

SWC teams' play improves in last seasons

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Sportswriter

In less than two years, the NCAA and the Southwest Conference schools will stick a fork into a once prestigious league of football teams. The SWC is done, and it's time for Texas A&M to start eating at a bigger dinner table.

With A&M, Texas, Baylor and Texas Tech defecting to the Big 12 in 1996, most people thought the quality of play that earned the conference its death sentence would never change. But that's not the case this season, as the dying conference has made a national statement by landing three teams in the top 25.

The Aggies, in the midst of a rebuilding year, haven't missed a beat in jumping out to a 5-0 start and a No. 7 Associated Press ranking. The three-time defending SWC champions have thrown early doubts aside over whether or not they could win with young, unproven players. A&M's raw talent is maturing quickly as the Wrecking Crew is once again rattling opponents and giving Aggieland more to whoop about.

The Texas Longhorns have been making some noise of their own in Austin lately. After a thrilling victory over Red River rival Oklahoma at the Cotton Bowl Saturday, the Longhorns find themselves 4-1 and ranked No. 9 in the coaches' poll. If not for Colorado's game-winning, last-second field goal against the Horns a week earlier, Texas might be in an even better position.

Big 12-bound Baylor is also a team to be reckoned with. The Bear's five wins have come by an average margin of 27 points and their dominating play has not gone unnoticed. Baylor is ranked No. 19 in the coaches' poll coming into their game against the Aggies this Saturday.

Not only do we see SWC teams popping up in the polls, but the league's perennial punching bags have actually been playing some competitive ball as well.

Although their records don't indicate it, Southern Methodist and Texas Christian have scared the pants off several of their opponents. The Ponies pushed North Carolina and UCLA to the limit before bowing out and the Frogs have impressive victories over New Mexico and Kansas. Also, just when it looked like Rice was going to follow in the losing footsteps of the other fine football university in Houston, the Owls have reeled off impressive back-to-back victories over Iowa St. and Tech.

As the SWC members have shown this year (excluding Cougar High), the conference may be dying, but its teams are not going to roll over. For Aggie fans, the improved level of play of conference foes makes the time until the merger a little more entertaining. Conference detractors might say the league's resurgence is too little too late for the SWC, but actually it's just better late than never.

No. 7 ranking shows A&M's character

By David Winder
THE BATTALION

A lot of college football teams would be ecstatic to be ranked No. 7 in the nation like Texas A&M. A top ten ranking would mean consideration for a top bowl game and a shot at the national championship.

Because of probation though, the Aggies are using their high ranking for inspiration and pride.

"Being ranked No.7 helps in a motivational factor," running back Rodney Thomas said. "As far as something solid it doesn't mean anything. What matters is you go out and win every game."

Linebacker Antonio Armstrong thinks the No. 7 ranking shows what the Aggies are all about.

"It shows that we have a lot of character on this team," Armstrong said. "We never stop no matter what adversity comes against us. Everybody was picking us to go down hill but we're showing them that we're going to continue to fight."

Even though the rankings mean very little in a national scope the Aggies still watch to see how the higher ranked teams are doing.

"When I see all those other teams on TV it has an effect on me," center Calvin Collins said. "I think we're as good as those teams or better. It just makes you work harder."

Thomas watches the polls every week but does not put too much stock in them.

"You can't help but see the polls," Thomas said. "But as far as personally watching them every week to see what happens, I don't care about that. Once you start doing that I think you get too optimistic about things."

Collins said that if the Aggies go undefeated they should be able to make a claim to the national championship.

"The question of being the best team we won't ever be able to find out," Collins said. "If nobody's beaten you how can they go against you. There's no justification in saying that you're not the national champions."



Sophomore linebacker Keith Mitchell sacks the quarterback in the Aggies 23-17 victory over Texas Tech. *Stew Milne/THE BATTALION*

Moon leads Vikings in 27-10 pounding of New York Giants

EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J. (AP) — Anthony Parker and Warren Moon showed New York Giants' prize prospect Dave Brown that he still has a lot to learn about life in the NFL.

Parker picked off a pass by Brown and returned it 44 yards for a touchdown on the fourth play of the third quarter Monday night to break a tie and lead the Minnesota Vikings to 27-10.

Moon, with 154 NFL starts to Brown's five, was 23-of-34 for 299 yards and touchdown pass and demonstrated the rhythm that Brown has yet to learn.

Parker's interception came after Brown, who also threw an interception that led to Minnesota's first touchdown, had tied it with a 3-yard run. The quarterback draw came at the end of a remarkable 94-yard touchdown drive that began on the Giants' 6-yard-line with 1:27 left in the first half.

It alone demonstrated why the Giants decided to give him their starting job and release veteran Phil Simms. Brown was 6-of-8 for 91 yards in the drive.

But on New York's first series of the second half, he demonstrated his inexperience, raising up and passing into the flat and hitting Parker perfectly in stride. The Minnesota cornerback took it untouched down the left sideline for the score, the second straight game that Brown has had an interception returned for a score.

Moon hit Cris Carter with a 20-yard TD pass late in the

period to make it 24-10 and putting Brown, who finished 18-for-36 for 226 yards and three interceptions, into a hurry-rup mode. Fuad Reveiz, who opened the scoring with a 44-yard field goal in the first quarter, tacked on a 24-yarder that made it 27-10.

Minnesota improved to 4-2, tied for first in the NFC Central with Chicago. The Giants' loss, on the night Lawrence Taylor's "56" jersey was retired by the team, was their second straight after they opened the season with three straight wins.

It was also the first Minnesota win over New York since 1976. The Giants had won four straight during that period, one of them a playoff game last January.

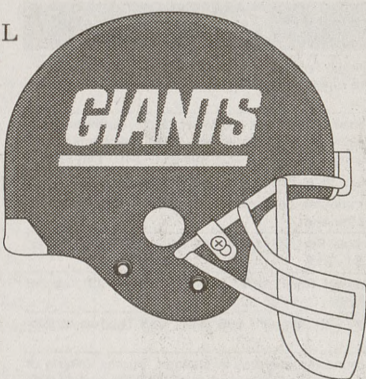
It was largely the product of a defense that has now scored 13 defensive touchdowns in its last 18 games.

Rodney Hampton, who returned to the Giants after missing two games with a back injury, was limited to 27 yards in 13 carries after rushing for 161 yards in the Giants' playoff win over Minnesota

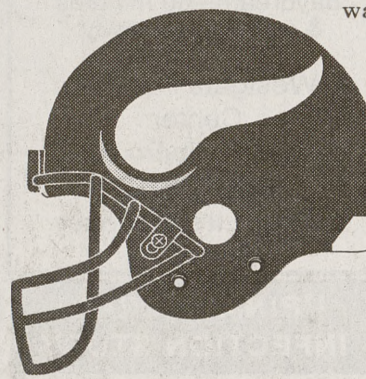
last season. Terry Allen, who went in from a yard out for Minnesota's first TD, carried 21 times for 75 yards.

After Minnesota fumbled the ball away at the Giants' 1-yard line on its first possession, Reveiz and New York's David Treadwell traded field goals to make it 3-3.

Vencie Glenn's interception at his own 47 on a ball tipped by Jack Del Rio set up Allen's TD.



- Brown: throws 2 interceptions
- Hampton: carries 13 times for 27 yards
- Lawrence Taylor's jersey retired



- Moon: 23-of-34 passes for 299 yards
- Parker: runs interception back for a touchdown
- Allen: carries 21 times for 75 yards

Audit shows Cotton Bowl fund misuse

DALLAS (AP) — A city audit has found abuse of policy and possible illegal activity among companies involved in the Cotton Bowl renovation, discrepancies it says deprived minority businesses of some \$1.2 million.

City Auditor Daniel Paul said larger nonminority companies used smaller minority-owned businesses "as a subterfuge" by reporting that they performed work or provided supplies and services when they did not.

"These companies were not doing anything other than handling paper," he said. The audit was delivered to city council members over the weekend, more than 18 months after reports of the possible use of minority fronts surfaced. A front is a company purportedly owned by a minority but actually run and financially controlled by someone else.

However, Assistant City Manager Ted Benavides said city officials don't necessarily agree with the audit's findings.

"We're going to need to give these companies a chance to tell their side of the story," he said.

The \$8.4 million Cotton Bowl project was criticized by black leaders, who tried to halt the renovation. The work was completed before the World Cup games this summer.

At the time, contractors reported that \$2.7 million went to minorities, while the audit says the figure is closer to \$1.5 million.

The audit lists four companies that received \$877,830, but performed "no

See Cotton Bowl/Page 10

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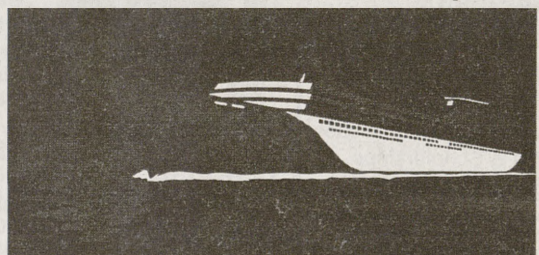
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