

# TEXAS A&M vs. LSU

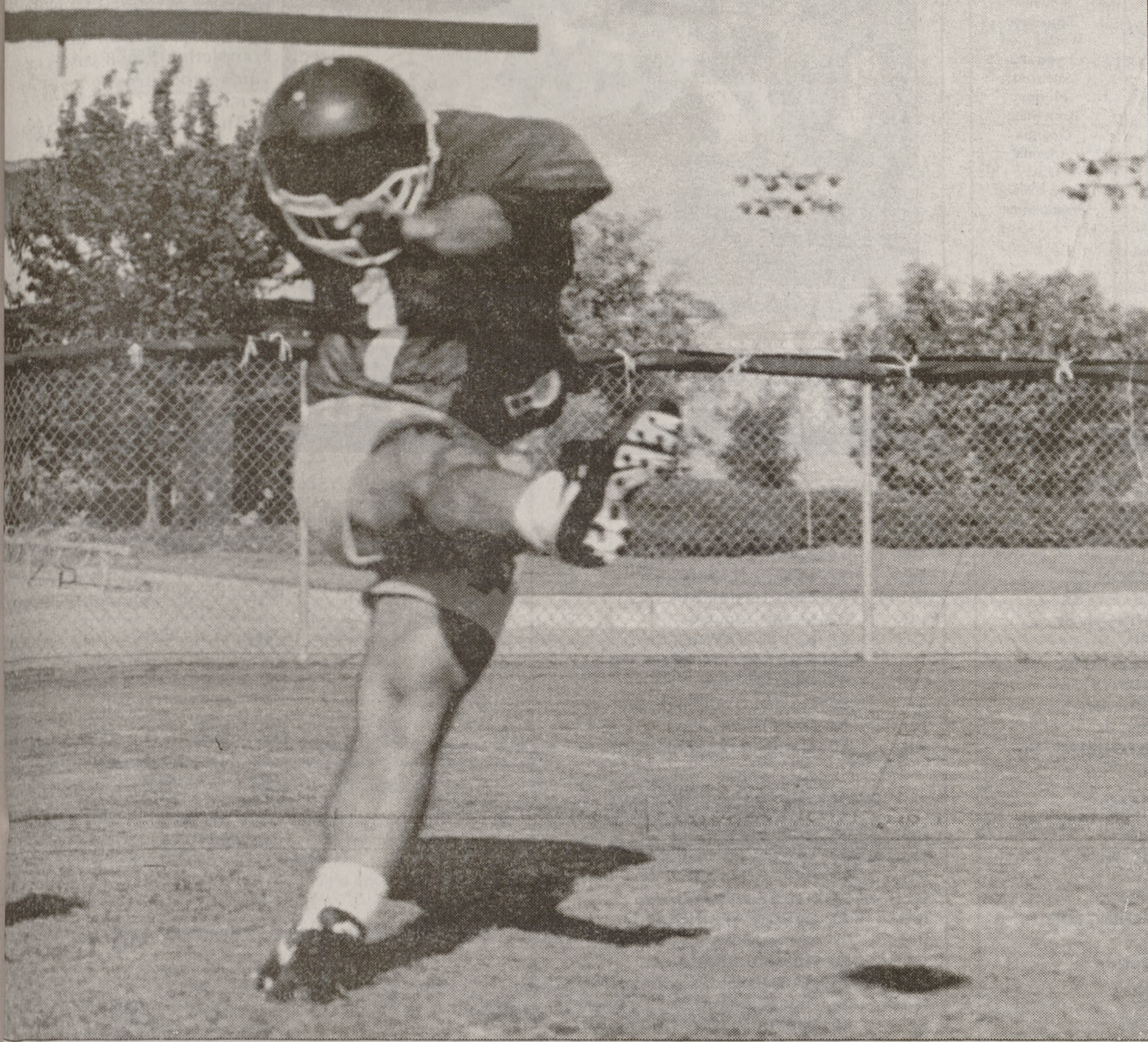
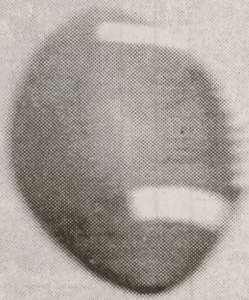
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THE BATTALION

Friday, September 3, 1993

## KICKOFF '93



Mary Macmanus/The Battalion

A&M senior placekicker Terry Venetoulis legs out a kick recently in a practice session on the grass field near Kyle Field.

## A&M ready for youthful Tigers' roar

By Michael Plumer

THE BATTALION

Preseason expectations turn into regular season realities for the Texas A&M football team on Saturday at Kyle Field when Louisiana State comes calling at 2:30 p.m. in both teams' openers.

The fifth-ranked Aggies, pegged by most observers to win a third straight Southwest Conference crown, will have a chance to prove their supporters right and their doubters wrong as the 1993 season gets kicked off.

But the Aggies will start the season at a disadvantage. Five players were suspended by the school for accepting paychecks for work not performed last summer.

Running back Greg Hill, wide receiver Brian Mitchell, defensive back Billy Mitchell, offensive lineman James Brooks and linebacker Jessie Cox will miss the game, according to A&M head coach R.C. Slocum.

A&M is currently awaiting response from the NCAA on the players' status.

Senior linebacker Steve Solari has been plagued by a hamstring pull and his status for the game is questionable. Whether he plays or not will be determined immediately before kickoff.

With all the uncertainties looming overhead, A&M players said they are looking forward to strapping on the helmets.

"We always want to get started again," noseguard Lance Teichelman said. "As a team, we want to be productive, especially after our showing in the Cotton Bowl against Notre Dame."

Teichelman also said the game will be meaningful because it is against the Tigers.

"This game is a better rivalry than most Southwest Conference games because there are a lot of Texas and Louisiana players on both sides," he said. "We want to beat them because it will give us confidence for the rest of the season."

"Actually, we want to annihilate them and show the (ABC) television audience that we are a better team than the one they saw in the Cotton Bowl last year."

But redshirt freshman Danny McCray downplayed the rivalry aspects. Instead, he said A&M needs to concentrate on beating every opponent, no matter who it is.

"Every game we play is big so getting jacked up over this one would not do us any good," McCray said. "We will be extremely excited about playing and I think there will be a much improved A&M team from last year that takes the field."

"LSU is a big game for us but this season I have a feeling all the games will be this season because of our success."

A key to the game will be sophomore quarterback Corey Pullig's performance. A&M coaches have stated they expect to throw the ball more this year and his continuing development is important.

For Pullig and the running game to have success, A&M needs a receiver that can stretch defenses to open up the passing lanes.

McCray, an All-American sprinter last spring, believes he can be the man.

"Last year, I had a real hard time adjusting because I had to think a lot running routes," he said. "But so far during practice I have been relaxed and able to see what is happening."

"The coaches brought me in here because of my speed, and the more opportunities I get, the better I will do."

Pullig expects McCray to be a major attribute to the team.

"He has settled down which is great because he always had the talent and speed to be a big game performer," Pullig said. "He is explosive with a lot of speed and the thing will be getting him the ball."

With Hill's absence, redshirt freshman Leeland McElroy and junior Rodney Thomas are expected to pick up the slack in the backfield. But the game could be decided by Pullig's right arm.

"I expect (LSU) to sit back in the zones and come after the passer," Pullig said. "We can't throw the ball unless we complete passes. I think that is the key to us having a successful season."

"We must be good at all facets of the game and not get that feeling of complacency, which could happen. We will try to better ourselves week-by-week."

## Venetoulis reflects on career before bringing in senior season

By Nick Georgandis

THE BATTALION

In college football it is said that offense wins games and defense wins championships. But when a game is on the line, it's the special teams that often turn the tide for a team.

In the kicking area this season, the Aggies have one question mark and one exclamation point.

The exclamation comes in the form of senior place kicker and All-American candidate Terry Venetoulis. Venetoulis enters his final year as the most accurate field goal kicker in A&M history with his 77.7% success rate. Venetoulis also ranks fourth in team history in career points

scored with 175.

Venetoulis, a life-long soccer player, did not begin kicking footballs until he was a junior in high school.

"The thought never even occurred to me to go anywhere to college," Venetoulis said. "My big deal was to be a soccer player. I played since I was 3. I've played on some national teams and a semi-pro team."

"I tried kicking the football in high school and really liked it."

Suddenly, recruitment letters started coming to Venetoulis and he made a decision after visiting the A&M campus.

"The thing that made me come to A&M was the overall atmosphere of this campus," he said. "Everyone was so

friendly. They treated me as a person, not just a recruit. I came to a game against Alabama my senior year that A&M got beat pretty bad.

"I looked up into the stands and didn't see anybody boo or leaving in the third quarter. It was great."

Venetoulis said he has set lofty goals for himself this season: 80% success rate on field goals and a 100% success rate of extra points.

After his graduation this year, Venetoulis doesn't see a let-down in the kicking game next season when sophomore Keith Waguespack attempts to take over the kicking chores.

"Keith is getting better every year," Venetoulis said. "He's doing really

good, he's been here for a couple of years, he's experienced and I think he feels comfortable around here. He has worked hard and I think he will get the job done."

The question mark in the kicking game regards the graduation of consensus All-SWC punter David Davis. Davis led the conference last season in punting with a stellar 43.8 yard average per kick (39.3 yard net average). As the first game against LSU quickly approaches, a starter has yet to be named.

The two candidates battling for the job are sophomore Sean Terry and junior James Bennett. Of the two, only Terry saw action with the Aggies last season, averaging 28.0 yards on just two kicks.

Terry lists his strengths as a punter as

having both good hang time and a quick release, a key to getting the ball away before the on-rushing defense has time to breach the line.

Terry said he believes with more experience in games and more reps in punting, he will continue to improve.

Bennett said his main strength is his tremendous leg power.

Being only a sophomore, Terry sees himself in a no-lose situation.

"If I'm out there as the starting punter, that's good. But if it's back-up row, I'll still be learning and I've got three years left here," he said.

A&M head coach R.C. Slocum said he won't make a decision on who will be the starting punter until gametime.

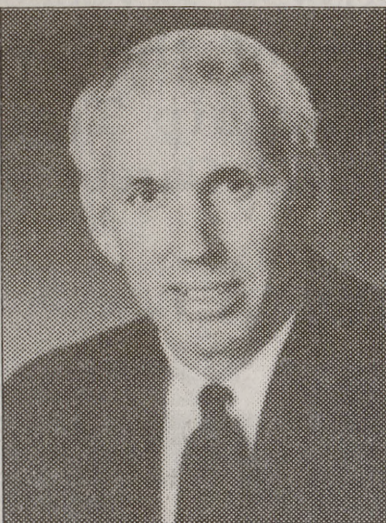
## Q and A with A&M coach R.C. Slocum

Selected questions and answers from A&M head coach R.C. Slocum's Tuesday press conference.

**Q** Did you guys have a bad off-week because you dropped from fourth to fifth in the polls?  
**A** I guess the main question is what kind of week did the writers have. I really don't pay much attention to it. I told the team it was a credit to you that we were ranked that high. We are concerned about the final poll.

**Q** How big is the A&M-LSU game?  
**A** The LSU-A&M rivalry is a big game for both teams because of the neighborhood that the states are in. They have been fired up to play the Aggies every year. Last year, they were better than people gave them credit for. It seems they got on a downward spiral which they could not get out of last year. LSU is a talented team. This season, they have changed their scheme to a 4-3 and they can do a lot of different things. Both of us have got guys who we have no idea how they will play or respond.

**Q** What is the difference between this year's team and last year's team?



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**A** We are better prepared at quarterback. Last year, I had grave concerns because Jeff was coming back from baseball and I didn't have anyone who had any experience. This season I have more questions about the defense. For instance, do we have a big-play linebacker. (Steve Solari is injured and he needs to assume the position Buckley vacated. Punter is another question mark because those guys have not been under the gun. Those are areas I am anxious to see.

**Q** What new players do you think will perform well?  
**A** I think Leeland (McElroy) is one. You never know for sure what will happen but we expect good things from him. I have a high opinion on Ray Mickens. I am anxious to see him in a game because he has had great practices.

**Q** How will you keep the team focused?

**A** That is the hardest part of coaching. Our guys expect to win a championship so we are approaching it with cautious optimism. A high majority of our players expect to win and out of that character evolves. The fans have high expectations so if we go 7-4 and go to a bowl game people would still think that would be a disappointment.

## LSU's Hallman revisits familiar ground

By William Harrison

THE BATTALION

The ghost of A&M's Cotton Bowl past comes back to Kyle Field Saturday, wearing a Louisiana State cap and trying to haunt the Aggies' national championship dreams.

LSU head coach and former A&M student Curley Hallman returns to his old campus, bringing back the gridiron experience built in part from 12 years as a player and coach at Texas A&M.

Hallman's Aggie ties run deep, having begun his coaching career at A&M under Gene Stallings. Hallman also coached under former A&M coach Paul "Bear" Bryant at Alabama and Jackie Sherill when he coached at A&M. Hallman coached the defensive backs at A&M from 1982-87 and helped Sherill initiate the "12th Man" kickoff coverage tradition.

Hallman said he can't wait to return to A&M. "I think any time a coach has been around a place where you played, graduated, or spent several years, when you go back it's exciting, and it's due more to the positive experiences and the friends he's got," Hallman said.

But then it's time for business after the pleas-



Hallman

antries are exchanged.

"When you get closer to that game and that kickoff, all that stuff is out the window because of the importance of playing a ball game and putting your players in a position to win," he said.

"To be competitive - that's the focal point."

Hallman brings LSU into its 100th season against the Aggies, and Hallman said his team must get off to a good start, as LSU is loaded with youth on its roster.

"We're (bringing) probably 22 true or redshirt freshman, 14-15 true sophomores that are either in a starting role or a playing role, so these youngsters need to do some things to make some things happen," Hallman said.

"LSU has a great tradition and great expectations, and we're in a rebuilding situation going into this 100th year," he said. "It's

taken a lot of pride and commitment to restore that reputation.

"It is a special year, but the bottom line is it's time to play football."  
This season, Hallman's A&M connection will continue, relying on newly-hired offensive coordinator Lynn Amedee, who coached at A&M with

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