

A&M defense excels in third decade

Aggies win four SWC titles from 1914-1923

By Nick Georgandis
THE BATTALION

The Texas A&M football program became a national force in the 1914-1923 decade, twice putting together perfect seasons and winning four of the first seven Southwest Conference championships.

In 1915, the Aggies became a part of a major conference for the first time along with the University of Texas, Oklahoma, Baylor, Arkansas, Rice and Oklahoma A&M.

The 1915 season also gave birth to the infamous name of UT's mascot. In route to a 6-2 season, the Aggies knocked off the Longhorns 13-0, and after the game, a group of cadets branded the score on the UT's mascot. To save face, the Longhorns added parts of letters to the

The Decade in Review

Decade record: 64-16-5 (.782)

Best record: 10-0 (1919)

Worst record: 5-4 (1922)

SWC Championships:

1917, 1919, 1920

Highlights: No points allowed in 1917 and 1919.

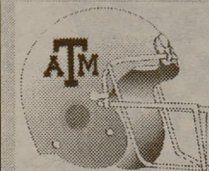


Photo courtesy of Texas A&M University Archives

A&M's running back in '17, '19 and '20 Roswell G. "Lil' Hig" Higginbotham (carrying the ball) gains some ground.

brand, and "Bevo" was born.

In 1917, the Aggies won their first ever SWC championship, and it was not even close.

The Aggie defense never allowed a point in any of their eight victories, while the offense rolled up an average of 34 points per game. Of the 11 players on the All-Conference team (selected by the coaches of the conference), five were Aggies, including end Tim Griesenbeck, tackle Ox Ford, guard E.S. Wilson, and backs Rip Collins and Jack Mahan.

Amazingly, just two years later, the Aggies were even better. Again, the Aggie defense held their opposition scoreless, this time going 10-0, and running up 275 points of their own.

The stunning teams of 1917 and 1919 were both the work of head coach

D.X. Bible, who also coached A&M from 1920-1928. He did not coach the team in 1918, but during Bible's first 25 games as head coach, the Aggies compiled a 24-0-1 record while outscoring their opponents by the nearly impossible total of 761-0.

The unbelievable streak was broken by the University of Texas in the final game of the 1920 season, as the Longhorns upset the Aggies 7-3. During their 1920 season, the Aggies set two still-standing records when they destroyed Daniel Baker 110-0, achieving school marks for most points scored in a game and largest margin of victory.

The following season, 1921, gave way to two A&M firsts and the birth of one of the most storied traditions in all of college sports.

On November 24, as A&M and UT battled on Thanksgiving Day, a group of A&M students produced the first live radio broadcast of a college football game, using only a transmitting key, a pair of headphones and about half a mile of transmission wire.

After winning the SWC championship again that season, the Aggies participated in their first-ever bowl game, defeating Centre College 22-14 in the Dixie Classic at Dallas.

During the game, Bible made a call to the press box where he requested one of the team's spotters to suit up in case the injury-depleted Aggies should need him. Although he never got into a game, E. King Gill stood on the sideline for the entire game and became the first 12th Man.

Aggies, Hunt roar into '20s

National Champs

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The ten-year period of Texas A&M football between 1924 and 1933 saw the tail end of the Aggies' mini-dynasty under great coach D.X. Bible.

The Aggies won the Southwest Conference championship in both 1925 and 1927, then dropped off into a up-and-down pattern that lasted until their national championship season in 1939.

Bible departed A&M after the 1928 season, but returned to haunt the Aggies many times when he coached the University of Texas from 1937-46. When he left, Bible had put together a 72-19-8 record (.768 winning percentage), winning five SWC championships in 11 seasons.

In their 1925 championship season, the Aggies continued to do what they did best under Bible, play almost perfect defense. Only one team (Trinity) scored in double digits against the Aggies, as A&M rolled to a 7-1-1 record, the only loss coming at the hands of Texas Christian, 3-0.

The following year, A&M dropped to 5-3-1, but in a 63-0 route of New Mexico, running back Jelly Woodman turned in one of the greatest individual perfor-

mances in the history of college football. Woodman scored seven touchdowns, one short of the Division I record, and accounted for 44 of the Aggies' 63 points. Both of Woodman's records still stand today.

The 1927 campaign was the Aggies' last hurrah under Bible, as they cruised to an 8-0-1 record, the lone blemish coming in a 0-0 tie with TCU. That Aggie team was led by outstanding quarterback Joel Hunt, who set an A&M record with 128 points scored and 19 touchdowns. Hunt was an All-SWC per-

former that year, and led the nation in points scored per game with 14.2. Hunt's touchdown mark was tied by running back Darren Lewis in 1990.

Hunt was especially outstanding in the Aggies' 39-13 defeat of Southern Methodist. He accounted for four touchdowns and picked off four Mustang passes, still an A&M single game record.

In the same season against Arkansas, Hunt returned a kick-off 97 yard for a touchdown, the fifth longest return in Aggie history, as part of A&M's 40-6 rout of the Razorbacks.

The rest of the decade was very average for A&M, but a particular incident in the 1931 season spawned a great Aggie tradition. Following a 26-6 win at Rice, a group of cadets hit a small stray dog with their car and brought it back with them to their dorm.

When the dog began barking at the sound of 'Reveille' the next morning, the cadets quickly christened it as such. A week later, Reveille was at the head of the Fightin' Texas Aggie band at the beginning of its halftime performance, as the Aggies concluded a 7-3 season by squeaking past Texas, 7-6 at Kyle Field.

The Decade in Review

Decade record: 56-31-8 (.632)

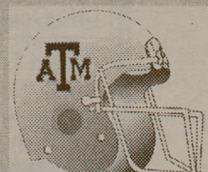
Best record: 8-0-1 (1927)

Worst record: 4-4-2 (1932)

SWC Championships:

1925, 1927

Highlights: A&M gets Reveille



the entire coaching staff proved to be a big plus for the team.

"Bill James, who coached the line, taught me things that no one else would have been able to teach at that time," Boyd said. "To play for Texas A&M and my coaches was my life. If they had told me to run into a brick wall, I would have."

Although sportswriters across the country agreed the Aggies were the top team in the nation, some other teams didn't agree.

"There were a lot of teams hollering that they were better than us, so we would send them letters inviting them down here to play," Thomason said. "We told them we would meet them on the practice field with no fans in the stands, and they could have their shot. We never heard back from any of them, though."

The dedication of the Aggies, combined with their love for the sport and the skills of some talented players, led A&M to the top of the national rankings, a place where other A&M teams have aspired to reach since that time.

"We had a lot of good athletes," C. Walemon 'Cotton' Price, A&M's quarterback, said. "We had a good group of boys, kind of like they have down at A&M right now."