

Friday, October 6, 1989

## No. 19 Ags ready to take their show on the road

### Lubbock the setting for Saturday clash of 3-1 teams

By Clay Rasmussen

Of The Battalion Staff

Losing one game in the Southwest Conference this year could have serious consequences for a team's bid for a conference championship.

Losing two conference games — and a team might as well kiss the Cotton Bowl goodbye.

That's the situation Texas Tech finds themselves in as they face Texas A&M this Saturday to fight for life in the SWC race.

A&M Coach R.C. Slocum said the game may well decide whether the Red Raiders, who are 0-1 in conference play, stay in the race.

"They'll be back home for the first time in two or three weeks," Slocum said. "This is a big game for them — they face elimination from the conference race."

"We'll have our hands full." Other than just playing to stay in the SWC race, the Red Raiders will be fighting to avenge a 50-15 slaughter last year at Kyle Field.

But Slocum said the Aggies too have something to prove to Tech.

Last time the Aggies traveled to Lubbock, A&M suffered a humiliating 27-21 loss.

Perhaps the loss itself wasn't as demeaning to the Aggies as the walk off the field at the end of the game.

"There was a lot said coming off the field," Slocum said through clenched teeth. "People were spitting on us. . . I haven't forgotten one bit of that day, I promise you that. A number of our players made that trip too, and I'm sure they remember."

That game's experience just might be what the Aggies need to motivate themselves for the game, after beating Southern Mississippi and watching Baylor beat Tech.

Other than just pure motivation, A&M faces several difficult tasks if they are to remain undefeated in the SWC.

Tech, minus quarterback Billy Joe Toliver who was lost to graduation, has turned to the running game and I-back James Gray.

Gray has gained over 400 yards this year, averaging 6.4 yards a carry.

"James (Gray) is a good player," Tech coach Spike Dykes said, "but it's his supporting cast that has been a little deficient at times."

Slocum said Dykes obviously wasn't talking about the Raider's offensive line when using the word "deficient."

#### A&M at Texas Tech

- Site: Jones Stadium
- Kickoff: Noon
- Ranking: A&M (19th), Texas Tech (—)
- TV/Radio: Raycom SportsNetwork; KTAM (AM 1240)

"Just look at Tech's line," Slocum said. "Those guys have worked together for so many years. With the same offensive system, that makes them dangerous."

Fortunately for the Aggies, Tech can't support the same offensive scheme it ran last year.

"I imagine the jury is still out as to where we stand offensively," Dykes said.

But Dykes said he will have his hands full trying to establish any type of passing attack against the Aggies.

"The big thing is going to be trying to protect the passer," Dykes said. "Boy, they (A&M) do such a great job of pass rushing that it scares me to death."

The Aggies shouldn't have it any easier, though.

In order to leave Lubbock with a win, Slocum said A&M must do two things: slow down Tech's running game and establish a running game of their own.

"For us to be successful, we'll have to keep them from making the big plays on us," Slocum said. "I don't think we can stop their running game, but we'll have to slow it down to the point where they can't keep the ball."

Dykes said he is worried about controlling the Aggie's groundgame and running backs Darren Lewis and Robert Wilson.

"It's going to be an awful big chore to shut both of those guys down," Dykes said. "They're great backs behind a big line, so our work is going to be cut out for us."

Both Lewis and Wilson had big games against Southern Mississippi, combining for 215 yards on the ground.

Slocum said he was pleased with A&M quarterback Lance Pavlas and the performance of the rest of the team.

"I feel like we're headed in the right direction," Slocum said. "We've gotten Lance off to a good start and he's been getting better every week — he's gotten to the point where he feels comfortable throwing."

A&M leads the series with Tech 26-20-1, but has found Tech to be a thorn in its side the last five years.

Jones Stadium always has been a tough place for the Aggies to play. The last five games in Lubbock have been decided by a total of 12 points, with the Red Raiders holding a 3-2 advantage in them.

"We were embarrassed last time we went there," Slocum said. "I certainly remember and I'm making sure our players remember too."



Larry Horton breaks a tackle in last year's 50-15 A&M win over Texas Tech at Kyle Field. The former running back switched to safety this season and is second in team tackles.

Photo by Jay Janner

## Big A takes the A's to avenge last year and win World Series

The Oakland Athletics will win the World Series in five games.

What about the American League Championship Series? It's only a formality for the best team in baseball.

With a 2-0 advantage, the A's might as well set the VCR for the Series, because they won't be home to see it.

Granted, the Blue Jays will win one game in the Mega-Dome. With quality players like Fred McGriff and Tony Fernandez, the Jays should chalk up a win. But they won't last longer than five games.

OK, so the A's win the ALCS. Who will face them in the Series?

My heart says Chicago. There's something nostalgic about having the Series in Wrigley. Besides, if the Cubs win the National League pennant, we won't have to listen to their fans whining for another 40 years.

But logic says that San Francisco will bash the Cubs.

Will Clark and Kevin Mitchell give Cub fans a preview of drubbings to come when



Alan Lehmann Sports Writer

they combined for three homers and nine RBI Wednesday night. Of course, they won't score like that every game, but other Giants will pick up the pace.

Matt Williams is a power hitter just waiting for a chance, and Brett Butler is a proven talent.

If it hadn't been for Dave Dravecky's injury, the Giants would have a chance at making the Series go the full seven.

Still, pitchers Scott Garrelts and Rick

Reuschel provide veteran leadership as well as victories.

Although the Giants have lacked a dominant closer, they have a decent bullpen-by-committee.

The fact is that it doesn't matter who the National Losers send against the Oakland buzzsaw. The A's will win.

A sweep is possible, but not probable. Mitchell and Rueschel will find a way to make the series last for five games.

You heard it here: the A's in five. I know what you're thinking.

What about last year? The A's were supposed to sweep the Dodgers in 1988, but lost miserably.

There were many explanations, all bearing some degree of truth:

- The Dodgers were underrated.
- Nah. They were actually pretty bad. Simply the luckiest team to win a Series in recent memory. Just getting into the postseason was a small wonder.
- The A's mentally weren't ready. Could be true, but still no excuse. Pro baseball

players don't get paid to feel ready, just to play.

The Dodgers' batting order had all the power of a women's bowling team. So, they rode the arm of Orel Hershiser into history.

• Pure, dumb luck.

Yep, now you're getting closer!

The fact is that the A's were superior to the Dodgers in every way, except luck. Statistically, Oakland was better than Los Angeles in almost every category. The A's hit for higher average, more home runs and won more games.

I know that stats don't win ballgames, but the A's were better on the field as well as on paper. All of the "experts" said so before the Series last year.

At any level of sport, teams have slumps and streaks. The A's simply slumped at the wrong time, and the Dodgers played above their heads.

That's the Lehmann Theory, anyway.

No matter why they collapsed last year, Oakland will win this year. They're hungry for a Series win. After hearing all of the talk

of their collapse, they played through a plague of injuries and beat the "No repeat" rule.

Oakland was dominating last year, but they are improved this season. The addition of Ricky Henderson has added a dimension of speed that they lacked.

Jose Canseco will have a better Series this year. After last year's fiasco, Mr. "Dial 1-900 Huge-Ego" has nowhere to go but up.

Dave Stewart will have a good Series, but not the wondrous one that the media will expect of him. He's a solid pitcher, but he gave up 260 hits in 258 innings this season.

Righthander Mike Moore will steal the pitching show. He finished the season strong, and allowed only three hits in seven innings in Wednesday's win. He allowed only 193 hits in 242 inings this season.

If the A's starters should falter, they can fall back on one of baseball's best closers. Dennis Eckersley has relieved in each of the A's six ALCS games in the last two years. He's saved five of them.

The A's are the best team, and will win the Series.



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