Aggies poised to reclaim Arkansas' SWC title

y Jeff Osborne

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Of The Battalion Staff

The 1989 Texas A&M football ogram combines newness with faliarity as the Aggies aim for their urth Southwest Conference ampionship and Cotton Bowl bid

the past five years. This year, the team is expected to ake a strong run for the Cotton owl, and is picked by SWC coaches the favorite to unseat defending WC Champion Arkansas to reclaim

he top spot.

The team features a Heisman because of Catholic wor rophy candidate, a Butkus Award andidate and most of last season's fensive firepower.

On defense, the "Wrecking Crew" ll be back and a strong secondary ould bolster a largely unproven

oup of linebackers.
Although this season's schedule 't quite as menacing as last year's, en the Aggies faced several of the tion's best (LSU, Nebraska, Oklana State, Houston, Arkansas and bama), it won't be a cakewalk by stretch of the imagination ei-

A&M's first two opponents, Loui-ana State and Washington, are th Top Twenty teams.

Following a September 16th clash th Texas Christian, the Aggies will ce Southern Mississippi, which fin-hed 10-2 last season and won the dependence Bowl.

In the fifth game, A&M will face exas Tech, a contest which has trationally been very tough for the gs in Lubbock

Then, a critical mid-season tanem in Houston and Baylor will hallenge the Aggies. A&M will then battle Rice and

thern Methodist (back from a vo-year death penalty hiatus). Fi-ally, the regular season will see Aransas and Texas arrive at Kyle ield for nationally televised games. Coach R.C. Slocum, A&M's new

signed amid controversy and un-ertainty amid a second NCAA in-

vestigation of the Aggie football pro-

Also new to the coaching staff are offensive coordinator Bob Toledo

in the Aggies' season.

The Aggies are hoping to re-

In preseason ratings, the Aggies were picked to challenge for the na-tional championship last year, but early losses and NCAA sanctions preventing a bowl bid quickly ended

expectations of post-season glory.

Also looming over the Aggies was
the George Smith scandal.

Smith claimed he had received

their investigation. The investigation lasted several months, and the threat of additional

hampered recruiting.

A&M recruited only 14 players this year, a far cry from the recruiting classes of the last three years

Of the 14 recruits one signed with the Minnesota Twins to play baseball and two were ruled academically in-

homa State's penalties were lumped together with Texas A&M by the ead coach has served as an assistant ach for the Aggies for 16 years.

He replaces Jackie Sherrill, who

The Aggies also have a new assistant head coach, Tom Hayes, who served as defensive coordinator for

from Oregon, receivers coach Robert Ford from Texas Tech, tight ends/specialists coach John Pearce from Fort Bend Willowridge High School, and offensive line coach Mike Sherman from Holy Cross.

Defensive coordinator Bob Davie, who has coached at A&M for four years, will also play a prominent role

bound from last year's disappointing 7-5 season. In 1988, the Aggies lost to five opponents ranked in the As-sociated Press Top Twenty, including conference champion Arkansas.

payments of hush money, but later recanted. After he changed his story several times, the NCAA dropped

sanctions or a "death penalty" which would suspend A&M from compet-ing in football for a year or more

which gained national attention.

"Houston, Oklahoma and Okla-

"After 20 some odd years of



Photo by Jay Janner

R.C. Slocum begins his first season at the helm in 1989. He also is beginning his 17th year with the A&M program.

coaching," Slocum said, "I understand the facts of winning and los-

ing.
"I hope the people we bring in here have more thanjust a few championship rings to show off, although I'm counting on those too.

"I hope they also have a good education and experience at A&M. The program will be dedicated to

winning with integrity."
Slocum said the tradition of the 12th Man Kickoff Team will be continued. This tradition, which features non-scholarship athletes from the student body, was started by

Slocum plans to start a new tradition as well. This year, freshman football players were sent to Fish Camp at Palestine.

The camp teaches incoming freshmen the traditions of Texas A&M, and what being an Aggie is all

"This will give the athletes a better understanding of what Texas A&M is about, and it will give non-athletes a better understanding of the football players," Slocum said.

"Some of you may wonder how I'm going to get all these guys to go. Well, we'll be working hard in the August heat out there, and I'll tell them they can take a week off at

camp.
"I'll tell them there's air-conditioned buses of pretty girls waiting in

The new coaching staff put to-gether by Slocum and Athletic Diector John David Crow is "very high quality," said Alan Cannon, director of Sports Information.

cum said, "and there wasn't one coach I offered a job who turned it

the same," Cannon said.

The offensive side depends so much on your skill positions," Can-

the parking lot. Any of the players who don't want to go, I'll send home," Slocum laughed.

"I don't think we could have had a better or smoother transition with a new coach and athletic director, but these guys were already in place.

"There's an old saying that the defense wins championships and there's a lot of truth to that. The offense should be more balanced.'

"We've got one of the finest Toledo, the offensive coordina-coaching staffs in the country," Slo- tor, said the Aggies will run "more of a pro-style attack, and we won't run the option nearly as much.

'Our offensive style will be simi-"With R.C. (Slocum), the de- lar to the (San Francisco) 49ers style fensive side should be pretty much of attack, emphasizing ball control with passing. The key is balance,' Toledo said.

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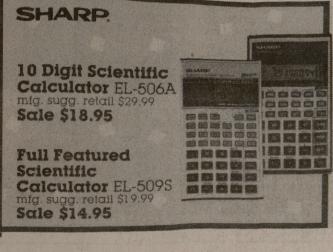


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