

Aggies expecting Wrecking Crew revival

BY TOM DAY
THE BATTALION

Nearly three weeks ago, the Texas A&M Football Team took to the national spotlight during its NCAA season-opening matchup with Brigham Young University in the Pigskin Classic.

But after a disappointing loss that day, and two ensuing bye weeks, the Aggies have basically been swept under the rug. A&M is on the borderline of dropping out of the rankings with a No. 25 showing in this week's Associated Press poll as most teams have played two games.

A&M Head Coach R.C. Slocum said the team is looking forward to playing Southwest Louisiana University on Saturday and getting back into a routine of playing on a weekly basis.

"It's a grind to practice for three weeks without playing a game," Slocum said. "We started out first, but we're behind a lot of teams right now. [The USL game] is really the opener of our regular season. We need to play

and get into a rhythm." A&M may have dropped out of sight recently, but not out of mind. The issue that is still surrounding the team is how it will correct the drastic defensive problems it experienced at BYU.

The Aggies surrendered 536 passing yards and six touchdowns to the Cougars in their Aug. 24 matchup.

A & M Defensive Coordinator Phil Bennett said neither he nor the defensive players have been able to get the team's nightmare performance in Provo off their minds.

"It's a strange situation to start in July, play your first game, and then almost have a month off," Bennett said. "Living with that situation since BYU has been like a gut wound — it just won't go

away. There aren't many hours during the day that I don't think about what I could have done to put us in a different situation to win that game. But at the same time, it is also a great motivator to be anxious to play again."

Since the BYU fiasco, the team has had plenty of time to iron things out. But the most important thing it has established is that the young and inexperienced Aggie secondary wasn't completely at fault in Provo.

"It would be unfair to put everything on the secondary," Slocum said. "It was the immediate

problem, but it was compounded by the fact that we didn't play better up front. There were two or three plays in particular that weren't ability errors, but communication errors that cost

us touchdowns."

Bennett said the defense has spent the last three weeks figuring out what went wrong in Utah.

"We had a problem at BYU with communications," Bennett said. "We had situations where some kids were playing one coverage and some were playing another, which basically lost the game for us. [Solving] that starts with discipline in the huddle and making sure we're all on the same page."

This weekend, the A&M secondary will have a different look when sophomore cornerback Shun Horn starts in place of senior Andre Williams. It was Williams who was beaten on the game-winning touchdown pass reception to BYU wide receiver K.O. Kealaluhi in the Pigskin Classic.

Despite his decision to start Horn Saturday, Bennett said he still respects the ability of Williams and will not hesitate to insert him into the game.



Linebacker Dat Nguyen tackles BYU running back Mark Atuaia on Aug. 24.

"[The secondary] was the immediate problem, but it was compounded by the fact we didn't play better up front."

R.C. Slocum
A&M head coach

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Motivational Player

Senior forward Yvette Okler plays for more than individual glory

BY JEREMY FURTICK
THE BATTALION



Stew Milne, THE BATTALION

Senior forward Yvette Okler does not care about individual awards — she just wants to help the team.

When glancing at a list of the Texas A&M Soccer Team's all-time statistics leaders, current Aggie forward Yvette Okler's numbers clearly stand out.

As a four-year starter for the Aggies, Okler ranks first on A&M's all-time list in assists with 27, and third in both goals (22) and total points (71).

But Okler's contributions to the team cannot be measured solely on statistics. The senior gives the Aggies a mental and emotional edge that goes unnoticed by most spectators.

Okler can often be seen on the field or sideline giving encouraging words to a dejected teammate or congratulating another after a good play.

"I just tell them the truth, 'Don't get down on yourself; you made a mistake,

we all do,'" Okler said. "We're all great friends, and can be totally honest with each other."

It is actions like these that have established Okler as a leader both on and off the field for the eighth-ranked Aggies.

A very modest and soft-spoken person, Okler does not give herself much credit, except to say that her field awareness is a key to her success and an asset to the team.

"Before I even get the ball sometimes, I'll see something opening up," Okler said. "The second I get a pass, I already have a plan of what I want to do with the ball."

A&M Head Coach G. Guerrieri said Okler's playing style and A&M's offensive game plan compliment each other well.

"Our offense is an attacking, ball-control system," Guerrieri said. "Yvette is one of our most important compo-

nents because her individual skills fit perfectly into our scheme." Okler said her individual success cannot rival the team's. Last year, the Aggies quieted many critics by advancing to the second round of the NCAA Tournament.

Okler said that success has carried over to the 1996 squad.

"We are starting at a higher level of play this year," she said. "Our goal is still the same — win the conference championship — but our expectations of how we play are higher."

Junior midfielder Jessica Mouske said Okler is always highly motivated and that the entire team sets her work ethic as the standard to follow.

But Okler said her work ethic is no different than any of her teammates.

"Everyone on this team hustles," Okler said. "[Coach Guerrieri] expects us to set an example for the freshmen, so I feel like

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A&M soccer posts first-ever top 10 ranking

The Texas A&M Soccer Team has distinguished a tradition that lasted several years by starting the season with an impressive 3-0 record.

In recent years, the team had not been able to proceed this far into the season without suffering a loss. With its current record, the Aggie squad has posted its first-ever top 10 ranking, earning a No. 8 spot in Soccer America's Top 20 poll.

Last week, the Aggies got its well-deserved "dream win" when they defeated the University of Alabama 2-1 in overtime. Not only did the Aggies proudly give the Crimson Tide its first loss of the season, but the team cleared its name following a year of reminiscing about the fateful day Alabama upset A&M last year, ending the Aggies' three-year home winning streak.

Rowe Joins Attack Not only are the Aggies shining as a team, but individual accomplishments abound as well.

Junior midfielder Diana Rowe scored two goals and earned her first career game-winning goal and multiple-goal match against Vanderbilt University last weekend, helping the Aggies post a Central Region sweep.

Currently, Rowe is second on the team in goals scored behind junior forward Bryn Blalack, and was regarded by her teammates and coaches as the most impressive and improved player of the week.

Rowe recently made the move from defensive to central midfield in late July when senior starter Jamie Cszmadia

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Nicki Smith
Soccer Notebook

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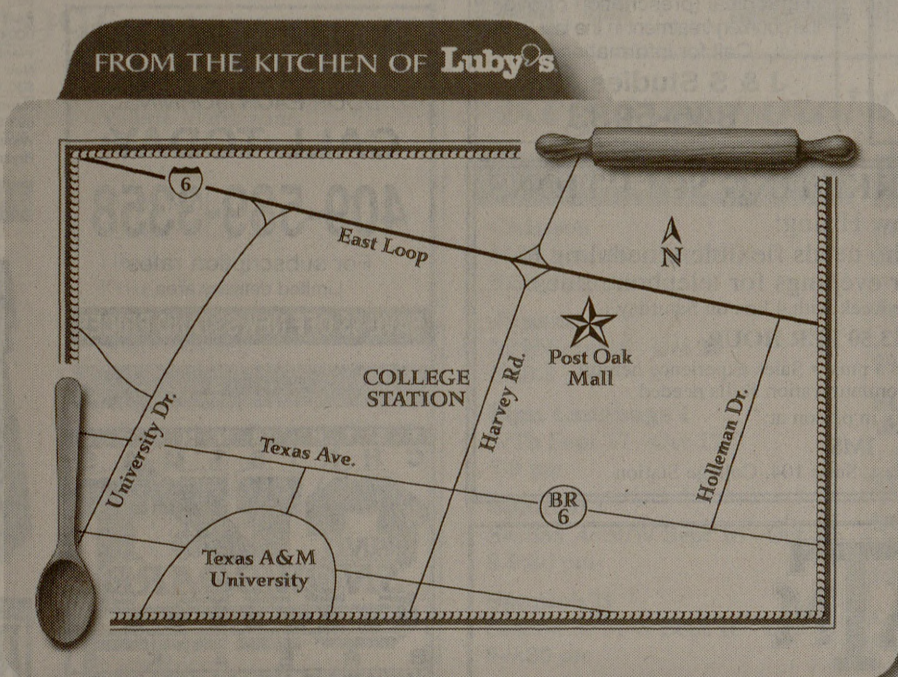
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