on the first team offense included quarterback Quinn Groves, a sophomore from Lawton, Okla.; tight end Billy Winston; senior tackle Jim Mabry and senior guard Freddie Childress; and place-kicker Kendall Trainor, who hit a school and SWC record 23 field goals in a row.

Martin led the all-league defense. Others Hogs on the first team included linebacker Kerry Owens and defensive back Steve Atwater.

In all, 13 Razorbacks were honored on either the first or second teams.

Lewis joined Texas' Eric Metcalf in the first team backfield.

Joining Houston's Jason Phillips at first team wide receiver were Houston teammate Jason Dixon and Texas' Tony Jones, who tied in the balloting.

Other first team linemen were McCall, Fontenot and center Courtney Hall of Rice.

Joining Martin in the defensive line were Glenn Montgomery of Houston, and Tracy Simien and Mitchell Benson, both of Texas Christian.

In the secondary, TCU's Falanda Newton, Houston's Johnny Jackson and Baylor's Robert Blackmon joined Atwater.

Moon hopes for berth in Pro Bowl

HOUSTON (AP) — Houston Oilers quarterback Warren Moon missed five games with a broken shoulder bone this season but hopes to be named to the Pro Bowl.

Moon's 93.9 quarterback rating is second in the AFC to Cincinnati's Boomer Esiason going into Sunday's game in the AstroDome against the Pittsburgh Steelers.

"It would be an honor to go because you're picked by your peers," Moon said. "I think a lot of players will look at (Buffalo) Jim Kelly because of Buffalo's record, but if I have a couple of killer games before the voting, maybe I'll have a chance."

Esiason and Kelly are Moon's primary competition for a spot on the AFC Pro Bowl team, selected by a vote of NFL players and coaches Dec. 12-13.

Moon suffered a broken scapula on his right shoulder in the season opener against Indianapolis and missed five games.

But he's regained form and in eight games has completed 94 percent of his passes and thrown 13 touchdowns.

"I don't think missing those games is going to hurt him," Quarterback Coach June Jones said. "I think it would hurt him if he had only six touchdowns, but he's right up there among the leaders in the AFC."

Kelly, who has played the entire season, has a 78.9 rating. He completed 60.7 per cent of his passes and thrown 12 touchdowns. Kelly has 15 interceptions compared to Moon's four.

"I haven't seen Kelly this season, but I don't know how anybody could be better than our guy," Coach Jerry Glanville said. "Warren deserves it."

Slocum

(Continued from page 9)

the 1970s. However, there are inevitable comparisons between the two groups.

Slocum doesn't feel comparisons are necessary.

"It's hard to make comparisons because the competition is not equal," Slocum said. "You can only compare statistically. Really, it's a team thing. A lot of the success of your defense depends on the offensive style and productivity."

"Back then (the 1970s) we were playing behind a good wishbone team like Arkansas is now. They're on the field for most of the game, and it makes it easier on a defense."

Slocum continues to specialize outside of his overall duties as coordinator. After working with the linebackers for several years, he now works specifically with the secondary.

Slocum attributed the move to

secondary coach to the absence of Curley Hallman. Hallman left A&M last Spring to become head coach at Southern Mississippi.

"We've got a position coach for each position," Slocum said. "We had an opening and I figured that, instead of paying for another coach, I could take over the job. Besides, it was a change."

The current Aggie defense may not be found among the national statistical leaders, but Slocum is happy with the unit's performance so far.

"I think at times this year we've played very well," Slocum said. "Arkansas did not score (an offensive touchdown) on us for the third time in the past four years. We stopped Houston pretty good, too."

Statistics may be an easy way to judge success. However, Slocum feels there is another of gauging his success as a coach.

"One good measure is the guys that go on up and have success in professional football," Slocum said.

If that is the case, there is no doubt Slocum is a success. No fewer than 28 players have gone into the pros after his tutelage.

Slocum's coaching skill got a big test in this year's game against Texas Christian.

Sherrill left Slocum in charge of the team to "minimize distractions" after the story broke of the allegations concerning former A&M player George Smith. Slocum responded with his usual laid-back demeanor.

After leading the team to an 18-0 victory, Slocum joked, "This head coaching stuff is overrated. There's nothing to it."

His response to a question about his reaction to his new role reveals the reason for his success.

"It was a little different especially when you have ten guys in front of you taking your picture all the time," Slocum said. "But, I didn't try to do anything differently than we normally for it. I just tried to be myself."

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