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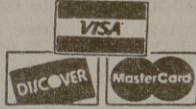
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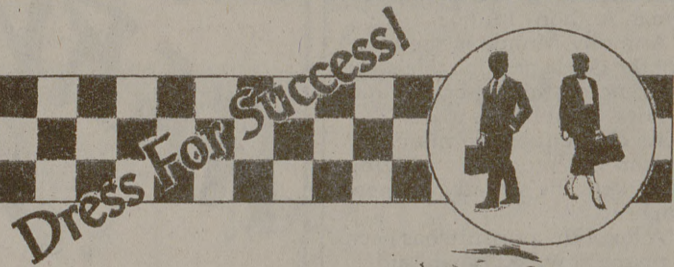
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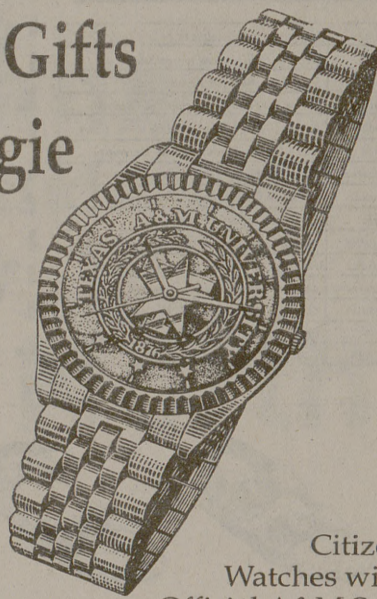
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Despite loss, A&M can not fold its tent

I've heard it said many times that experience is the best teacher. Based on

what transpired in Norman last Saturday, Texas A&M endured a painful lesson in basic mathematics. Three concussions + five suspensions + six turnovers = a disastrous 44-14 loss. This column is not devoted entirely to what happened on Owen Field. It is about what can take place over the balance of this season.

To get the full picture of what happened, we need to take a brief look at the game from the Sooners' perspective. Here's a team that has fallen from the national spotlight over the last five years. They were a mediocre 5-4-2 last season.

This game was their opportunity to prove themselves against a highly ranked national power and they took complete advan-

tage of it. A&M never stopped Oklahoma's misdirection running game and that, coupled with a lethargic Aggie offense, was what did it.

Give them some credit. They beat A&M. Period.

The most important thing A&M can do right now is determine what goals can and cannot be reached. Going undefeated is obviously out of the question. A national championship is all but impossible considering the precipitous drop in the polls.

What is reachable is a third straight unbeaten season in the conference. No Aggie team has ever accomplished this feat. A third straight Cotton Bowl is there for the taking. These may not sound as attractive right now, but it would be silly to abandon these seemingly "lesser" goals simply because of one game.

It's like a child who says "if I can't have all of the candy, I don't want any of it." It's self-defeating to think like that.

An often overlooked aspect of college football is the mental and emotional approach. It's often just as important as having the good players, but is much harder to evaluate. How a team handles adversity is more important than how it handles victory.

For the first time in A&M head coach R.C. Slocum's tenure,

the Aggies have to bounce back not only from a jarring loss, but also a protracted player eligibility battle with the NCAA. I have the utmost confidence in Slocum and his staff from the standpoint that they are running a program that is honest and aboveboard in all respects.

What is not as clear is how the team will respond. I don't mean that to sound as if I am down on the Aggies, because I'm not. This is still an excellent team with loads of talent.

What I am trying to get across is that A & M can go one of two directions. They could either (1) start pointing fingers, divide into cliques, blame the coaches and generally fall apart at the seams or (2) tighten the circle, leave last week behind and tend to the business at hand.

I think Texas A&M will respond in a positive manner. This is a group of players that has enjoyed tremendous success and have enough pride to be angry at last week's performance. The NCAA song-and-dance is over and done with.

There has been a week to evaluate and address strengths and weaknesses. Good teams respond to a loss with even more determination. Bad teams roll over and die. A&M is good. Enough said.



WILLIE CORRINGTON
Sportswriter

Missouri

Continued from Page 3

maximize our efforts offensively, but mixing up the offensive play calling is a definite part of our game plan.

"We're still playing with a lot of young guys," Stull said. "Last year they played most of the season and gained a lot of experience."

The biggest concern for the Aggies, however, will be the play of quarterback Jeff Handy.

Handy, a junior, set the Big-8 record for the most passing yards as a sophomore in 1992 with 2,463 yards.

In Handy's first start against Oklahoma State last season, he passed for 485 yards and 3 touchdowns.

Handy picked up where he left off last year as he passed for 281 yards and two touchdowns with no interceptions in leading his team to a decisive 31-3 season opening victory against Illinois last week.

Slocum said he knows that

Missouri is a much improved team from a year ago and is preparing for them accordingly.

"They're a much better team this year," Slocum said. "They have all the makings of a great football team."

Slocum also said Missouri has added some new wrinkles to the offense that could cause problems for A&M's defense.

"They have the ability to run screens, draws and quick passes which takes a lot of our blitz packages away," Slocum said. "They have a quarterback and receivers that are very good and on defense they have overall great speed."

The defense, however, was subject to injuries last week. Slocum said he thinks that the injuries will not figure into this week's game.

"We're expecting (Steve) Solari, (Ray) Mickens and England to play," Slocum said. "Eric is the most questionable, but he will not practice this week so that we can hopefully have him for the game."

On Thursday, Slocum upgraded all his injured players to probable status for Saturday.

Finally, Smith signs his name on dotted line

The Associated Press

IRVING — Emmitt Smith and Jerry Jones ended their contract feud Thursday. The cost: millions of dollars out of Jones' pocket and two lost football games.

Smith, who had watched Super Bowl champion Dallas Cowboys lost both games they played without him, reached an agreement with Jones that could make him the highest paid running back in the game.

"I got what I wanted. I wanted to be the highest paid running back in the NFL," said Smith. "But it was the hardest thing for me to do, to sit in the living room and watch my teammates play on television."

But the player admitted that "if the team had been 2-0, it's possible that I wouldn't be here."

Smith said he hoped to be ready to play in Sunday's game against Phoenix but added, "Derrick Lassic deserves to start. I'm not sure how far I can go. It's possible I could hurt the team more than help it."

Smith and the Cowboys owner signed a contract during a news conference Thursday night. Jones called it a "win-win" solution.

"Both sides gave in on this one. We gave him a lot of front-end dollars, so it won't hurt us when the salary cap begins next year," Jones said.

Asked if there was a miscue against Smith, Jones said, "I may have miscalculated but I've never miscalculated his importance. Emmitt will always be a Cowboy."

Jones said he would get to work on signing quarterback Troy Aikman next. Aikman has two years left on his contract, but Jones would like to sign the player so he could front-load the pact with money this year.

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