

Aggies first years filled with trials, triumphs

By Nick Georgandis
THE BATTALION

Although games of football had sprung up on the campus of Texas A&M as early as 1892, the University did not field an official team until 1894.

Despite most records showing the Aggies' first game was against Galveston Ball High School, Texas A&M archivist John Dyal has proven through old newspaper research that the first game was actually played against the University of Texas in Austin. The inaugural season started off poorly, as the Aggies were blown out by Varsity 38-0.

The Aggies would play just one more game that year, defeating Galveston Ball High School 14-6 in Galveston on Thanksgiving Day to finish their inaugural season with a 1-1 record. The first coach at A&M was Frank Dudley Perkins, a rather versatile man, who also served as the team's manager and starting fullback.

After not being able to field a team in 1895, the Aggies returned to the gridiron in 1896 and have fielded a team every year since. Their schedule expanded to three games in 1896 and to six games by 1898.

In the first three years of Aggie football, the rules of the game were drastically different from the ones A&M fans are familiar with today. From 1894 to 1897, touchdowns were worth four points and points

after were worth two. In addition, forward passes were illegal.

While the first few years of Aggie football were a bit of a roller coaster ride, as the team swung between good (4-2 in 1898) and not-so-good (1-4 in 1901). But things truly came together for A&M in 1902 as the team compiled a 7-0-2 record including the school's first-ever victory over Texas, 12-0, at Austin. It was A&M's first win over Varsity in five tries, and the following quote appeared in the Dallas News the following day, commemorating the end of the Aggies' frustration against their Austin nemesis.

"For the first time in the history of the game in Texas, the state University went down in defeat before the

Agricultural and Mechanical eleven and it was the first time that team had ever scored against the Varsity.

"The College boys and their friends are painting the town red tonight, while everything is silent and dark on the campus. The explanation of the unexpected is that College simply has the best team."

Only a lack of offense kept the Aggies from having a true perfect season in 1902. Twice, A&M tied opponents at 0-0, but overall they held their opponents to a minuscule 11 points over the course of the entire season. At the end of the 1902 campaign, the Aggies were proclaimed Champions of the Southwest.

Although Texas A&M was still learning the game of football in that first decade,

they were not without controversial games.

In the 1899 Texas game, A&M was denied an apparent touchdown on a controversial official's ruling. When the officials awarded Texas the ball on the Aggie two-yard line after a mad scramble for a fumble, A&M captain Hal Moseley led the team off the field and out of the stadium with 28 minutes still remaining in the game. Texas was awarded the game by forfeit, 6-0.

Despite an overall successful first ten years (a 31-16-5 composite record and a .644 winning percentage), the first decade gave the Aggies their worst two defeats of the century to come. At Texas in 1898, the Longhorns ripped A&M 48-0. Three years later, Baylor trounced the Aggies 46-0.

The Decade in Review

Decade record: 31-16-5 (.644)

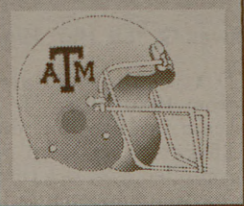
Best record: 7-0-2 (1902)

Worst record: 1-4 (1901)

Southwest

Championships: 1902

Highlights: 1902 - first win over Texas (11-0)



A&M's second decade had good defense, odd opponents

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The second decade of Texas A&M football saw the game evolve more towards the contest played at Kyle Field today. In 1906, the forward pass was legalized; in 1909, field goals dropped in worth from four points to three and by 1912 touchdowns became worth six points a piece up from four.

The Aggies obviously favored the new style of play, as they compiled a 61-18-4 record over the ten-year period, enjoying winning records in eight of the seasons.

The best campaign of the decade was easily 1909, when head coach C.B. Moran led A&M to a 7-0-1 record, with the lone blemish coming in a 0-0 deadlock with TCU.

As was becoming the trademark of their early teams, the 1909 Aggies had an outstanding defense, pitching six shutouts and outscoring their opponents 130-14 overall. That defensive trend continued over the next three seasons, as A&M outscored the opposition by a combined total of 833-61 while piling up a 39-3-1 record from 1909-1912.

The 1908 season was a disappointing one, both in the Aggies' record and in their fans' display in the annual tilt against the University of Texas. The season ended 3-5 and during their clash with the Longhorns, played in Houston, Aggie fans showed their sensitive side.

UT led 14-0 at halftime when some of the 1,200 Longhorn students in attendance marched across the field with brooms resting on their shoulders like rifles. What was supposed to be a traditional "snake dance" was interpreted by a group of cadets as a motion that Texas would "sweep" the Aggies off the field. The cadets came onto the field and a riot nearly ensued. One Texas student was stabbed three times, but no arrests were made and Texas went on to a 24-8 victory.

With the Southwest Conference not coming into existence until 1915, Texas A&M's schedule varied from year to year, and some of the Aggies' opponents were of the head-scratching variety.

The first A&M game of the decade is a perfect example, as A&M defeated the Dumb and Deaf Institute 49-0. The following year, A&M blanked the Houston YMCA 29-0, but were defeated by Transylvania (Kentucky) University 29-6.

Over the course of the decade, the Aggies found a couple of the teams to be much to their liking, the Haskell Institute and Daniel Baker. Although Haskell defeated A&M a couple of times in the decade, the Aggies usually had their way. Daniel Baker however, was not so lucky. In 1906, the Aggies whipped Daniel Baker 34-0, then destroyed the small school 50-0 in 1912. Another unlikely opponent of the Aggies was Fort Worth Polytechnic College, who actually held their own in a 19-6 loss in 1913.

The Decade in Review

Decade record:

61-18-4 (.759)

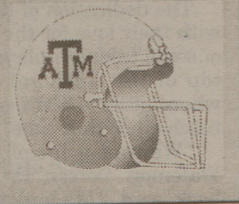
Best record: 7-0-1 (1909)

Worst record: 3-5 (1908)

SWC Championships:

none

Highlights: A near riot happens between A&M and Texas fans in 1908.



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