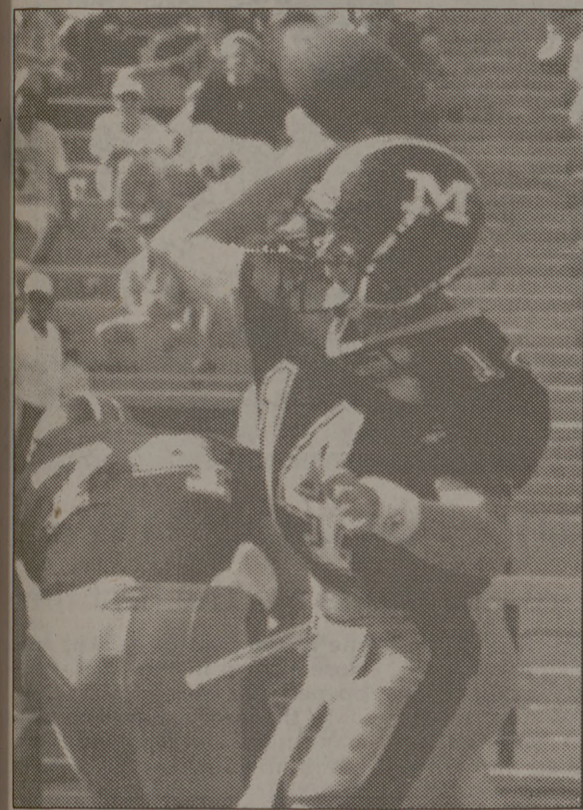


TEXAS A&M VS. MISSOURI

Injured Aggies look to avoid upset



Tiger quarterback Phil Johnson is the leading candidate to start Saturday against Texas A&M.

Early-season losses piling up for No. 5 A&M

By DON NORWOOD

Sports Writer of THE BATTALION

For injury-riddled Texas A&M, Saturday's matchup with Missouri will be the same song, second verse.

Much like in their home opener last week against Tulsa, the Aggies (3-0) bring their list of casualties on the road to face a fresh, healthy Missouri (0-1) team Saturday at 1:00 p.m.

The latest of A&M's injury victims is fullback Doug Carter, whose ankle sprain against Tulsa is especially distressing, considering his high value as a receiver out of the backfield.

And although he is expected to return in time for the Southwest Conference opener against Texas Tech, A&M head coach R.C. Slocum said that Carter's absence in Missouri's Faurot Field will be an undesirable interruption.

"I think he was making great progress until he got hurt," Slocum said. "In the first game, he got sick out in California. I think that affected his play. He didn't have as good a game against Stanford that I normally would have expected."

"He came back against LSU and had a real solid game, and last week he started off good before his injury."

Slocum said the fifth-ranked Aggies could use his experience Saturday rushing the ball and catching the ball.

"He's been around a long time and knows what we're doing," he said. "He's a guy you can count on

in the passing game, not only from the standpoint of running routes and catching balls but also in picking up blitzes, and doing things like that are really important."

But that's not all. Backup quarterback Tommy Preston is suffering from a sciatic nerve problem, shelving him for the near future and thinning out the ranks behind Jeff Granger.

"We're trying to get him rested up and well," Slocum said. "We'll look at him next week, rest him a little more and try to get him back to see how he responds to the lack of activity."

On the other hand, there's Missouri, who came out of their near-upset on the road against Illinois with little more than scrapes and bruises.

"(Defensive tackle) Rick Lyle wasn't able to play in the second half after he hurt an ankle," Missouri head coach Bob Stull said. "We expect him to play Saturday."

Another aspect of Saturday's game that places the two teams at opposite ends of the spectrum is their quarterbacks. Missouri signalcallers Phil Johnson, Jeff Handy and Brian Sallee all notched playing time a year ago.

Johnson, who is the leading candidate to start Saturday against the Aggies, accounted for 2,187 yards of total offense last year while connecting on 14 touchdown passes.

No matter which quarterback plays, their targets are among the best in the nation. Wideouts Victor Bailey and Byron Chamberlain were rated as the best receiver tandem in the nation by Lindy's Football Annual.

Throw in an offensive line led by potential All-America Mike Bedosky protecting Tiger passers, and the challenge for the A&M secondary might be more demanding than some might think.

The picture of the Missouri defense is not so rosy, however. Graduation and spring practice injuries took their toll on a squad shifting to a more blitz-oriented scheme.

The situation is at its worst among linebackers, a position that is a perennial weakness in Columbia. Middle backer Darryl Major, last year's Big Eight co-freshman defensive player of the year, is the only proven player at either the outside or inside positions.

Therein lies the rub for the Tigers, who get to look forward to meeting a renewed Greg Hill. Hill rushed for 125 yards against Tulsa's underrated 4-3 defense last week with guard John Ellisor sidelined with a knee injury, a statistic that Stull said is a cause for concern.

The prospects seem pretty bright for the Aggies. As a matter of fact, they seem as bright as they did a year ago before A&M hit the road against Tulsa.

Obviously, the similarities are nothing more than coincidental. And Stull is in no way pretending that his Tigers can work the same kind of magic Tulsa did a year ago.

But what if? "What we're worried about is just playing hard and minimizing our mistakes," Stull said. "But any time you win, it builds confidence for the rest of the season."

Dueling sports editors sound off to each other on Lassie, Ferret Field and Harry S.

COLUMBIA, Mo. - Texas A&M is going to be 3-1 after this weekend.

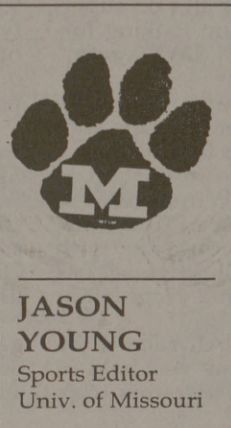
No, I'm not kidding. Hey, stop laughing.

ESPN just assigned the Sept. 26 Missouri-Indiana football game to their early game that Saturday. Do you really think that a respectable broadcasting company would assign a mediocre 0-2 team to be on television?

Therefore, it only goes to reason that ESPN is hoping for a MU victory to enhance its ratings for the Tigers-Hoosiers match-up. But it's going to take some incredible intervention for Mizzou to win. So it would seem that Saturday's Aggie game would have to be affected by some heavenly source.

My first guess would have been God, but he's just too busy making UT look like crap. So the next logical conclusion would be Harry S. Truman.

You're laughing again. Just hear me out. By now, Truman is sick and tired of President Bush comparing himself to Truman. And considering Bush is a "Texan" and is planning on using the Texas A&M campus for the site of his library, this will be a perfect time for Harry S. to get back at



JASON YOUNG
Sports Editor
Univ. of Missouri

Bush.

This would seem very logical if you were a Missourian. Because we all know that there are only two Trumans, Harry S. and the Tiger - our mascot.

Therefore, it's obvious that Harry S., wanting to defend his home state and his namesake will help MU kick A&M's ass.

Finally, the University of Missouri, unlike Texas A&M, has a real mascot. This may seem trivial compared to the other logical reasons, but the truth is, who could ever be scared of a dog named Lassie?

There it is, three extensively researched and thought out reasons why the Tigers are going to beat the Aggies.

By now, I'm sure all of Aggieland is shaking in its collective cowboy boots, and Royal Crown Slocum and the rest of the boys have turned the plane around.

Y'all better just start practicing your cheers or hollers or whatever the hell they're called, because the Aggies are not going to win. And if you want to get kissed, you better go home to mamma.

It is going to be an extremely long and painful day at Faurot Field.

Someone once asked me whether the Missouri students would tear down the goal post if we beat the Aggies. Hell, we would tear down the entire stadium.

No one is kidding themselves here at Mizzou, Texas A&M is by far the better team. So if Missouri

See Young/ Page 6

COLLEGE STATION - Why should we even bother?

Why should Texas A&M even bother showing up in Columbia Saturday to play your Missouri Tigers? Seems like it would be a waste of gas.

The fifth-ranked Aggies have already taken the field three times this season and have come away victorious each time. They have proven themselves superior in battlefields from the "Big A" in California to "Death Valley" in Louisiana. They look down the road at a pitiful Southwest Conference schedule like a hungry lion, or tiger, looks at a piece of raw meat.

Meanwhile, Missouri has seen combat only once this season, and they couldn't even win that. Sure, sure, you made it close late in the game, but like the saying goes, "Close only counts in horseshoes and hand grenades."

So Saturday, there will be a team with talent descended from heaven playing a team whose only accolade is that they came close. What possible chance does this Missouri team have of beating A&M?

What chance do they have? Plenty.



CHRIS WHITLEY
Sports Editor
Texas A&M

The setting is just too perfect. A top five team full of momentum travels north to play some seemingly loser school. The point spread is over two touchdowns, and the experts have already penciled one in for the Aggies.

Sounds like a set-up to me.

A&M could be walking right into a trap when they step onto Ferret Field Saturday. Filled with overconfidence, the Aggies will expect a cakewalk while your Tigers play so far over their heads that they suffer nosebleeds for two weeks and pull off the upset.

But that's not the worst part.

The tremendous "upset" will cause the Aggies to plummet in the rankings. The press will wonder aloud why such a solid group of football geniuses lost to, of all teams, Missouri. Team morale will be at an all-time low. Soon, we'll be hard pressed to win any of our games (except, of course, for Texas).

And all you residents of Columbia will just laugh your heads off. You'd just love to pull off the upset of the year, wouldn't you? The campus would be abuzz. The fans would tear down the goalposts at Fart Field, or wherever it is that you play.

Of course, it wouldn't matter much. You still couldn't beat Nebraska, Oklahoma or even Colorado (that is, unless you only give them four downs to score).

But even if the Tigers go 1-10, they can say

See Whitley/ Page 6

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