

Russell edges out Polen for Superbike title

By RICHARD S. JAMES
Sports Writer of THE BATTALION

American Motorcyclist Association Superbike champion of 1991 Thomas Stevens passed teammate Scott Russell a number one as a reward for his victory in the Superbike race at Texas World Speedway Sunday.

Stevens handed his Kawasaki teammate a number plate with the traditional

Polen's many travels.....Page 10

champion's number one, which Russell earned by defeating Doug Polen on the 1.8 mile road course and protecting his points lead in the Superbike championship.

Russell, the fastest qualifier, put slower traffic between himself and Polen's Ducati in the closing laps, giving him just enough of a lead to hold off Polen's

charge out of the last turn on the last lap.

Polen was beside him as they crossed the finish line, but Russell won by two feet and five one-thousandths of a second.

"Fifty more feet and I would have won," Polen said. "But it's not fifty more feet so I lost."

Polen pulled close to Russell's Kawasaki several times toward the end of the race but was caught behind slower riders that Russell passed quickly.

Russell said he thought traffic helped him more than hurt him in this race. He said he passed several people on the straight that Polen had to pass in the corners.

"We had some pretty slow guys out there that sometime get in your way on a track like this," he said. "There's not a lot of room to pass and it makes it real interesting when you have to get by these guys in tight situations."

Russell led all but the first lap of the 33-lap race. Tom Kipp jumped into the lead at the start, but lost it when Russell

passed him under braking on lap two. Kipp's Honda was passed by several more riders before finishing in eighth.

Polen qualified in second, but fell to fourth at the start. He passed Kipp and Kipp's teammate Mike Smith to settle in second. Stevens finished third.

Polen, Stevens and Jamie James all had a chance of winning the championship going into this race, but Russell's win ensured his points lead. James was four points behind, but lost two laps in the pits because of a flat tire.

Russell lost the Superbike championship by two points last year to Stevens, who was riding for the Vance & Hines Yamaha team at the time. He might have breathed easier had he known that his closest competitor was out of the competition.

"I didn't even know Jamie was out of the race," Russell said. "I wasn't watching my pit board, I didn't care. I knew I was leading it and all I wanted to do was win the race." Russell also won the 750cc SuperSport race on Saturday. He had already clinched the championship in that class.

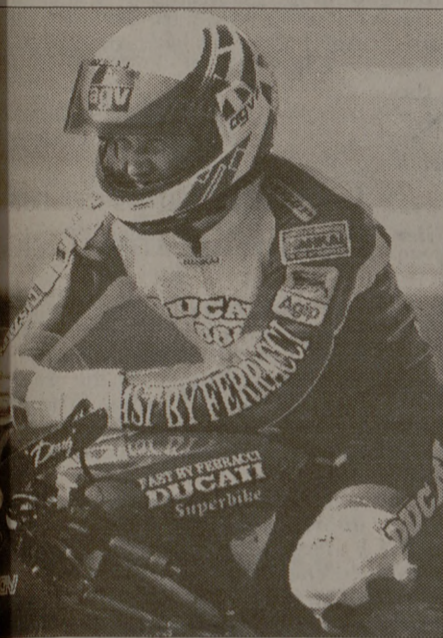
Russell said he had to work harder in the race than he did in qualifying. He said his throttle control and smoothness didn't come as easy as they did in qualifying.

But even with the problems, he said he didn't think it would be as close as two feet.

"I started to throw my arm up halfway down the straight (on the last lap) and I said 'uh-oh, I better not do that,'" he said.

In other races Sunday at TWS, Conroe native Colin Edwards came out on top of a tight battle with Jim Filice in the 250cc Grand Prix race. Doug Polen's teammate Pascal Picotte lapped the entire field on his Ducati to win the SuperTwins race.

Tom Kipp won the 600cc SuperSport race on a Honda and Scott Zampach bested the Harley-Davidson TwinSports field. Edwards, Picotte and Kipp each won the season championship in their class.



KARL STOLLEIS/The Battalion

Doug Polen lost Sunday's Superbike race to Scott Russell by .005 seconds.

SPECIAL REPORT

THE STATE OF THE AGGIES

Despite grumbles from media and fans, Slocum thinks undefeated A&M is on course

By CHRIS WHITLEY
Sports Editor of THE BATTALION

Like something out of a Charles Dickens novel, the Texas A&M football team has seen the best and the worst of times.

On one hand, the fifth-ranked Aggies are undefeated and hold the highest position they have had in the Associated Press poll in years. They are on top of the Southwest Conference and are overwhelming favorites to defend their spot in the Cotton Bowl on New Year's Day.

However, this has also been a team cast in the spotlight, which has made it susceptible to criticism. Charges by media and fans about the Aggies' lack of dominance over their opponents and the level of play at quarterback have haunted them in recent weeks.

To add fuel to the fire, three teams this season have jumped ahead of the Aggies in the AP poll, forcing A&M to stagnate at the number five position. With the elongated season approaching its halfway point, A&M still finds itself searching for respect despite all its accolades.

A&M head coach R.C. Slocum told The Battalion that he has had some concern about how the Aggies handle the slings and arrows of the season, but ultimately they must find some satisfaction within themselves.

"I was concerned about that," Slocum said. "We've got 41,000 students here, so there's going to be a number of people that are going to be really different. We've got hundreds of thousands of former students out there, and there's going to be a percentage of people who're going to be unhappy about whatever you do."

"At some point, to be happy in life, you have to have standards of performance that you set for yourself."

This year's A&M squad has been placed in constant comparison to last year's Southwest Conference championship team. Although the present team has had a better start, it still has problems comparing with its predecessor, which won its games with relative ease.

The 1991 Aggies plowed through the conference schedule without a serious challenge. They typically outscored their opponents by huge margins and ended any doubt to the outcomes of their games by halftime.

In 1992, the Aggies have come from behind in every game but one. Their average margin of victory is seven points, compared with last year's average of 26.

Much of the criticism against this year's team has been directed toward its leader, sophomore quarterback Jeff Granger. Granger, who also pitches for the A&M baseball team, has had to fight off attacks about his passing inconsistency bringing down the team's offense.

Slocum said that a major difficulty for Granger is the public comparing him with Bucky Richardson, the leader of last year's team who is now with the Houston Oilers.

"I think anyone that replaced Bucky Richardson — anyone — would have probably been overvalued and over-criticized," Slocum said. "Bucky was such a leader and such a performer that, by comparison, with any new quarterback, there would have been an adjustment period before he would have been accepted as being anywhere close to Bucky."

Another problem Granger suffers

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DARRIN HILL/The Battalion

Texas A&M head coach R.C. Slocum assembles with the 1992 Aggie football team before rushing off onto Kyle Field. Slocum's team has received some criticism this season regarding its close victories and its failure to rise in the polls.

Aggies aren't pathetic, but they need big win

In case you haven't noticed recently, The Battalion has been a very popular publication over the past three weeks.



CHRIS WHITLEY
Sports Editor

Countless numbers of students and fans have joined the Houston Chronicle and The Dallas Morning News and who knows how many others in reacting to the remarks made in this space about

the level of play of the Texas A&M football team.

Now, it's my turn. The Aggies are not pathetic. They are not a bad football team at all. Actually, they are a pretty good football team.

Ask Bill Walsh or Spike Dykes, and they'll tell you the same thing.

Ask the Associated Press. Out of over 200 college football programs in America, their group of writers believe A&M can beat all of those teams but four.

Ask the 69,017 fans at Kyle Field who no doubt were at least wary that the Aggies would pull out a victory with 5:19 to play in the Texas Tech game nine days ago.

Ask any collegiate football team in the nation who has a loss or a tie right

now. No matter how well they may have played, they can't say that their record matches the Aggies.

If you look at it on a surface level, it seems ludicrous to doubt a team who is in the top five in the nation, who has beaten a national power like Stanford in California and who has gone through five games unscathed.

So what's all the fuss about? Well, the Aggies haven't yet reached their potential. They're capable of doing so much on both the offensive and defensive side of the ball, but it all hasn't clicked at the right times.

Another problem is that this is the 1992 Aggies, not the 1991 Aggies. This is

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Texas wins fourth straight over OU, 34-24

By STEVE O'BRIEN
Sports Writer of THE BATTALION

DALLAS — The Cotton Bowl is somewhat of an oddity for the Texas Longhorns.

The ramp that leads from their locker room to the field is located on the south end of the stadium where thousands of Oklahoma Sooners fans are seated. Every time a Longhorn player steps onto the field, he is greeted with a chorus of boos.

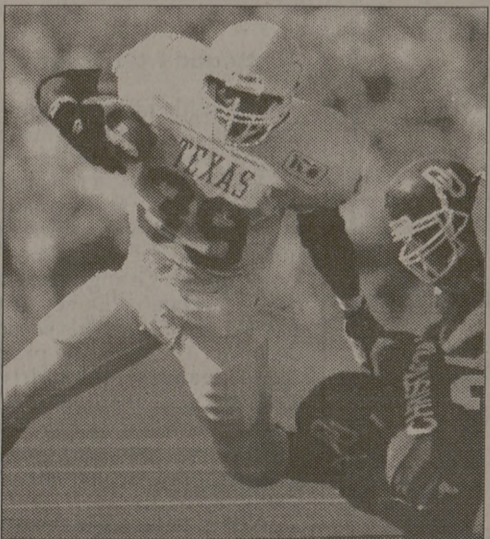
And in the past three games against Oklahoma, Texas had used last-second punts to pull out victories.

Forget about oddities. The Longhorns beat the 16th-ranked Sooners, 34-24, and seem prepared to challenge the No. 5 Texas Aggies for another date in Dallas — this time as Southwest Conference champions on Jan. 1, 1993.

Longhorn enthusiasm doesn't come from the simple fact that Texas won. The Longhorns' win on Saturday was, believe it or not, a blowout.

"I think our coaches did a fantastic job of getting our team ready," first-year head coach John Mackovic said. "Our plans were complete, and we did the things we needed to do to get control of the game offensively and defensively.

Our special teams were alert. I was pleased with the way the coaches got

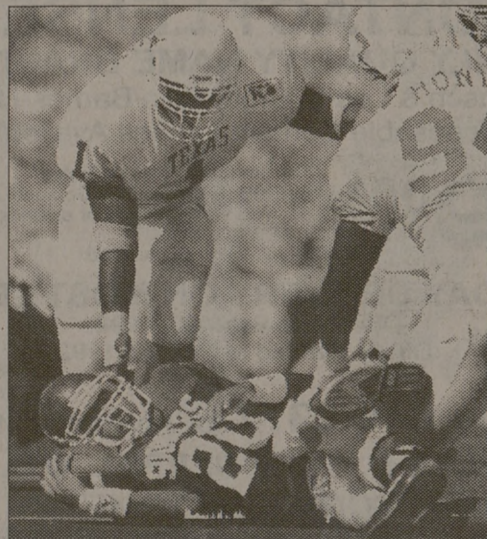


Texas' Curtis Jackson (left) dodges around the Oklahoma defense while Norman Watkins hovers over Sooner tailback Earnest Williams (right) in Texas' 34-24 win.

the players ready. And the players played a terrific game today."

After losing their first two games and stumbling with Mackovic's new offense, now the Longhorns' can look at their final six games with some confidence.

"We've had the talent, but now we're



KARL STOLLEIS/The Battalion

finally using it," UT quarterback Peter Gardere said. "I expect a lot more from this team. Everybody's just starting to get on the same page. We're getting more comfortable, and we're getting better."

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Lady Aggies' slump continues with road defeat to Houston

By RULY MEDRANO
Sports Writer of THE BATTALION

After jumping out of the gate with an 8-2 preconference record, the Texas A&M volleyball team has run into testing times by stumbling into a 1-3 conference mark.

This past Saturday, the Houston Cougars downed the Lady Aggies at Hofheinz Pavilion in Houston in four games, 5-15, 15-8, 15-7, 15-8.

A&M head volleyball coach Al Givens said the Lady Aggies started off the match strongly, but they failed to adjust to a resurging Cougar team throughout the night.

"Houston wasn't playing well in the first game, but then they started playing well," Givens said. "You have to respond in a situation like that and we didn't. We ended up playing catch up the rest of the night."

The Lady Aggies were stricken by a .159 hitting percentage while the Cougars were attacking with a hitting percentage of .265.

According to Givens, the Lady Aggies had a bad passing night, and ineffective passing has been the culprit in their three conference losses.

"Inconsistent passing has been our problem lately," Givens said. "We can't get any side-outs that way. In volleyball, offense is going to win matches, and Houston was just able to outthrust us."

Against Houston, the Lady Aggies may have been a little weary after a road swing two weeks ago which took them to Lubbock and into Florida within a period of four days.

The Lady Aggies then suffered a disheartening loss to the University of Texas three days prior to the Houston match, and it is possible they were still feeling the effects of that loss against Houston.

Givens offered no such excuses. "I would hope we'd be over it (the road trip and the Texas loss)," Givens said. "What I'm really concerned about is that we're 2-5 over our last seven games."

"We've lost to some good teams, but I'm concerned with our execution." Despite the slow conference start, Givens gives the impression that the young Lady Aggie team is far from throwing in the towel.

He spoke of this Wednesday when the Lady Aggies will travel up Highway 6 into Waco to take on Baylor, who Givens

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