

Aggie spirit offers change for the better

As a transfer student from California, it has been rough adjusting to a new school and state.

Jose de Jesus Ortiz

Sportswriter

I didn't know what to expect from Texas A&M University at first. But the one thing I did know was that along with great academics, A&M's football program is second to none.

Well I'll confess, when I applied to A&M I really didn't know our football team was so good. My older brother, educated me on that fact.

My brother is a former college football player who lives for his daily supply of sports pages. He's the self-proclaimed Tsar of college football.

"Junior, I didn't know you applied to Texas A&M," he said to me with a big smile on his face. "Their football team is damn good. You are going to love it there."

They can't be better than UCLA, I thought. I love the Bruins.

My brother is an avid USC fan and I was shocked to hear him talk highly about another team.

"You'll be surprised," he said. "They really have some great traditions."

In his own shady way, he somehow knew all about Texas A&M's traditions that revolve around the football squad.

"They have some 12th Man thing that if the Aggies score you get to scam on your date," he said. "I wish all fans were as great as A&M's."

I was astonished. The Tsar, an Aggie from New Mexico State University, was actually praising something that was going to be a part of my life for the next two years.

But even with his enthusiastic descriptions, I wasn't going to be convinced until I verified the facts.

So now, everything the Aggies do on the field I compare to my Bruins. After all, I did grow up watching UCLA on the tube. And as far as being a traditional football power, very few schools rate with the university just twenty minutes away from my house - USC.

When I visited USC and saw all of the Heisman trophies they gathered over the years, I was overtaken by the spirit of Tommy Trojan. But, little did I know in those days about the Spirit of Aggieland.

Games at USC play second fiddle to games at A&M as part of the 12th man. A game at USC means merely watching. But Aggies have the opportunity to feel like they are part of

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A&M secondary ready to tackle UH offense

By David Winder

The Battalion

For the first time since the 1986 season the Texas A&M secondary will face a University of Houston football team that likes to run as much as they pass.

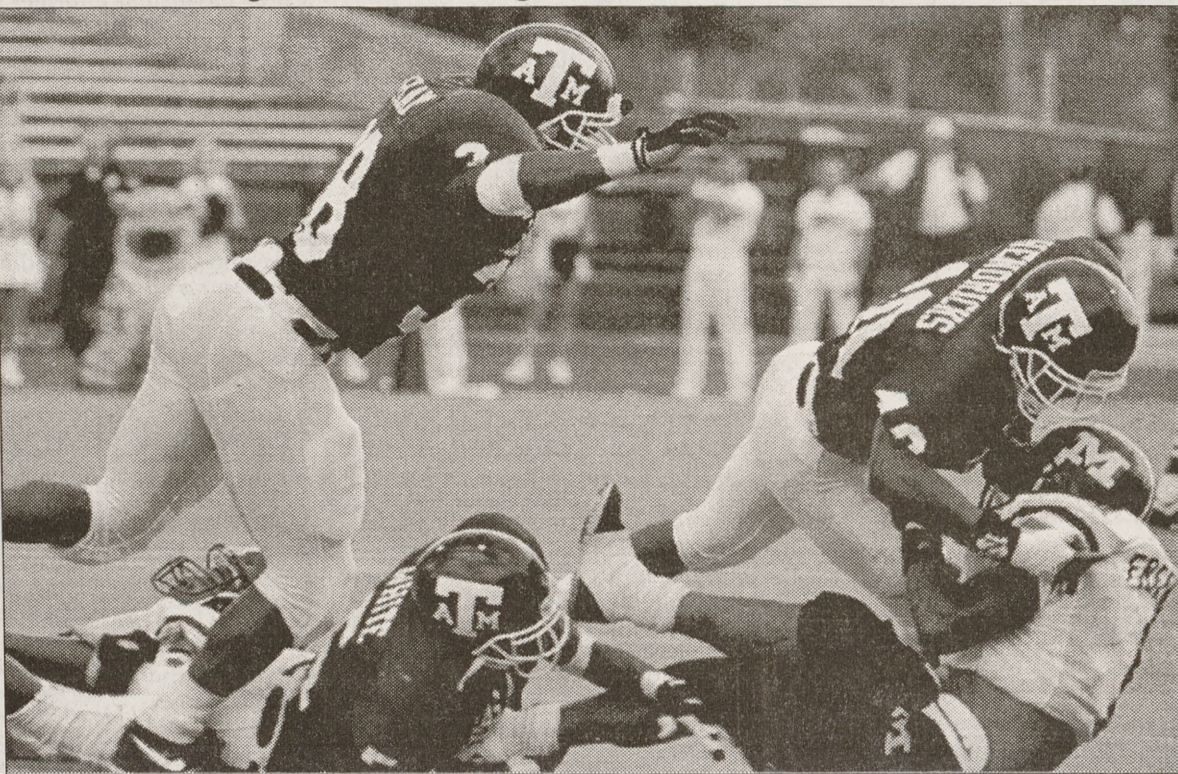
First year Houston head coach Kim Helton has started the process of phasing out the run and shoot offense, opting instead for a more balanced attack. The Cougars' passing game is not gone, however.

"We (the secondary) have to be ready to defend the pass," defensive backs coach Trent Walters said. "They are still throwing the ball, but not as much as they did last year."

"They have the same quarterback (Jimmy Klingler) and the same receivers and they're still throwing the ball well. Ron Peters and (Keith) Jack are excellent receivers and they'll give us a tough time."

The Cougar offense did more than give A&M a tough time last year as Klingler passed for 488 yards and three touchdowns in the Aggies 38-30 victory. Houston receivers Sherman Smith along with Peters each had over 100 yards receiving for the game.

"I'm looking forward to it (Saturday's game) because we embarrassed ourselves last year," cornerback Ray Mickens said. "All those yards they got on us really embarrassed us last year, so we're looking to play a good game this year."



Kyle Burnett/The Battalion

Junior defensive backs Michael Hendricks (right) and Junior White bring down a Missouri receiver while junior outside linebacker Reggie Graham gets ready to assist during the Aggies' 73-0 win on Sept. 18.

Houston (1-3), which is coming off a 24-3 victory over Baylor last Saturday, sometimes uses a two-back set or a tight end in special situations.

"Anytime you play a team like UH you are going to go against an explosive offense," cornerback Aaron Glenn said.

"I'm still expecting it to be as explosive as it was last year."

Walters said Houston's new offensive attack places more responsibility on the shoulders of the secondary.

"They are a little more diversified this year than they were last year," Walters

said. "They are running the ball pretty well and also throwing it, so that's double trouble for us because we have to defend the pass while at the same time be alert to defend the run."

A&M strong safety Michael Hendricks feels the key to shutting down Houston is getting to Klingler.

"We have to get pressure on the quarterback," Hendricks said. "Last year we had no pressure on the quarterback and they gave us a tough game."

"I think the way the defensive line plays will also be a key to the game."

Reserve cornerbacks Donovan Greer and Andre Williams will also see time against the Cougars' passing attack.

"We're working on getting them ready this week," Mickens said. "We're trying to get them ready for this game by telling them of our past experiences."

"I'm pretty sure that they're going to do real well this game."

Glenn said he sees this Saturday as a defensive challenge regardless of the type of offense the Cougars run.

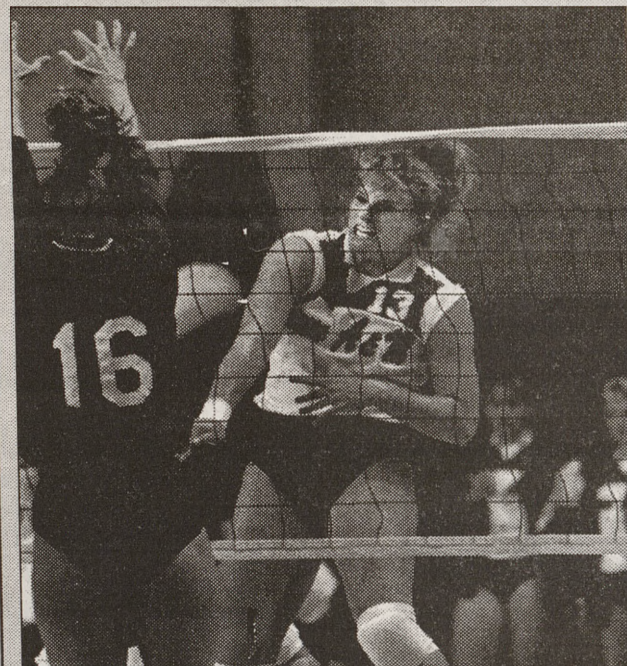
"Houston plays A&M hard every year," Glenn said. "Even when I wasn't here I could see that Houston played A&M hard."

"It's going to be another tough game on the defense. We're just going to have to go out there and make sure we keep our intensity up."

Lady Aggies take on Rice, try for eighth straight win

By Julie Chelkowski

The Battalion



Mery Macnarus/The Battalion

The Lady Aggie volleyball team will try to boost its 15-3 record and seven game winning streak as it takes on Rice University at G. Rollie White Coliseum at 7 p.m. Wednesday.

Although the Rice Owls are only 8-7 this season, and Texas A&M has dominated the series between the two teams by 26-4 since 1976, the Aggies are not taking the game lightly.

"They're going to come in fired-up," setter Suzy Wente said. "We can't take anybody for granite. We have to play our game because anybody can get beat if they're not ready."

Assistant coach Jon Roberts said the Owls' record is no direct reflection on how they have played in the past and will play against A&M.

"I saw them play Texas and they weren't afraid of them," he said. "I don't think they will be afraid of us."

But, he said, the Aggies are ready for a challenge.

"They're a younger team, so sometimes younger teams don't play as consistently," he said. "I'm hoping they play real well because I think we need a competitive match."

"We've been stomping teams lately and I think we need to get into a match where we have to fight it out."

The Aggies are currently in the middle of their season and the coaches said they have noticed a slight decrease in the level of intensity in the team.

"We're kind of going through that (stage) now," Roberts said. "We're in the mid-season blues. The honeymoon is over."

Assistant coach John Corbelli said the "blues" may be a result of the long winning streak they have been experiencing.

"We're trying to protect ourselves from getting complacent about the wins we've been getting," he said. "We need to keep ourselves focused on the end of the season and being a better team at that point and keep making progress."

But senior outside hitter Sheila Morgan said the team is capable of pulling out of any slump, especially with the help of their fans.

"The fans are really, really great," he said. "We've had diehard fans that have kept with us all through the years."

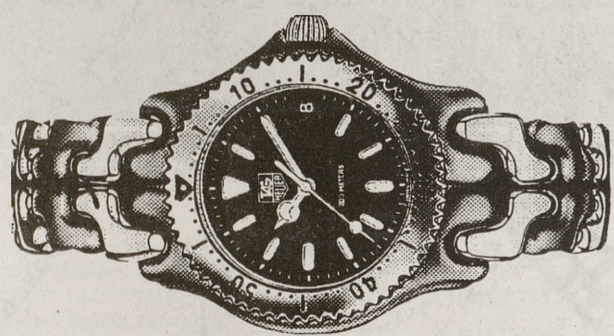
"It really makes us feel good knowing that all these long hours in the gym (pay off)."

The Lady Aggies' success has landed them at number six in the South Region rankings which Morgan said is an honor. But, she said, the team needs to continue to improve upon their current level of play as they meet Rice and other teams in the future.

"In the four years that I've been here, we haven't been ranked at all, in any poll," she said.

"To finally reach that is really nice, and it says a lot about our coaching staff and our team that we can turn around and do some great things, but we need to keep it up."

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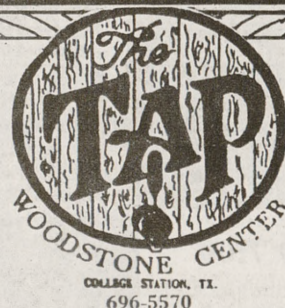
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