

TEXAS A&M vs. SMU

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THE BATTALION

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Aggies wary of Mustang surprise

By Julie Chelkowski

THE BATTALION

This weekend's contest between Texas A&M and Southern Methodist may not be the most anticipated game this season for many Aggie fans.

For A&M, it has the basis for being a fairly uncontested game - the Aggies are 6-1 overall while SMU is 1-4-2; A&M is ranked 11th in the nation while SMU is fifth in the Southwest Conference and out of any consideration for a bowl game; the point spread is 32 in favor of A&M; and the game is at Kyle Field.

But despite the obvious advantages the Aggies possess, A&M head coach R.C. Slocum said the team will enter the game with the same intensity as any game this season.

"I fully expect to go out there and fight for our lives in this ball game," Slocum said. "They'll come in here motivated, and it'll be a heck of a contest."

"That's what we're prepared for, and we're planning on having a tough football game."

Although SMU has only won one game this season, the Mustang run-and-shoot offense has proved to be a threat to opponents as they have averaged 233.7 yards per game and have lead in the fourth quarter in four games.

With SMU's passing attack, the Aggie secondary is anticipating much more business than they received last week against Rice's run-oriented offense.

A&M cornerback Ray Mickens said he is eager to have the burden back on the secondary's shoulders.

"We're going to be put on an island, and the corners will be put to the test a lot of times," he said. "I think we've been doing our job, but one game can blow all of that." Mickens said losing to SMU or another lesser opponent would be embarrass-

ing for the team and A&M could not take the Mustangs for granted.

"There ain't going to be a let down for this game," he said. "The game lies in our hands - win or lose it's going to be decided in the secondary."

Along with the injury to the Mustang's record this season, the SMU secondary has also suffered substantial losses in starting positions due to injury. Free safety Richie Butler, cornerback Michael Artmore and free safety/cornerback Troy Williams are all doubtful for this Saturday's game.

"That's a factor, but I've learned over the years not to put a whole lot of stock in those injuries," Slocum said. "A lot of those injured guys have a high tendency to show up and play on game day."

"I never pay a whole lot of attention to who they have injured."

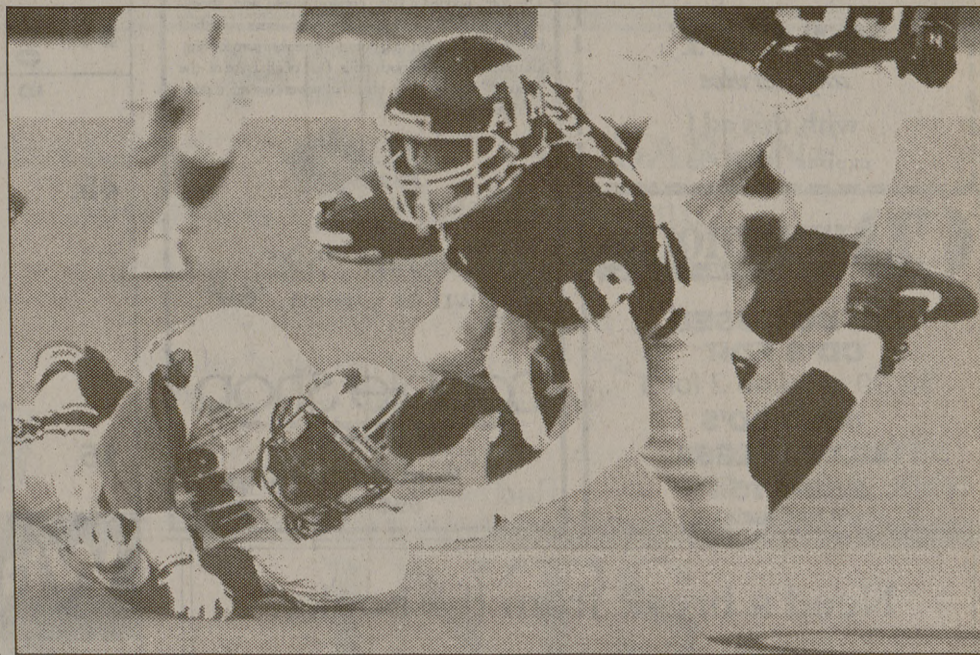
A&M has its share of injuries on defense, as well.

Inside linebacker Reggie Graham (sprained ankle), nose guard Lance Teichelman (bruised knee) and free safety Junior White (bruised knee) returned to practice on Thursday for the first time this week. Graham is the only player, however, who is questionable for the game.

"I never make a big deal out of the ones we have hurt," Slocum said. "Some of them show up on game day (and) feel like playing, and other days they can't."

"We'll have 11 out there and they will, too." But the oddsmakers have established A&M's 11 as being 32 points better than SMU. Slocum said he realizes the delicacy of the situation.

"I've been in coaching long enough that I've been on the other end where it wasn't fun," Slocum said. "I would never try to do anything to embarrass a coach or a group of young men."



BATTALION FILE PHOTO

Texas A&M junior wide receiver Brian Mitchell (18) slips away from an SMU defender in the Aggies' 65-6 victory over the Mustangs at Kyle Field in 1991.

PLUGGING THE MIDDLE



Mike Steele/THE BATTALION



Mike Steele/THE BATTALION

A&M senior inside linebacker Jason Atkinson (43, left) and fellow inside linebacker junior Larry Jackson (37) are locked-in on helping the Aggies stuff the run. Atkinson has registered 40 tackles and one sack this season while Jackson has made 25 stops.

A&M middle defenders find opponents running at them, taking advantage of injuries, blitz tactics

By Michael Plumer

THE BATTALION

If Texas A&M's defense was compared to the human body, the inside linebackers and the noseguard would be the heart and soul.

Linebackers Jason Atkinson and Larry Jackson, along with noseguard Lance Teichelman, form the Aggie's inner core.

With A&M's blitzing style of defense, sometimes it is easy to overlook the fundamental key to winning football games - shutting down the run, especially the up-the-middle crashes Baylor and Texas Tech feature offensively. The onus on that falls on the three inside players.

Predominantly, A&M's defense has been characterized as a finesse type because of the all-out pass rush, but A&M defensive coordinator Bob Davie said that is a label that should change.

"I haven't seen it where teams run right

at us," Davie said. "I don't think Texas Tech or Baylor ran the football down our throats and that is one of their strengths. There are no blitzes to stop the run."

"You just have to play good, solid technique."

Davie said he stresses fundamentals to Teichelman, Atkinson and Jackson like getting the correct reads and following the ball.

Playing noseguard, Teichelman is automatically the center of attention and said he has a simple job which directly helps out the inside backers.

"It is pretty cut and dried," the senior said. "If it doesn't take two guys to block me, then I have to make the tackle. I have a lot of responsibility but that goes with the territory of playing the position."

So far this season, only one running back has gained over 100 yards against the Aggies, and that was Rice's Yoncy Edmonds last Saturday. Atkinson, a senior,

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Kyle Burnett/THE BATTALION

A&M senior noseguard Lance Teichelman (58) pressures Houston's Jimmy Klingler.



Q and A with R. C. Slocum

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

Q What is your biggest concern with Southern Methodist?

A I go back to a game two or three years ago when they came in here and took the opening drive and went right down the field and scored. You look out there and say, "They shouldn't be able to do that." But they did. I think (both of SMU's) quarterbacks are capable of throwing well, and they've got good receivers there. I've seen their defense come up and smack us. They knocked our starting quarterback out of the game last year. I can honestly say, I've never coached a game that I wasn't nervous about before the contest.

Q Is this another week where you have to carefully monitor how your team approaches the game?

A Yes. We've got to make sure we have good practices. If we allow ourselves to not have good practices, the we set ourselves up to have failure on the weekend. So the challenge is to make sure we practice good and have good tempo. The first little sign I see that we are being nonchalant, I'm going to get that stopped. When you play the big games, it's not as hard.

Q A&M has been getting good pressure on the opposing quarterback, especially from the outside linebacker spot. What are your thoughts?

A (Junior outside linebacker) Antonio Shorter is one of the most underrated guys around. Outside linebacker was one of the big, big questions we had this year. Losing a guy like Marcus Buckley and all the plays he made, we were really concerned if anybody could step up. But Shorter has been a solid player. He's not hurt our defense at all. And (senior Steve) Solari has done a good job.

Q With an open date next week, are you approaching anything different this week? Will you play different people or try anything new?

A No, we're not doing anything different at all. We're trying to take it as another game and do everything we can to be ready to play this weekend. We'll worry about getting through this October stretch. Then, next week, if we can successfully come through this five-game stretch, then we'll feel much better about where we are as a team. Looking at it back in August, we thought this was going to be a tough grind, playing five straight weeks with three of them on the road.

Mustangs look for perfect effort to hang with Aggies

By David Winder

THE BATTALION

Youth has been the biggest problem for the Southern Methodist Mustangs this year. Four times the Mustangs have taken leads into the fourth quarter and four times they have come away without a victory.

In their first game of the year, the Mustangs (1-4-2, 1-2-1) had the lead until the last play of the game when Arkansas scored a touchdown for a 10-6 victory. The next week, the Mustangs held a 16-3 advantage over Wisconsin, currently ranked number 18, only to run out of gas and lose 24-16.

After leading most of the game SMU ended up in a 10-10 tie with Missouri by giving up a late touchdown. The biggest blow to Mustangs season though is when they allowed the Houston Cougars to score three touchdowns in the final

quarter for a 28-28 tie.

"We lost 30 seniors off of last year's team, so we are really young," SMU head coach Tom Rossley said. "Our goal is to start redshirting a lot of our freshman recruits so that eventually we'll be able to play some fifth year seniors."

"This year, only Baylor and Texas have really handled us. Those are the only two games that we have had this year where really didn't have a chance to win."

Recruiting has been a problem for the Mustangs since the football program was hit with the "death penalty" by the NCAA in 1987. Rossley believes, however, that SMU's recruiting woes are changing for the better.

"First of all, we don't get some recruits because are admission standards are really high," Rossley said. "But now we're becoming more

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Rossley