

# Norton era gives A&M national acclaim

By Jan Higginbotham  
THE BATTALION

In 1934, Homer Norton took over the head coaching position for Texas A&M and, up until his departure from the school in 1947, led the Aggies to one of the most successful decades of Aggie football.

The Aggies accumulated a 60-31-7 record (.648 winning percentage) in that 10-year span and earned three Southwest Conference championships in 1939, '40 and '41.

Norton also coached the first All-American to come out of A&M. Joe Rount, '38 and an A&M guard, became the first Aggie to receive national honors when he was named an All-American in 1936 and again in '37 when he was a unanimous selection for the honor.

Four of Norton's players earned All-American honors during the decade with two of the men earning the honor twice.

Norton coached the Aggies to their first and only national championship in 1939, as they outscored their opponents 212-37.

The 1939 Aggie team's defense allowed only 747 yards of total offense in their 10 games, with an average of 74.7 yards per game, an NCAA record for a season that still stands today.

The team made the Aggies' only Sugar Bowl appearance on January 1, 1940, when they took on the Green Wave of Tulane University. The Aggies slipped by the Green Wave 14-13 to claim the number one spot in the polls.

Tommie Vaughn, a center and linebacker for the championship team, said his experiences as a student and athlete at A&M were unforgettable.

"Back in those days, if you had an opportunity to get an education and play football, it was great," Vaughn said.

## The Decade in Review

Decade record: 60-31-7 (.648)

Best record: 10-0 (1939)

Worst record: 2-7-2 (1934)

SWC Championships: 1939, 1940, 1941

Highlights: National Championship (1939)

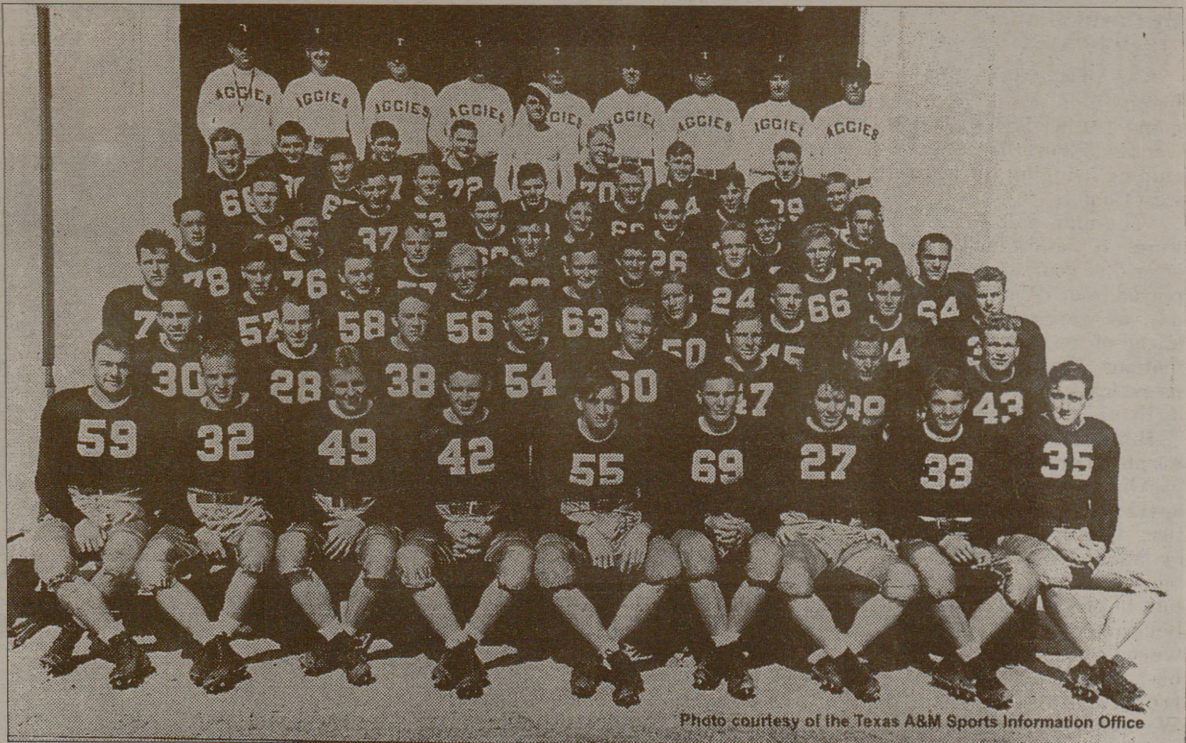
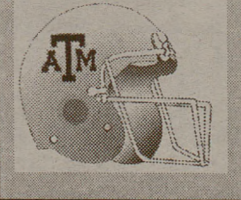


Photo courtesy of the Texas A&M Sports Information Office

### The 1940 SWC Co-Champions

Joe Boyd, a defensive and offensive tackle, said football during that decade differed greatly from the game that is played today.

"When you got injuries back then, you just kept on going," Boyd said. "We didn't have any faceguards or any pads. It was very easy to get injured. They really weren't too careful about injuries."

Norton's teams strung together 20 consecutive wins from 1938-40 before losing to the University of Texas 0-7 in 1940.

"We won the national championship in '39, but they had a much better team in 1940," Boyd said. "It was unfortunate that they lost to t.u. that year."

The 1939 and '40 teams helped A&M's athletic department to lift itself out of an economic slump, as the ticket sales from the teams' games those two years paid off almost all of the cost of the 1929 expansion of Kyle Field.

Jim Thomason, a blocking back and defensive linebacker for the championship team, said Aggie fans came out in large numbers for all of the A&M games during his three-year career.

"We packed the stadium in every game," Thomason says. "We almost paid for the stadium in '39 alone. That's pretty good, considering the tickets were only \$2.50 or \$3 a piece."

# Post-war years bring lull in Aggie wins

By David Winder  
THE BATTALION

Texas A&M football took a down turn after the end of World War II as the Aggies compiled a 40-55-7 record for the 1944-1953 decade.

In 1945, halfback Bob Goode set a still standing Southwest Conference record with a 98-yard punt return against Ellington Field. In 1948, Charlie Wright caught a touchdown pass to tie the University of Texas 14-14 and give the Aggies a 0-9-1 record.

In 1950, the Aggies climbed as high as No. 13 in the national rankings and posted a 25-20 upset of 7th-ranked Southern Methodist as running back Bob Smith rushed for a then-SWC record 297 yards, a mark that remains an A&M record. The week before, Smith had suffered a broken nose in a loss to Baylor and had to wear a black mask over his face for protection. Smith and Jack Little were later named an All-American that year.

"I played with a great bunch of guys," said back Yale Lary, who played from 1949-1951. "Being an all-boys school there was an atmosphere of to-

getherness. We were all in the Corps, (and) the tradition and the Aggie Spirit were all very important."

In 1951, A&M started out No. 6 in the nation, their highest preseason ranking ever. They justified it right away with victories over 4th-ranked UCLA and 11th-ranked Oklahoma.

The Aggies went into conference play with a 4-0 record, but then collapsed, going 1-3-2 the rest of the way. When A&M hosted Texas, Bob Smith was hurt on

the opening kickoff. Glenn Lippman stepped in and rushed for 174 yards while Lary scored two touchdowns. Texas missed a late field goal as A&M won 22-21, beating Texas for the first time since 1939.

"That win kept them from going to the Sugar Bowl and really capped off my career," Lary said.

Lary is the only Aggie who is a member of the National Football League Hall of Fame.

## The Decade in Review

Decade record: 40-55-7 (.426)

Best record: 7-4 (1944, '50)

Worst record: 0-9-1 (1948)

SWC Championships: none

Highlights: Bob Smith AP Athlete of 1950

Sidenote: Two A&M players graduated No. 1 and No. 2 from the Class of '52. Jaro Netardus was valedictorian and Glenn Lippman was the salutatorian.

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