

A&M should get the respect it deserves

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Asst. Sports Editor

As passing attack? Is that what that was? Not since the days of Kevin Murray have so many footballs gone soaring through the air at Kyle Field.

Corey Pullig continued to his game by game improvement that started at the beginning of last season. He enjoyed his finest day at Kyle Field as an Aggie, completing 17 of 30 passes, hitting Rodney Thomas and James McKeehan for touchdowns, while not throwing a single interception. The three times Pullig was sacked, it was only because he didn't rush the ball into a poor throw, more aware of the blitzing linebackers than of the lurking safeties.

But the biggest improvement of all, was made by Pullig and the rest of the team, breaking out of the one stigma associated with A&M over the last few years, the one that said they couldn't beat national powerhouses.

It started in the 1992 Cotton Bowl when Florida State slipped by A&M 10-2 in a soggy Cotton Bowl, and grew during A&M's trashing by Notre Dame in the '93 Cotton Bowl and by Oklahoma last year in Norman. The Aggies gained a modicum of respect back in last year's game, playing the Fighting Irish even nearly the whole game, before finally falling 24-21. That game figured to gain the Aggies' back at least a little respect, but the focus that day was on a national championship between Florida State and Nebraska, and A&M's effort was largely overlooked.

But come Saturday night, A&M could not be denied. The new-look "Wrecking Crew" pushed the Okla-

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Texas A&M avenges loss with 36-14 victory

Aggies convert three turnovers into 17 points

By David Winder
THE BATTALION

Last week, the Texas A&M football team kept talking about how revenge would not be a factor in their upcoming game against the University of Oklahoma.

After last year's 44-14 trouncing in Norman though, the Aggies were still looking forward to meeting the Sooners in the rematch.

"It feels good," linebacker Antonio Armstrong said. "I've been waiting a whole year to play this game. It's great that we won, but it still doesn't erase the way we lost last year."

Last year the A&M offense could never get on track while Oklahoma made plays on both sides of the ball. This year nothing went right for the 14th-ranked Sooners as the 16th-ranked Aggies rolled to a 36-14 victory Saturday in front of a record non-conference crowd of 72,577.

"It was the exact opposite of last year's game, especially in the fourth," Sooner head coach Gary Gibbs said. "It looked like it would be an exciting finish for us, but it just became lopsided in the fourth quarter."

In the last quarter, the Aggies took advantage of three Sooner turnovers, turning them into 17 points. After a Reggie Brown fumble recovery, Corey Pullig found tight end James McKeehan open in the end zone to give the Aggies a 26-14 lead.

On the Sooners' next possession, Aggie defensive end Brandon Mitchell recovered quarterback Garrick McGee's fumble. Three plays later, place kicker Kyle Bryant made his third field goal of the game for a 29-14 score.

Cornerback Ray Mickens finished off the scoring for A&M by picking off a McGee pass and returning it 38 yards for a touchdown.

"They were doing a good job rotating their backs in, keeping a fresh one in the game at all times," Brown said. "So we just had to sit back and be patient. It worked because we got three interceptions and two fumble recoveries."

Another thing that worked was the Aggie offense, as it racked up 359 total yards. Last year Pullig threw three interceptions while passing for only 84 yards. This time around, he threw for 191 yards and two touchdowns.

"I'm passing 50 percent better than I did last year," Pullig said. "In the back of our minds we knew it was payback time. We were too good to lose like that last year."

After a Bryant 53-yard field goal, Pullig found Rodney Thomas alone in the end zone for a 12 yard touchdown pass to give the Aggies a 10-0 lead.

"This team will get better," A&M head coach R.C. Slocum said. "The more these young guys get to play, the better they are going to get."

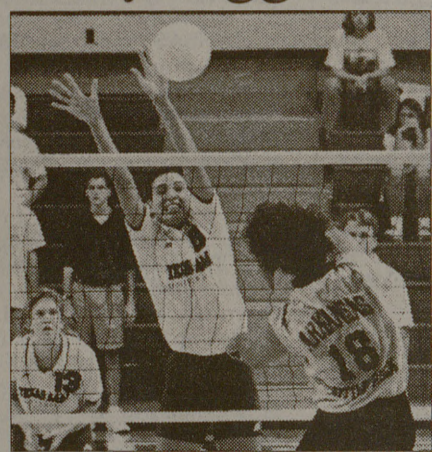


Stew Milne/THE BATTALION

Cornerback Ray Mickens returns an interception for a touchdown.

Lady Aggies start volleyball season with impressive opener

by Tom Day
THE BATTALION



Stew Milne/THE BATTALION

Jennifer Bronner blocks a spike during the game against Arkansas

With the University of Texas invading G. Rollie White Coliseum on Wednesday, the Lady Aggie volleyball team sought to establish an intimidating home-court presence in their home opener last Friday.

Using a relentless barrage of kills to accomplish its goal, A&M overpowered Arkansas-Little Rock in four sets, 15-4, 15-2, 13-15, 15-10.

A&M, 3-2, came out rocking and rolling in the first two sets, using sharp passing to set up several kills to take control of the match.

Setter Suzy Wente believes solid teamwork was the key to the tune-up victory.

"Tonight, we passed really well and had a lot more eye contact and good

communication," Wente said.

Head coach Laurie Corbelli used a lineup primarily made up of freshmen and reserves to finish off the Lady Trojans.

Perhaps the most pleasant development was the play of sophomore middle blocker Page White and freshman outside hitter Kristie Smedsrud. White posted a career-high 20 kills and had no errors in 24 attempts in leading the ferocious A&M attack. Smedsrud blasted 19 kills in only her fifth collegiate match. "I'm starting to get a feel for the system we run. I felt real comfortable tonight, so I was real excited," Smedsrud said. "I love (the playing time) and I'm having a great time here. Everything for me is a new experience."

Head coach Laurie Corbelli was excited about Smedsrud's fierce play. "She has great composure on the

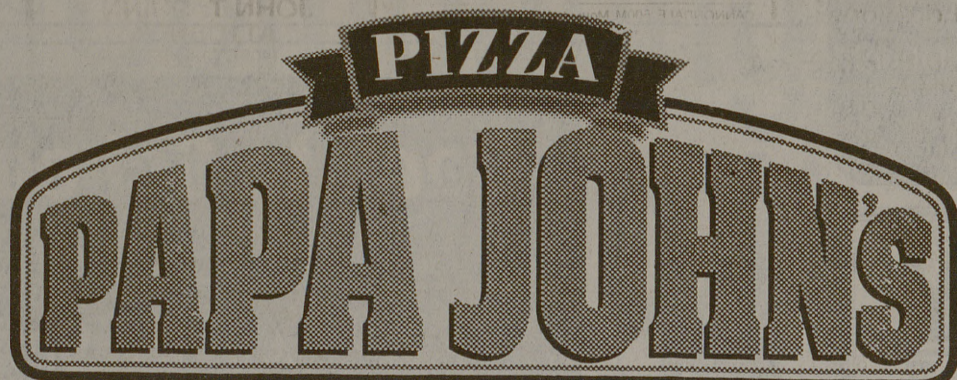
court, she's very hard to rattle, and she's our go to player right now," she said. "She has just earned herself the number one outside hitter position and we needed one bad on our team."

Corbelli feels that the team is ready to play Texas after getting a feel of playing on its home court.

Aggie Fact

Texas A&M ranks 22nd among the all-time Division 1 winningest football programs. Michigan is first on the list.

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