

# TEXAS A&M vs. HOUSTON

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THE BATTALION

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## Aggies ready for new Cougar attack

By Julie Chelkowski

THE BATTALION

The University of Houston football team may have a few surprises for the 14th-ranked Texas Aggies when they walk on to Kyle Field Saturday. But A&M may have the ace up their sleeve with the return of junior running back Greg Hill.

Hill will play his first game of the season after coming off a five-game NCAA suspension for accepting unearned pay for summer work. Hill said he is more than ready to get on the field and Houston is a perfect team to kick off his season.

"I just want to get out there, do my best and not go out there all hyper - but go out there calm and cool like it's practice," Hill said. "I've had good success

against Houston. I had two touchdowns my freshman year and I had three last year."

On the other side of the ball, the Cougars, who shocked an unsuspecting Baylor team 24-3, will meet A&M with a new style of offense, a new coach and a new image. And the Aggies don't know what to expect.

"It presents problems because we're not sure what they're going to do," A&M head coach R.C. Slocum said. "The coaches on defense will have to adjust on the field during the game."

The Cougars' run-and-shoot offense has been phased out this season by new head coach Kim Helton who replaced it with a more balanced attack. However, Houston's inconsistent offensive performance so far this season created a problem for the Aggies as they prepared for the game.

"It's a disadvantage to us," Slocum said, "because we're not sure if they're going to play us like they did last year or they're going to play us like they played Baylor last week or play like they did Michigan earlier this year."

In last year's game at the Astrodome, Houston gave the Aggies one of their toughest challenges as they led at halftime by a score of 17-10 after racking up 304 yards while A&M only had 179.

The Aggies came back in the third quarter with three straight Greg Hill touchdowns followed by a Rodney Thomas touchdown in the fourth quarter. Houston scored twice more in the fourth quarter to render a final score of 38-30.

A&M senior defensive end Eric England said what happened in the past will not happen again.

"It will be different than last year," he said. "We're playing at home, in front of

our crowd. We'll be even more hyped and we'll be prone to try to stop things like that. We really don't want that to happen at our house."

But Slocum said the Cougars will be just as talented as last year because most of their key players return. One of Slocum's biggest concerns, he said, is Houston junior quarterback Jimmy Klingler who passed for an impressive 488 yards in last year's A&M game and eluded all Aggie attempts for a sack.

The reformed Houston offense also features senior running back Lamar Smith who rushed for 118 yards and caught eight passes for 49 yards last weekend against Baylor. Smith currently leads the SWC with 6.5 receptions per game.

"I'm worried about him," Slocum said. "(He's) comparable to Bam Morris. He looks like a versatile player."

Slocum said Houston's current 1-3 record is not an accurate measure of the teams abilities. For A&M to compete, he said, they must be ready to react to any situation and just "hang loose."

"We have to prepare for more defense," he said. "It really spreads your preparation thin so it's not as effective. It might be one of those games where we'll have to make adjustments until we figure out what they really want to do."

Houston's offense is not the only area of the team undergoing changes. The Cougars promoted linebackers coach Gene Smith to defensive coordinator before the Baylor game and the changes were immediately apparent as they held the Bears to only a field goal.

A&M sophomore quarterback Corey Pullig said the Houston changes will

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## Q and A with R.C. Slocum

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

**Q** After beating a good team like Texas Tech on the road, does that make you feel good about your chances of a third consecutive conference crown?

**A** We won a game that I was very concerned about in Lubbock. I feel good about that. At the same time, I look at our team and start thinking in terms of winning enough games to win the conference championship, and we are not there yet. Sometimes you reach a point where you say "we are where we need to be and we just need to keep it fine-tuned." We're not at that point. There are some things I'd like to see us do better like blocking, (avoiding) fumbles, just little things that keep you from looking like you're oiled up. Those things disappoint me.



Slocum

**Q** In the second half against Texas Tech, A&M really began moving the ball. Do you expect similar results this week against Houston?

**A** Houston is a much more talented defensive team than Tech is. If you just go athlete-wise, a guy's ability to run and chase and do those things, they've got a lot more ability. And offensively, they've got a lot of the tools back that helped them lead the nation in offense last year.

**Q** What did you think of Houston's 24-3 victory over Baylor last week?

**A** There's been some talk that the Cougars' defense played better last week. One of the reasons they played better is that their offensive scheme will allow their defense to play better. With a balanced offense, and running the ball like they are, their defense doesn't have to play as much. As a result, they are fresher and they play better.

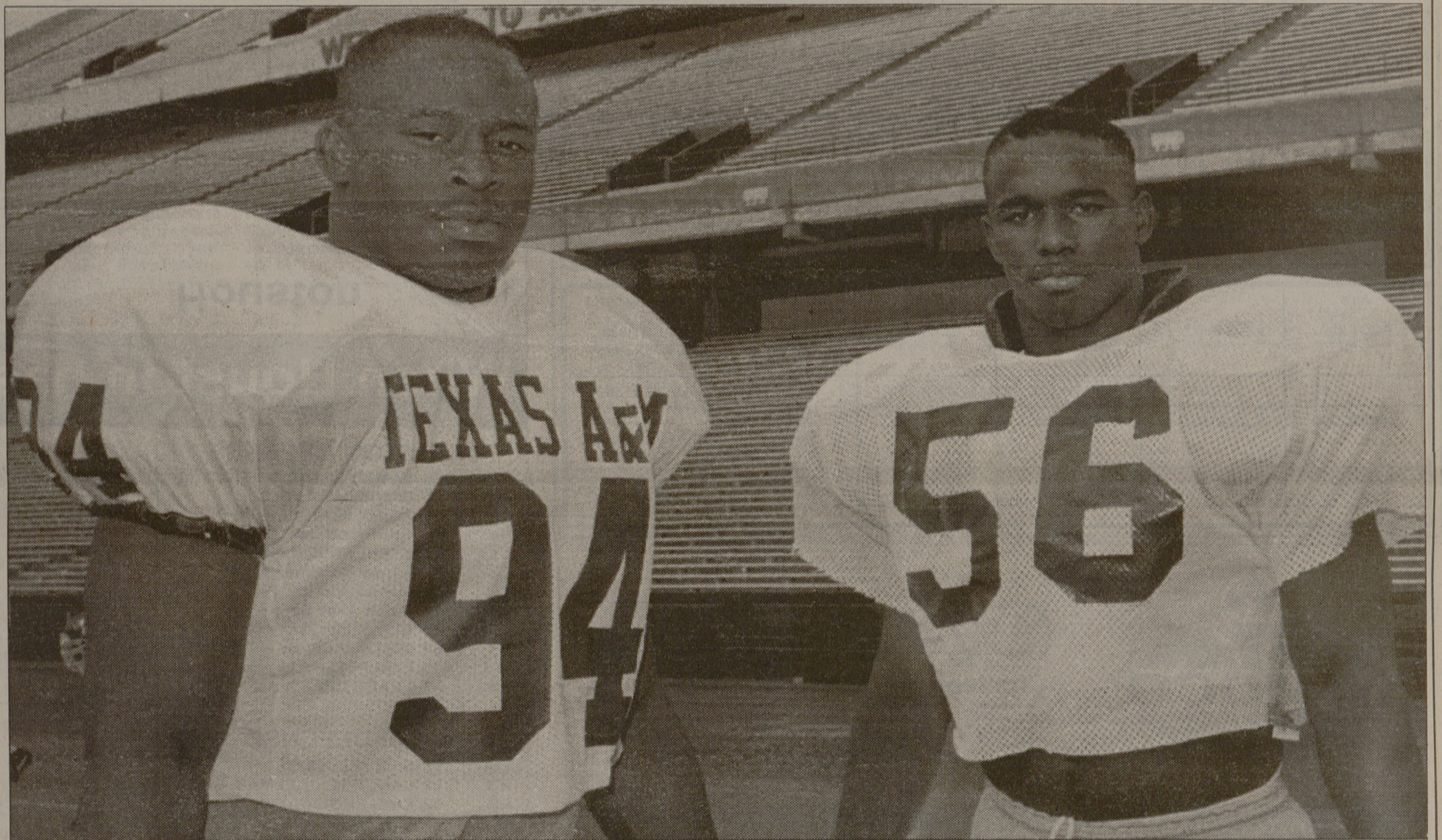
**Q** Will (tailback) Leeland McElroy be used at fullback this week with Greg Hill's return?

**A** We've used him some at fullback already. He's a good pass receiver, and when you get back there in split-back formation, there's no problem to take the fullback out of the game and put Leeland in there, particularly if you are not counting on your fullback to be a blocker in that formation. If he's going to be in a pass pattern, you're better off having a quicker guy in that situation.

**Q** What do you think about Houston coach Kim Helton's claim that A&M can not respect Houston?

**A** I am really amazed coach Helton knows what we think. He's a lot smarter than what I thought, and I thought I was pretty smart. I don't know if he appreciates that I have coached against Houston for a long time. I recruited some of those guys.

## Bookends



Kyle Burnett/THE BATTALION

A&M senior outside linebacker **Steve Solari** (left) and junior outside linebacker **Antonio Shorter** (right) are looking to pressure Houston quarterback Jimmy Klingler this Saturday at noon when the Houston Cougars invade Kyle Field. Last season, the Aggies did not record a sack against the Cougars in the Astrodome.

## A&M's Solari, Shorter make bruising tag team

By Michael Plumer

THE BATTALION

The National Football League is dotted with Texas A&M outside linebackers who left College Station with a patent for pass-rushing.

The blitzing style employed by the Aggies allowed former players John Roper, Aaron Wallace and Marcus Buckley to depart with a knack for sacking the quarterback.

Two current A&M linebackers are playing as this year's pass-rushing innovators.

Senior Steve Solari, a three-year starter, and junior Antonio Shorter, a first-year starter, now patrol the outside for the Aggies in A&M's 3-4 defensive alignment.

While they have not yet posted the big sack numbers their predecessors have (Solari has three quarterback

traps, Shorter 3 1/2), both agree that their style of play has been instrumental in the 14th-ranked Aggies 3-1 start.

"I just do what it takes to win, whether that is applying technique or playing football," Solari said. "For me, it depends on the situation because I know I can't make every play."

"But you need to take it upon yourself to make the play when needed."

Shorter said that although he is relatively inexperienced, he feels that he is reaching the stage where he can create some havoc in opponents' backfields.

"When the season started, I was tentative," Shorter said. "Now I am ready to start turning it loose and be reckless. I am out there on the field to make things happen, and if I stay poised, good things will happen."

But this past spring, things were not so rosy for

A&M at the outside spot. Solari, who was expected to take over Buckley's vacated spot, was injured and missed all of spring practice.

A&M defensive coordinator Bob Davie decided to move an inexperienced and unproven Shorter into Buckley's position. Davie said he has not regretted the change one bit.

"We have made it through the early part of the season which was the tough part," Davie said. "It was frustrating for Steve because we were going to make him the focal point."

"We decided to let Steve do what he did last year because Antonio has been a solid player. He hasn't been spectacular, but he has made the plays he needed to."

Shorter said taking over for Buckley, a second-round draft pick by the New York Giants, has actually not

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## New Houston coach Helton leads confident players against A&M

By William Harrison

THE BATTALION

University of Houston head football coach Kim Helton talked freely and frankly about his Cougars' underdog status for Saturday's contest against heavily-favored Texas A&M.

And while he pulled no punches when talking about his own program's lack of size and depth, he said the Aggies could lose to the Cougars if A&M pulls its own punches.

"The key to the game is that Texas A&M will have to overlook us a little bit, (and) maybe they'll do like Baylor did (in their 24-3 upset loss to Houston) and overlook us," Helton said.

After an 0-3 start, the Cougars shut down the Baylor Bears in the Astrodome and the first year coach said he was not

surprised, although the team has not had much time to overhaul its offense.

"Right now, we're teaching new plays every week because we didn't have a spring practice," Helton said. "You'd like to be teaching techniques at this time of the season, not new plays."

Helton said his team has gained a measure of confidence from beating a talented Bears team and also from gradually learning from week-to-week.

"Until you do something and have success, you really don't have any faith, you just have a lot of hope," Helton said.

"I think (the upset) gives us a confidence that says 'maybe if we play as hard as we can play, we can compete with some of these teams that have us out-manned.'"

Senior wide receiver Keith Jack agreed and said Houston has gained a better attitude since Helton took over for the fired John Jenkins.

"Last year (when) we played Michigan, we were all tense - including the coach," Jack said. "And now we have a coach who is more of a go-get-the-job-done kind of coach. 'We knew that we had just learned an offense in three weeks, and further down the road, I think it would have been a lot better game and maybe we could have upset them.'"

"(Helton) lets us know that there is no one out there that we can't play with

and compete with, and I think that's what all the players are beginning to believe."

Helton said the difference this year in his offense versus Jenkins' pass-happy run and shoot scheme is that the team is less predictable and is learning what it takes to win behind junior quarterback Jimmy Klingler.

Under the run and shoot, Helton said Klingler, the nation's leader in total offense and passing yardage per game last year, racked up "false yardage" - massive statistical accomplishments tainted by mistakes.

He said that Klingler is learning not to make mistakes, and Helton took the blame for the one interception Klingler has thrown all season. Helton said Klingler has the footwork to elude A&M's

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Helton