

Football team to be '95 National Champions

DREW DIENER

Sportswriter



Are you irked by the negative comments swirling around the state about the Texas A&M football program? Are the shots people are taking at R.C. Slocum for wanting to get rings for his players that read "SWC's Best" bringing a grimace to your face?

My advice is to keep your chin up and brush off the trash talk.

A&M football will be back with a vengeance next season. If you think about it, the possibilities for success and fortune on the gridiron in 1995 are endless. Allow me to make a bold prediction: Texas A&M will win the National Championship next season. Some of you may "rah-rah" that prediction while others of you may wonder what I've been smoking. No cigars, Chief.

Texas A&M - National Champions. Got a nice ring to it, don't it? Now some of you sports enthusiasts, be you red ass or not, probably are questioning the logic behind such a prediction: Texas A&M - National Champions. I could not fathom making such a rash statement without having any way to back it up. (So go ahead Drew, get to the point. Stop spinning your wheels. Yes, Drew, please do. -Ed)

O.K. I'll come clean with my reasoning, and hopefully it may serve to enlighten. Have you ever heard of this guy? He's pretty quick, wears #34, is faster than a speeding bullet, more powerful than a locomotive, able to return kicks 100 yards for a touchdown? Leeland McElroy, that's the guy's name. Bad things man, bad things.

The backfield is his alone next year, and the coveted Heisman Trophy his to lose. Explosive, dynamic, amazing, these are various adjectives used to describe him) Oh, let me tell ya about Leeland McElroy! It's no mystery here at A&M as to what he is capable of doing on the football field. God willing he opts to remain an amateur, Leeland McElroy will be the catalyst behind the maroon surge that is set to take the nation by storm.

As for the rest of the offense, another spring under the tutelage of quarterback guru Steve Ensminger, and Corey Pullig will be quite capable of directing the Aggie offense. A young offensive line really began to come together as this season wound down, and they should be more than capable of warding off opposing defensive attacks next year.

On the other side of the ball lurks possibly the best defensive end in the land, the pride of Abbeville, Louisiana, Brandon Mitchell. Baylor head coach Chuck Reedy said earlier this season that Mitchell was better than his predecessor, Sam Adams of the Seattle Seahawks (Talk about your rash statements).

The former high school fullback is a load and his speed and agility should have opposing offensive linemen dreading each play.

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Same song, second (season) verse

Lady Aggies to host rematch with Michigan State in NCAA Tournament

Jason Holstead THE BATTALION

A 17-14 record, which ranked them 13th in the final NCAA Midwest region poll. The Spartans are making their first-ever appearance in the NCAA tournament.

MSU is led by freshman outside hitter Veronica Morales, who is averaging 5.1 kills per game, ranking her ninth in last week's NCAA national statistics.

As a team, the Spartans are hitting .221 and averaging 15.5 kills, 17.1 digs and 2.87 blocks per game.

Head Coach Laurie Corbelli said the key to the Lady Aggies' success against MSU is their court defense.

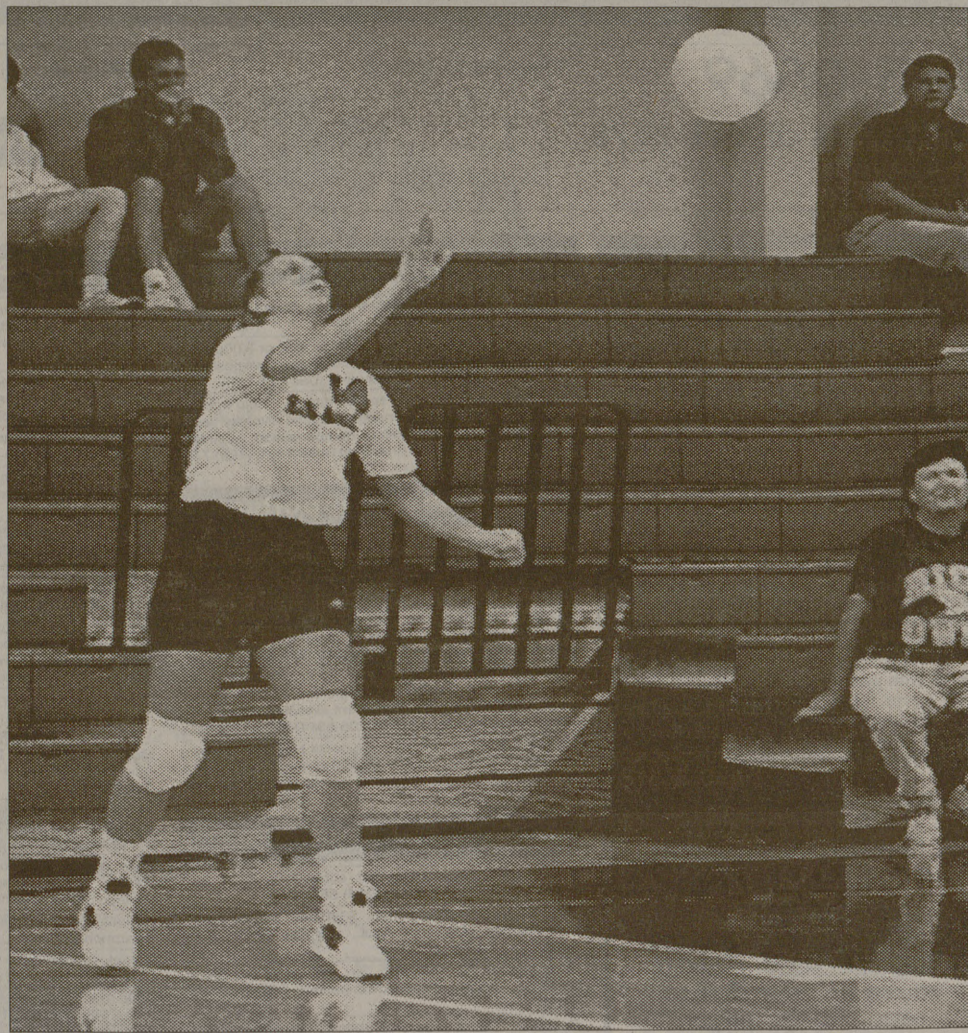
"It seems to me when any team's blocking is really hot, that can beat a lot of great teams," Corbelli said. "Blocking and court defense is something we focus a lot on in practice, and I know Michigan State does as well."

"It's going to be a battle at the net to see whose block is going to be the best timed and positioned." (Blocking) can really shut down offenses."

Corbelli said the Lady Aggies are happy to be playing this first-round game at home.

"I think if we can get a crowd and get a lot of noise, it will be unbelievable how much it helps our team play some great volleyball," Corbelli said.

The winner of tonight's game will advance to the second round and play at Ohio State University (26-2) on Saturday, December 3, in Columbus, Ohio.



Junior outside hitter Dana Santleben practices her serve in preparation for the Lady Ags' match against the MSU Spartans.

"It's going to be a battle at the net to see whose block is going to be the best timed and positioned."

-Laurie Corbelli, Lady Aggies' head coach

Ryan wishes Oilers no ill will

Coach to bring Cardinals to Astrodome on Sunday

TEMPE, Ariz. (AP) — There's no spite in Arizona coach Buddy Ryan's plans to beat the Houston Oilers on Sunday.

Ryan respects any team that has a former defensive coordinator for a coach. Especially when it's a protege like Jeff Fisher, the Oilers' coach of two games.

"They're not as nice of people," Ryan said Tuesday about defensive coordinators as head coaches. "They're used to handling tough people. If you can handle defensive linemen and linebackers, you can handle anybody. I mean, it's a little different than handling a quarterback or a wide receiver."

The Oilers (1-11) have the worst record in the NFL and are in an eight-game skid. Only the Cardinals (15-4) and Tampa Bay (16-5) have scored fewer points than Houston (167).

But Ryan is confident that Fisher will turn around a team that a year ago had a 12-4 record and won the AFC Central championship.

"How bad things have eroded, I don't really know, but I know that Jeff is a disciplined person and he'll put some discipline in the thing, and they sure needed that," Ryan said.

Fisher, who replaced Jack Pardee in a Nov. 14 shakeup, was a Philadelphia assistant the five years that Ryan coached the Eagles. After three years as secondary coach, Fisher was promoted to defensive coordinator at the age of 31.

When the Eagles fired Ryan in January 1991, Fisher moved on to San Francisco. The Oilers hired him as defensive coordinator in February after Ryan left for

the Cardinals.

Ryan said he never offered Fisher a job with the Cardinals because he already had Ronnie Jones, 39, the Oilers' linebackers coach, lined up to become his defensive coordinator at Arizona.

"I think Ronnie Jones, with the job that he's doing here with this defense, will be a head coach, and I think he'll be a good one," Ryan said.

Attrition through free agency gutted a Houston team which Ryan said had more talent than any in his experience, including the dominant Eagles teams of the late '80s and the 1985 Bears, who beat New England 46-10 in the Super Bowl.

"No question about it," Ryan said. "There was a lot of talent on both sides of the ball. The Bears offense was really Walter Payton. They had Willie Gault, who could run fast, but he didn't always take the ball with him."

Houston lost defensive ends Sean Jones and William Fuller, but for once Ryan conceded that the most important missing player was an offensive performer, quarterback Warren Moon.

"He was the guy that made the offense work," Ryan said.

The session with reporters didn't lapse without a reference to Kevin Gilbride, Pardee's offensive coordinator and a devotee to the run-and-shoot which Ryan renamed the "chuck-and-duck." Ryan threw a looping right at Gilbride on the sidelines in the final regular-season game.

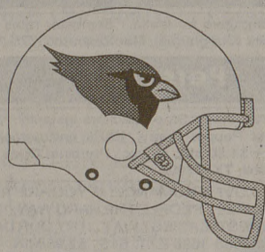
After Gilbride got the pink slip, he called Ryan "a cancer" and claimed Ryan tried to undermine other coaches.

Ryan said he didn't care that he wouldn't have a chance to sic his defense on a Gilbride-coached offense.

"As long as I don't have to play with it," Ryan said.

"Jeff (Fisher) is a disciplined person and he'll put some discipline in the thing, and they sure needed that."

-Buddy Ryan, Arizona Cardinals' head coach



Cowboys' QB Quandry Continues

IRVING (AP) — Troy Aikman will be in uniform for Sunday's game against the Philadelphia Eagles, but the Dallas Cowboys hope he won't have to play.

Aikman, who suffered a ligament sprain in his left knee two weeks ago, will be the Cowboys' designated third quarterback, coach Barry Switzer said Tuesday.

Either Jason Garrett, who rallied Dallas from a 14-point deficit to a 42-31 victory over Green Bay Thanksgiving Day, or sore-thumbed Rodney Peete will start against the Eagles.

"We'll know more later in the week, but both Jason and Rodney will be in the mix. Troy will suit up and probably be the third quarterback," Switzer said. "I think Rodney should be healthy, and both he and Jason will be taking a lot of snaps this week. I sure like what Jason did against Green Bay."

Aikman said his knee was feeling better, but added, "I think it would be extremely optimistic to say that I'm going to be ready to play in the game."

"I'll certainly be ready the following week," he said. "I'm able to run around and do things I haven't been able to do, although I'm not totally pain-free."

Switzer said he still was concerned about Peete's thumb, which was injured two weeks ago against Washington. Peete suited up but did not play against Green Bay.

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