

Thursday, August 31, 1989

Ags, LSU resume rivalry as A&M tries to beat jinx Slocum will try to end opening game drought

By Clay Rasmussen

Of The Battalion Staff

The latest battle of an all too familiar series continues Saturday night at Kyle Field.

It was seven years ago that former Head Coach and Athletic Director Jackie Sherrill said one of the first things he intended to do to the Texas A&M football program was to

Maybe Sherrill should have waited.

Since the reinstatement of a ten-year contract with LSU, the Tigers have beaten the Aggies in their last three meetings by a combined score of 79-20. LSU leads the series 25-14-3, including a 27-0 drumming last year in Baton Rouge.

"It's embarrassing," said A&M Head Coach R.C. Slocum.

The Aggies will have a tough time with a relatively young defense matched up against the Tigers' powerful, high scoring offense.

A&M's defensive line and linebacker spots are filled with players who have little experience. The bright spot in the Aggies' defense was to be their secondary, but the injury of free safety Gary Jones leaves the Aggies thin in the defensive backfield.

Jones is regarded as one of the

hardest hitters in the Southwest Conference and his leadership will be missed in Saturday's game if he cannot play, Slocum said.

Jones is listed as questionable for the LSU game.

The revamped Aggie offense will have a long night if they can't shut down the Tigers' defense. Regarded as one of the stingiest defenses in the Southeastern Conference, LSU returns Karl Dunbar and Clint James to the defensive line.

The Aggies' offensive linemen will have to minimize the effects of these two if junior running back Darren Lewis is to have a good game.

The Aggies have made a tradition of playing tough opening schedules and playing catch-up football during these non-conference games. A&M

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Pavlas confident, ready to lead Aggies on return road to cotton

By Richard Tijerina

Of The Battalion Staff

Coming out of high school, Lance Pavlas appeared to have it all: All-American quarterback from Tomball. Consecutive appearances in Class 5A state championship games. One of the nation's most highly-recruited players. Strong armed and smart with the right attitude to make it big.

But Lance Pavlas' story was nearing fairy tale proportions to everybody else but Lance Pavlas.

Things somehow got in the way of that storybook ending. Fans expected him to become the next great Aggie savior after All-SWC quarterback Kevin Murray left in 1987. Pavlas was to make the jump from Tomball Field to Kyle Field quickly and continue Texas A&M on its way to winning consecutive conference championships and Cotton Bowl appearances.

But Pavlas was expected to come too far too fast. Projected as the starter of the future, Pavlas was redshirted his freshman year. When he came back in 1987, he found himself locked in a quarterback controversy with veteran Craig Stump, who eventually won the job.

Pavlas waited patiently. When Stump was finally out of the picture, it appeared Pavlas' time had finally arrived. However, no one seemed to notice the signing of a virtually unknown quarterback from Louisiana named Bucky Richardson. At least, no one seemed to notice until mid-season when he became the Aggies' starter and led them to a 35-10 Cotton Bowl victory over Notre Dame.

Pavlas waited patiently. Last year, Richardson was again the starter. Southern Mississippi transfer Chris Osgood ranked ahead of Pavlas on the depth chart. His play was sporadic last season, with more inter-

ceptions than touchdowns. His job was usually the mop-up job, coming in at the end of the game when the game was already decided.

Pavlas waited patiently. And now all that waiting has seemed to be paid off. Richardson went one way as a knee ligament surgery in the offseason forced coaches to redshirt him this season. Head Coach R.C. Slocum named the 6-foot, 2-inch, 185 lb. Pavlas the starter in spring practice, then hired former Oregon offensive coordinator Bob Toledo to come in and redesign the offense with a more pass-oriented attack to suit Pavlas' talents.

Pavlas leads the Aggies in their 1989 season opener on Saturday at Kyle Field against Louisiana State University. Although he is 1-2 in his career as a starter, he played well in the final game last season. See Pavlas/Page 15

LSU at Texas A&M

- Site: Kyle Field
- Kickoff: 5:45 p.m.
- Ranking: LSU (tenth), A&M (unranked)
- TV/Radio: ESPN (Ch. 32); KTAM (AM 1240)

The A&M-LSU series going again.

Rangers resume familiar fade despite good individual efforts

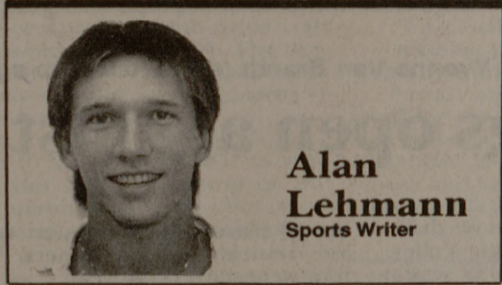
School is back in session, and it's a whole new semester. Remember last spring? School was over, the birds were chirping tirelessly and summer was as close as the nearest beach. However, in our mad rush to vacate College Station, some of us missed a peculiar sight.

The Texas Rangers were on top of the American League West. They were blowing away the competition with Nolan Ryan's arm and the smoking bats of Julio Franco, Rafael Palmeiro and Ruben Sierra.

Long-suffering Ranger fans were making the pilgrimage to Arlington to see these new Rangers and their strange habit of winning. They left for the ballpark blissfully ignoring the incessant doomsayers reminding them of Ranger collapses past. Ah, summer. Vacation. Valentine.

Victories. There were even four Rangers in the All-Star team. Ranger faithful in paradise.

But, now the summer vacation is over,



Alan Lehmann Sports Writer

and so are the hopes of a Ranger pennant.

The Rangers can find valid excuses for the slide, but excuses don't win pennants. The harsh reality is that the Rangers' hopes are as dead as the roadkill on I-45.

Mathematically, it's still possible for the Rangers to win the division. However, being 11 games out with only 33 games left, the Rangers are mired in fourth place,

closer to fifth place than third. To win the West, the Rangers would have to win almost all of their remaining games, and hope for the three best teams in the American League to completely fall apart. Don't hold your breath.

In fact, with 18 of their remaining games against the Royals, A's, Angels, and Orioles, the Rangers might not finish above .500.

No more wondering. This is not the year. So, what's left? Nothing, other than the mundane task of finishing the season with no hope of winning the division.

What went wrong? Although the Ranger front office is best remembered for disastrous trades like the Walt Terrell and Ron Darling for Lee Mazilli fiasco, the front office did turn the franchise around in 1989.

In 1988, the Rangers finished the season below the .500 mark, and hopelessly behind the A's. However, the current Ranger record (68-61) is the second best at this

stage in the history of the franchise. Ranger General Manager Tom Grieve's deals for Palmeiro, Franco, and Harold Baines kept the Rangers in the race most of the season, and give the Rangers one of the league's most potent offenses.

The cost of attaining this extra firepower was not unbearable.

Trading away starters Pete O'Brien, Jerry Browne, Scott Fletcher and Oddibe McDowell did anger some fans. However, only Brown has played well enough to regret, and the play of Julio Franco has made Browne obsolete in the Ranger lineup.

Signing Nolan Ryan may have been Grieve's master stroke. With a 14-9 record, Ryan has been the workhorse of the Ranger staff. His 243 strikeouts lead the league by a wide margin.

What went wrong? It wasn't the Ranger hitting. Their .263 team average is in the top six in the league.

For the first time in recent memory, the Rangers had three starters chasing the batting title. Although none are still in contention, Franco, Sierra and Baines all boast averages of .300 or better.

With the exception of Ryan and Russell, the pitching has been streaky. Rookie Kevin Brown has been a pleasant surprise. However, the rest of the staff has been unreliable.

The Achilles Tendon of the Rangers has been the defense. Cecil Espy's defensive lapses have cost the Rangers several games this season. Palmeiro has had difficulty in adjusting to his new position, and all of the Ranger infielders have made errors costing at least one game.

The solution? Just hope that the team will gel over the winter, and play like a team with the chemistry needed to win the AL West.

To borrow a phrase common among Ranger fans, "Wait until next year."

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