

Senior class: four years of dominance

KIM MCGUIRE

Guest Columnist

Saturday's game was a memorable one for me, like many of the other football fans who watched the Aggies trounce the Horned Frogs 34-17. But it wasn't the win or the No. 8 ranking that the team finished with that left me with goosebumps and chills racing down my spine. It was the introduction of the senior class who finished their season with the most wins of any class in Southwest Conference history and trail only Miami and Florida State for the most wins among Division I-A schools.

As the seniors stepped on to the field shortly before the game to a thunderous round of applause, I felt this incredible swell of pride for the team and the accomplishments they have made since their arrival at Aggieland four years ago. Since many of seniors were redshirted their freshman year, some of them are members of the Class of '94 like myself. I remember my senior year in high school, reading about the all-stars who were headed to A&M just as I would be the next fall. I even remember seeing some of them at Fish Camp, scared freshmen just like me.

So there they were, all the seniors who have never lost a game they played on Kyle Field doing the Aggie War Hymn for the last time as football players. But as my heart soared for these 23 outstanding athletes, I couldn't help but feel a little disappointed.

It's disappointing that the Class of '95 would play the last game of their collegiate careers on Kyle Field and not in the Cotton Bowl like every senior class before them. It's disappointing that the seniors had to end their senior careers on probation with no television exposure, no SWC championship and especially no bowl appearance.

It's even more disappointing that one of the big names involved in the Warren Gilbert "I'll pay you for sleeping" fiasco has gone on to an illustrious career in the NFL. Greg Hill, who plays for the Kansas City Chiefs, is sharing time with Marcus Allen, while his teammates must suffer the wrath of the NCAA. Hill jumped boat early only to leave players like Rodney Thomas and Antonio Armstrong to pay the price of his and three others' actions.

No one deserves more than the seniors to get a chance to prove themselves in a bowl. It's pretty much a known fact that Rodney Thomas is one of the nicest guys you'll ever meet and I can't help but root for the good guys. Michael Hendricks, Reggie Graham, Cliff Groce, Ryan Matthews, and Armstrong have been impressive players during their stint at A&M, and it's just natural to want them to succeed even more than they already have. I just can't help to think a Cotton Bowl victory would be the perfect end for a perfect season.

While the University has taken steps to prevent future Gilbert disasters from happening again, what's

See McGuire/Pg 6

Aggies complete season undefeated

Thomas reaches 3000 career rushing yards

By Nick Georgandis
THE BATTALION

The situation almost demanded an upset.

Texas A&M was coming off two straight emotional road victories at Louisville and Texas, and seemed absolutely assured of continuing its perfect record at Kyle Field for its graduating seniors. Texas Christian University, on the other hand, still harbored an outside shot at the Cotton Bowl and had the one man, Andre Davis, who had been able to thwart the Aggies' vaunted run defense in over a season.

The result? Business as usual as the Aggies methodically overran the Horned Frogs 34-17 Saturday, finishing the season 10-0-1, their first undefeated season since 1956.

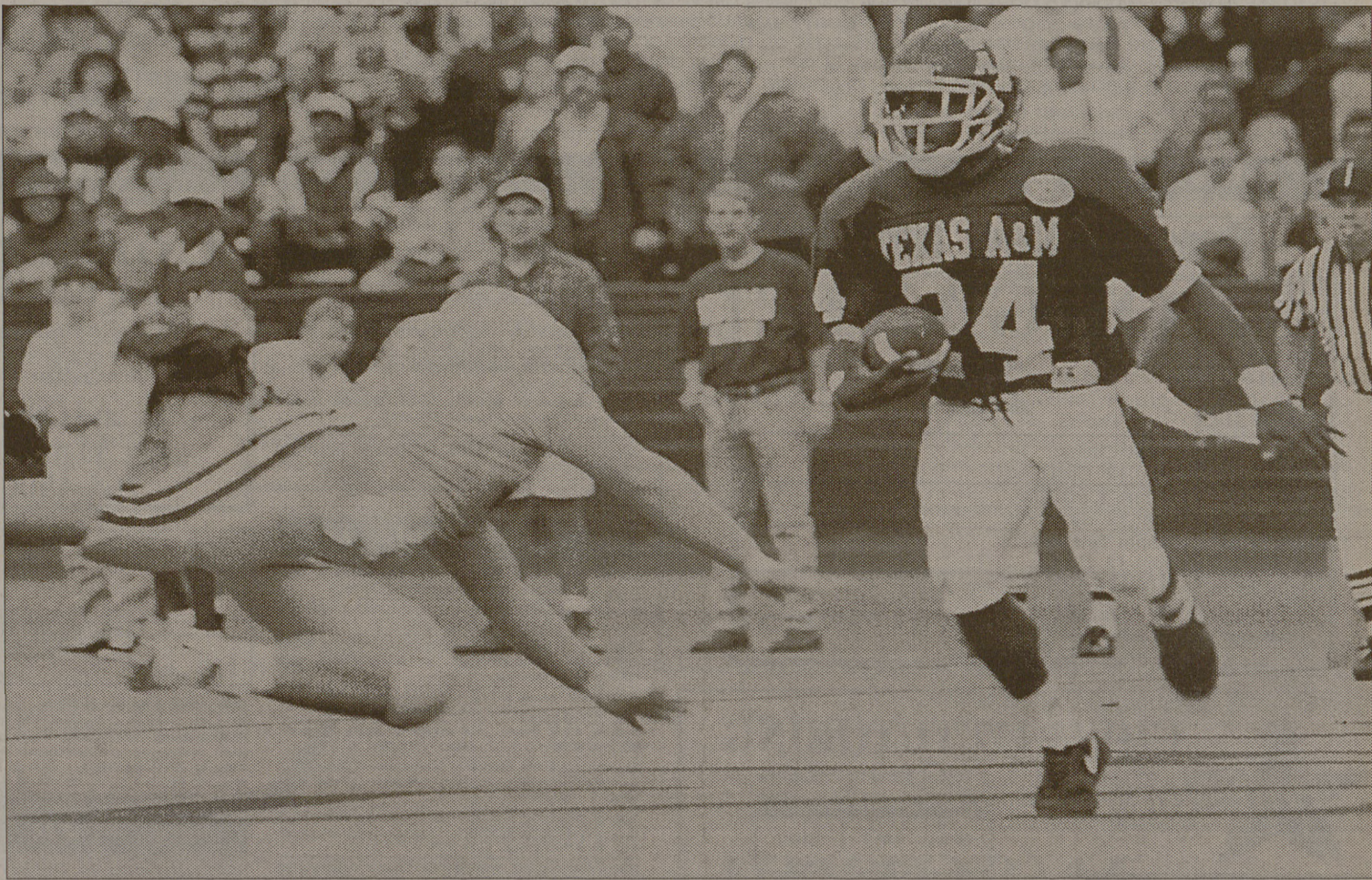
The game ended with TCU driving to a score and the Aggie defense stopping the Frogs three times from the two-yard line. Senior linebacker Antonio Armstrong said the final drive was a fitting ending to the Aggies' 1994 campaign.

"Stopping them at the goal line, it kind of summed up our whole season," Armstrong said. "A stop on fourth down would have been better (the clock expired while TCU tried to get off one last play), but we went out just the way we wanted."

The Frogs, who needed to defeat both A&M and Tech on the road to go to the Cotton Bowl for the first time in 35 years, looked like world-beaters on the opening drive of the game when they marched 80 yards in 11 plays to take a 7-0 lead on a one-yard run by quarterback Max Knake. But A&M's offense answered the Frogs' challenge, using up almost six minutes of the clock on their opening drive and tied the score on senior Rodney Thomas' dive into the end zone.

"Our offense did a great job on the first drive and throughout the game," A&M head coach R.C. Slocum said. "I thought it was the turning point of the game. I really don't care how we move the ball, as long as we outscore their offense."

With the touchdown, Thomas tied



Robyn Calloway/THE BATTALION

Junior cornerback Ray Mickens dodges a TCU player after intercepting a pass. The Aggies finished the season undefeated.

Darren Lewis' school record for most scores in a career with 45. Also during the drive, Thomas reached 3,000 career yards exactly on a 15-yard scramble through the right side.

Although Davis ran for 119 yards, the most against A&M since Davis accumulated 138 last year, the Aggie defense clamped down on the Frogs' ability to score, limiting them to just three points in the next two quarters. Armstrong led the way for the "Wrecking Crew" in his final collegiate game, accounting for seven tackles, including four for a combined loss of 28 yards, and the only sack of Knake that the TCU offense line allowed all afternoon.

A&M took the lead for good on a 36-yard Kyle Bryant field goal in the sec-

ond quarter, and extended the lead into double digits when sophomore tailback Leeland McElroy slashed through the right side of the Horned Frog defense for eight yards and a 17-7 lead. During the 13-play, 80-yard drive, McElroy rushed six times for 43 yards, en route to an 83-yard game. McElroy would add another touchdown on a 27-yard scamper early in the fourth quarter to give the Aggies a 31-10 lead.

Although focused on the game at hand from the opening gun, Slocum gave the crowd an opportunity to celebrate the graduating class with just 2:45 left in the game and the Aggies assured of a victory with a 17-point lead. Slocum called a timeout and all 23 se-

niors stormed on the field as the Kyle Field scoreboard flashed their truly momentous career marks.

The senior class ended their careers with 42 wins, tied for the best four-year total ever. They never lost a game against a Southwest Conference foe, finishing with a 29-0-1 mark. They never lost a game at Kyle Field in four years, going 24-0-0, and were the first class at A&M with four 10-win seasons.

"It's kind of like winning has become a tradition at A&M," senior linebacker Reggie Graham said. "Our careers are finished but the younger guys will continue it on. If they play like we know they can, they'll continue our accomplishments and the tradition."

Pullig's leadership key factor in victory

Stewart Doreen
THE BATTALION

Corey Pullig did not pick a bad time to have a really good day.

Texas A&M's junior quarterback completed 16 of 28 attempts passing for 224 yards and one touchdown, but his ability to make the big plays against a fired-up Texas Christian University defense produced scores and the final win in the undefeated 10-0-1 season.

Down 7-0, Pullig led the Aggies' offense to tie the game. Pullig was instrumental in keeping the drive alive, hitting senior Ryan Mathews and senior James McKeenan on third-and-long situations. Rushing for the other three down, Pullig went three for three on the drive that turned into seven points when Rodney Thomas capped the drive with a three-yard touchdown run.

"The turning point in the game was our offense coming back and scoring to tie the game," said head coach R.C. Slocum.

Up 10-7, Pullig hit junior wide receiver Chris Sanders for 21 yards on a third and 12 from the TCU 29-yard line. Sophomore Leeland McElroy would

score a play later to make the score 17-7.

Up 17-10, Pullig drove the Aggies down the field on the first series of the second half. Pullig hit Sanders for 51 yards and for a 25-yard touchdown pass on successive third and elevens. The touchdown made the score 24-10 but more importantly took away any momentum that was left over from the Frogs' field goal to end the first half.

Pullig said the improved production in the passing game is showing off the capable receiving corps.

"They've shown what they could do this year," Pullig said. "This offense has grown into an effective passing game."

Up 24-10, Pullig hit Mathews for 13 yards on a third and 12. To that point in the game, A&M was seven of 12 in third-down conversions.

The Aggies would finish the game 10 of 17 on third-down conversions. The offense would not rack up any more huge plays. They did, however, run time off the clock and keep the ball away from the TCU offense.

"We knew that we'd have to take advantage of every opportunity we'd have," Pullig said. "Their offense is re-

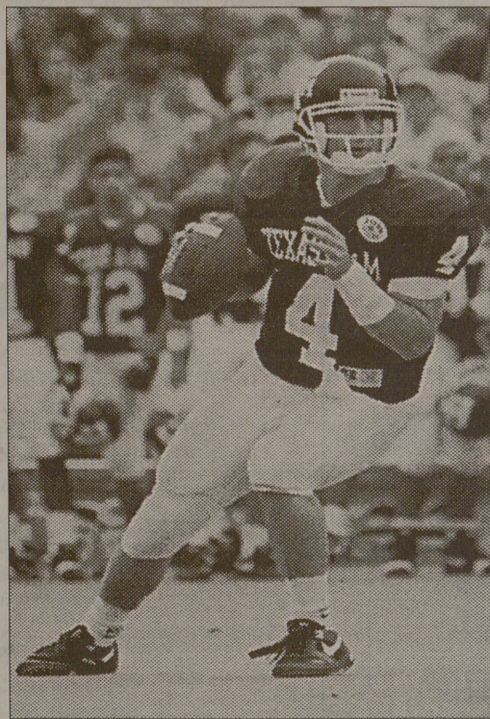
ally stingy with the ball."

What was more impressive about Pullig's effort was the ability to make up for the lull in the ground attack. Saturday, the Thomas and McElroy combination rushed for 117 yards (40 yards below their season's average). The two were outgained by the Horned Frogs' Andre Davis.

"People have overplayed the run," Slocum said. "Corey stepped up and took advantage of that."

The performance on Saturday might have settled arguments about the league's top signal caller. Pullig's play against the Horned Frogs' junior quarterback Max Knake, the conference leader in most statistical categories, has people looking for Pullig to get his deserved recognition.

"I'd say Pullig is a strong candidate for the all-conference quarterback," Slocum said. "The number one ingredient with a quarterback is how he leads his team to a win. If you measure Corey on that criteria, he has quarterbacked his team to undefeated seasons. He has made key plays to keep key drives going."



Robyn Calloway/THE BATTALION

Junior quarterback Cory Pullig looks for a pass during the TCU game, Saturday.

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