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Asst. Sports Editor

One step forward, two steps back for SWC

What was to be a good season for the Southwest Conference has turned into a bad joke. The conference was going to become a national power, but all it's become is a nightmare.

The Longhorns can't beat a hapless group of Bulldogs from Mississippi State. Texas went from being No. 13 to a nobody.

And last night, Houston showed us something about the run and shoot in their 40-10 loss to the Miami Hurricanes. The offense of the '90's is no more effective against good talent than the wishbone was in the '70's.

All this comes when, for the first time in seven years, every team in the league has a chance of winning the conference championship and gaining a birth in the Cotton Bowl.

Now it looks like every team in the conference has shot at going to Dallas for a Texas-sized whoopin' at the hands of real football team.

The Hurricanes have won the last two games they've played against the SWC by 73 points.

Miami 86, SWC 13.

Is it necessary for Texas and Houston to play their worst games when it matters the most?

Houston head coach John Jenkins and Texas coach David McWilliams have great talent. They manage to make their players believe they don't have a chance at winning.

Texas got to the Cotton Bowl last season, but as soon as the Longhorns walked on the field they were doomed.

The Miami players taunted the 'Horns as they walked on the field, and the Texas players actually looked scared. And the hit delivered to the Longhorn kick returner on the opening play of the game shook viewer's televisions.

And Houston has managed over the last two seasons to lose only the games that really matter.

The Cougars couldn't beat Texas last season to keep their unbeaten streak going and in 1989 Andre Ware and company where politely ushered out of Kyle Field carrying a humiliating loss.

But there's hope on the horizon. Baylor and A&M have big games this weekend. A little pride and respect can be brought back to the conference with a couple of victories.

The Bears and Aggies will play something that's been missing in the first couple of conference humiliations. They'll play straight ahead, hard nosed football - minus the skirts. No gimmicks, no tricks.

The Bears square-off against national champion Colorado and the Aggies face LSU.

Is coaching the problem in the Southwest Conference?

Jenkins has helped give credit to a few of football's old theories. First, you win games with defense. No matter how much you plan on scoring, if you're going to win the game the other team has to score fewer points.

Second, the best way to defend against a good passing attack is to put pressure on quarterback. Miami quarterback Gino Torretta completed 16 of 35 passes for 365 yards and four touchdowns. Anybody could probably complete a couple of passes if you gave them five minutes on every play.

And finally, if you don't give your quarterback time to throw, he might as well be blind. That's about how effective he'll be. Houston's Heisman candidate David Klingler is good, but he's not that good.

If Texas really wants to leave the conference, let 'em. Maybe Houston will go to.

A&M is the only conference team over the past six years to consistently win big games. Baylor also has been consistent during the last decade.

I can't remember last time the Aggies beat up on the Bears. I can't remember the last time anyone beat up on the Bears.

Maybe McWilliams and Jenkins should take some hints from A&M head coach R.C. Slocum and Baylor coach Grant Teaff.

Winning doesn't come quickly and it doesn't come easily.

The bayou comes to town

Aggies hope to cage LSU Tigers at Kyle Field

By Steve O'Brien
The Battalion

Last October the Aggies strolled into Death Valley the eleventh ranked team in the country. Hours later, they limped home to College Station with a 17-8 defeat at the hands of Louisiana State University.

The loss, played at LSU's Tiger Stadium, is almost a year old, but head coach R.C. Slocum remembers it well.

"Last year's game was pretty much an even ball game," Slocum said. "With 11 minutes to go it was 3-0, and we were playing without Darren (Lewis)."

Lewis, an all-American tailback, was ejected from the game for throwing an elbow to the head of an LSU player.

"The series he got kicked out we had driven down and had second and five on the 25 yard line," Slocum said. "He was ejected from the game, and it put us back on the 40. Then it was second and 20. We threw an interception on the next play."

When the Aggies and Tigers face off Saturday, there will be some major differences from last year's game.

The game will be played at Kyle Field, where the Aggies have lost only three games in five seasons. And this time the Aggies know who their leader is and have built the offense around him.

Last year, A&M quarterback Bucky Richardson was coming off a year of knee rehabilitation, so the Aggies were forced to play Lance Pavlas, limiting their ability to run the option. It came at a time when the Aggies possessed one of the best backfield tandems in the country.

After faltering against LSU and then Texas Tech and Baylor, Pavlas was replaced by Richardson. The junior quarterback would go on to start the next seven games for A&M, losing only one game.

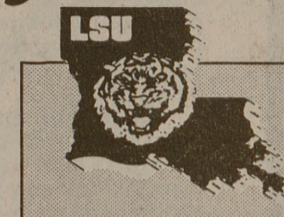
Richardson was the starting quarterback in A&M's 65-14 Holiday Bowl victory over Brigham Young.

Now, Pavlas is gone to graduation and Richardson is a year older.

"It's quite a bit different," Slocum said. "I wished we would have changed earlier last year too. We were caught in a situation where we had Lance, and he had won eight games with him."

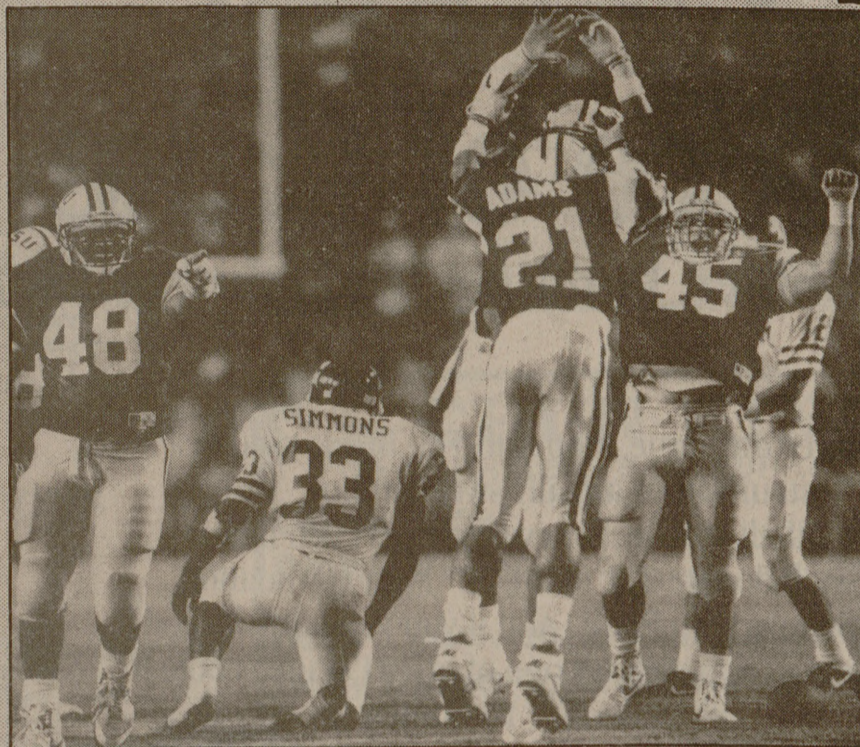
"We were coming back and had a young man Bucky who had been out for a year and you didn't know how his knee would hold up. He couldn't go through contact in the spring."

At the time, the quarterback to use



A&M vs. LSU

When: Saturday, Sept. 14
Kickoff: 12:08 p.m.
Where: Kyle Field
TV: Regional telecast by Raycom
Radio: Aggie Football Radio Network



was Pavlas. Now it's time for Richardson.

"Looking back last year I was kind of sitting back in the wings waiting to get a chance," Richardson said. "It's a whole different concept when you know you're going in and they're counting on you to do the job."

"I'm ready. I've been waiting for a long time."

Another difference from last is the experience factor.

Last season it was A&M who had all the seniors and returning starters. On Saturday, the Aggies will field two returning offensive starters, including

Richardson, and five on defense. The Tigers return 20 starters, including nine on offense and their entire defensive unit.

Slocum said the younger players need to go out and have fun and not worry about making mistakes.

"You would like for them to come off the field and things go good and start getting a little confidence going on the field," Slocum said. "We've spent some time talking to the younger guys about just going out and playing and not putting a big burden on themselves to try and make it all happen at one time."

Freshman Greg Hill will be the Ag-

gies' starting tailback and freshmen wide receivers Wilbert Biggens and Ryan Mathews should see extensive playing time.

But Slocum said he's not going to be conservative because of his young team.

"We're going to do some things for down the road and we're going to start building a team," he said. "We're going to play young guys and after they play they'll be better after this week. They'll be more experienced and better next week."

Young players need a chance to get their feet wet to build their confidence, he said. Saturday they get their chance.

Atkinson ready to step into A&M linebacking tradition

By Chris Whitley
The Battalion

Jason Atkinson has been ready to play Texas A&M's season opener against Louisiana State since last season ended.

He had a taste of the starting lineup last year when all-Southwest Conference linebacker Anthony Williams was lost to injuries. After two solid performances against Texas and Brigham Young, Atkinson is eager to start the season at inside linebacker.

"I'm ready to play LSU tonight," Atkinson said Tuesday afternoon. "Ever since we walked off the field after the Holiday Bowl, I've been thinking of nothing but LSU."

Atkinson, a sophomore, will join a linebacking crew that might be the strongest in the conference. He will line up next to senior Quentin Coryatt, a member of the preseason all-SWC team. "Quentin's an incredible athlete," he said. "We're working together real well, which is kind of exciting for me to be working on the same team with a guy that's number one in the nation at what he does."

Coryatt and Atkinson have been working together since last December's game against Texas. In his first full game, Atkinson fared well, recording 10 tackles. Yet he still feels he could have done better.

"I had been playing the fourth quarter the entire season. I wasn't really

physically prepared to play sixty snaps. If I had been prepared, I would have played a lot better," he said.

To insure his preparation for this season, Atkinson undertook a rigorous off-season conditioning program. Staying in College Station over the summer, he worked out five to six hours a day.

As a result, he has come back stronger and quicker.

"I'm definitely in shape to play sixty snaps now," he said.

Atkinson has come a long way from his grade school ball days in Houston. He's been playing football since the age of six.

He started playing in Sharpstown, the area in south Houston where he grew up. He admits it was a rough part of town, but he played there out of necessity.

"It was the only place I could play tackle football in the area," he said. "There was a lot of flag football, but my dad wanted me to play tackle football."

He learned his football instincts there, which he said helped him as he went into middle school and high school football.

At Westfield High School in Houston, he made all-Southwest, all-state, all-Greater Houston, all-area, and all-district teams. He led the state with 181 tackles his senior year.

Although he was recruited by many colleges throughout the country, choosing A&M was not that big a decision. His father, Class of '66, and grandfather, Class of '36, both graduated from A&M.

"I've been an Aggie all my life," he

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Kinchen returns to sink Aggies

LSU split end knows revenge is on A&M's mind

By Douglas Pils
The Battalion

Todd Kinchen picked a good game to make his career.

Last year Texas A&M pranced into Death Valley for a matchup with Louisiana State equipped with a No. 11 ranking, a 3-0 record, a high-powered offense and visions of an undefeated season. Somebody forgot to tell Kinchen.

Kinchen permanently cast his name in stone as one of LSU's all-time greats on an innocent looking 2-yard swing pass.

He took the third and 9 pass from quarterback Chad Loup and weaved his way in and out of Texas A&M's vaunted defense, including a brilliant move on All-SWC cornerback Kevin Smith, for a 79-yard touchdown.

The play gave LSU a 10-0 lead early in the fourth quarter. However, on a A&M punt after its next possession, the 6-0, 192-pounder highlighted his history making play with an encore. He returned the punt 60 yards to set up the Tigers' next touchdown for a 17-0 lead with 7:20 remaining. By game's end, Kinchen accounted for 218 of LSU's 419 total yards.

"Definitely the A&M game was the biggest game I've played in at LSU," Kinchen said. "Having a long weaving touchdown like that is something that a player always dreams about. And to come back and make another big play is a big dream for a collegiate athlete."



Kinchen

Circumstances for the Aggies are different this time. While they are ranked No. 20 in the nation, there are many question marks as A&M begins its season playing as many as eight true freshmen.

The Tigers on the other hand are coming off a 31-10 season opening loss to Southeastern Conference rival Georgia, in which LSU's offense never got on track.

As a result, Kinchen said he felt like he had to do something extra to jump start the team. He ended up fumbling twice despite five catches for 83 yards and a touchdown to go with 71 yards on four punt returns.

"I felt a little bit of pressure to make the big play but I always put that kind of pressure on myself in a game no matter what the score is," Kinchen said. "I felt that the offense was sputtering. You always want that big play that encourages your team."

LSU head coach Curly Hallman said he understands Kinchen's competitive nature and said in no way does he want to impede upon that competitiveness. However, he would like Kinchen to hang on to the ball.

"I don't want Todd to slow it down," Hallman said. "He's got a lot of imagination. He's got a lot of energy and he gives an outstanding effort. The only thing he needs to do is keep that hand around the point of the ball and bring it into his rib cage."

Coming off the loss, Kinchen said there were some doubts about the talent of this year's Tigers.

"In the beginning of the week, there were a lot of questions raised about how

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