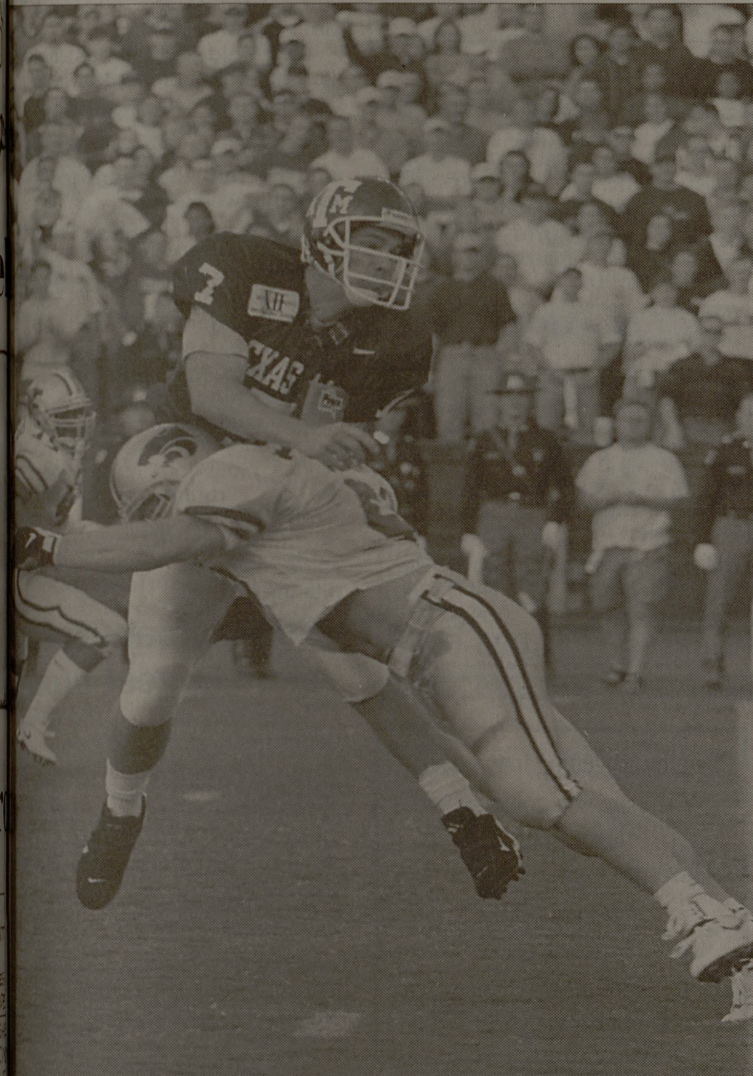


Generous Aggies give away another one, 23-20



Stew Milne, THE BATTALION

A&M quarterback **Brannon Stewart** gets thumped just as he releases the football in the first quarter of KSU's 23-20 defeat of A&M.

By JAMIE BURCH
THE BATTALION

Fighting to climb above the .500 mark, the Texas A&M Football Team returned home in hopes that Kyle Field and the 12th Man was the formula for success. But the 21st-ranked Kansas State Wildcats marched into College Station and defeated the Aggies in a tough-fought battle, 23-20.

Perched on the KSU 40-yard line with 1:38 left in the game, A&M needed a touchdown to win or a field goal to send the game into overtime. On third and five from the KSU 35-yard line, wide receiver Albert Connell caught an 18-yard pass from quarterback Brannon Stewart, but fumbled at the KSU 17-yard line to end A&M's last-ditch effort to win the game.

Connell, who had eight catches for 127 yards and one touchdown, said his knee was on the ground when the referees awarded KSU with a fumble recovery at the end of the game.

"All I know is that I was down," Connell said. "I was trying to catch the football and next thing I knew I was hit from behind. That's the ref's call. I couldn't do anything about it after he made the call. But I should have known better. Even when I'm down I have to protect the football because you never know how it's going to turn out."

The Aggies began the fourth quarter trailing 23-10. After a 40-yard punt and a 15-yard pass interference penalty against the Wildcats, the Aggies took over at the KSU 45-yard line. The Aggies took off on a 10-play, 33-yard drive that culminated in a 30-yard field goal by junior placekicker

Kyle Bryant with 10:51 remaining in the game, cutting the Aggies' deficit to 10.

A&M special teams player Trent Driver then blocked a KSU punt with 3:29 left in the game and recovered the ball at the KSU 29-yard line. Stewart connected with Connell on a 15-yard touchdown pass to bring A&M within three points, giving the raucous crowd of 64,155 hope for an Aggie miracle comeback.

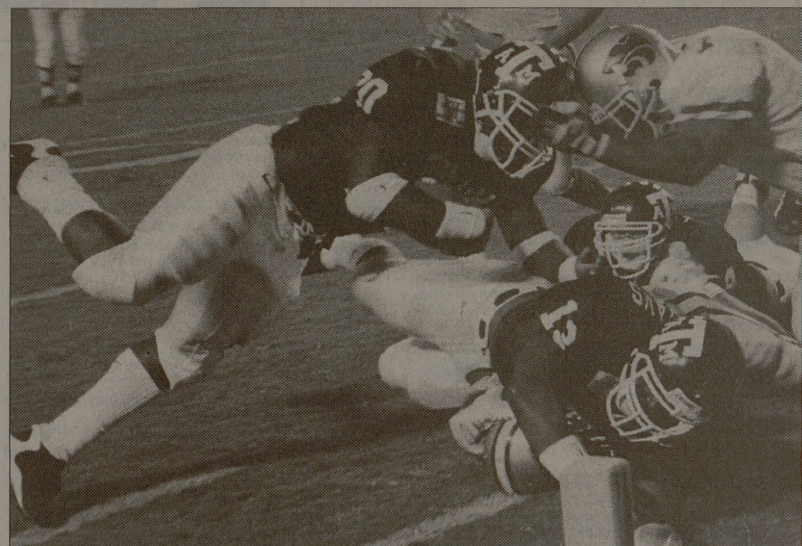
The boisterous gathering made a huge impact throughout the game, disrupting on-field communication between Kansas State players in several instances. Slocum said he was impressed and thankful for the fan support.

"I thought our fans did a great job," Slocum said. "It was a great atmosphere and that makes the loss hurt even more. I'm totally embarrassed for them that they didn't get a better performance out of us."

That embarrassment stemmed from five A&M turnovers, two of which set up Wildcats scoring drives in the early-going.

Trailing by 17 points at the half, A&M received the opening kickoff of the third quarter and started chipping away at the lead with a 10-play, 68-yard touchdown drive. Tailbacks Sirr Parker, Eric Bernard and D'Andre Hardeman combined for 20 yards on the drive, while Stewart connected with Connell for 48 yards on two passes. Hardeman scampered in from a yard out for the touchdown and cut the deficit to 20-10 with 10:59 remaining in the third.

Kansas State later answered with a 33-yard field goal to stretch the lead to 23-10.



Ryan Rogers, THE BATTALION

Sophomore tailback **D'Andre Hardeman** dives for a touchdown in the third quarter of Saturday's game at Kyle Field.

Kansas St. 23, Texas A&M 20

KSU	13	7	3	0	—	23
A&M	3	0	7	10	—	20

	A&M	Kansas St.
First Downs	16	15
Rushes-yards	44-135	39-39
Passing yards	151	147
Comp-att-int	11-28-2	18-29-0
Return yards	46	30
Punts-avg.	6-46	8-37
Fumbles-lost	4-3	2-2
Penalties-yards	11-76	8-63
Time of possession	28:20	31:40

See AGGIES, Page 8

Aggies must figure out way to beat their toughest opponent — themselves

The stale refrain has become all too familiar to the Texas A&M Football Team. The Aggies and their fans have uttered the words so many times this season, they could probably write their own blues melody by now.

The final verse reads something like this — "A big play here, a catch there... a little luck here, one more yard there... and they had that game won."

It was the same sad song for A&M Saturday at Kyle Field. The Aggies fought valiantly and should have beaten 21st-ranked Kansas State, but they wouldn't let themselves do it.

For some strange reason, they can't stop beating themselves. Kansas State didn't beat A&M — the Aggies' five turnovers and inability to make the big plays did.

That's nothing new this season — in fact, you could call it the Aggie theme. There's no telling how good the Aggies could be if they could get the turnovers out of their system. But the giveaways continue to plague them, canceling out would should end up being a

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stellar season from a statistical standpoint.

The amazing efforts made by Albert Connell, Keith Mitchell and several others this year don't mean squat if the Aggies aren't winning.

So who can we blame for the Aggies' inability to hold on to the ball? The players for not remembering fundamentals like tucking away and protecting the ball? Or the coaches for not teaching or demanding the

players do the same?

No one is immune from the team's baffling case of "fumble-itis" — not even Connell, who made a spectacular play at the end of Saturday's contest breaking past All-American Chris Canty to make a thrilling catch and run to the Wildcat 17-yard line before fumbling away the Aggies' last shot at glory. The play was a fitting end to another A&M effort spoiled by untimely and costly turnovers.

It's not fair to pick on Connell though, considering he spearheaded the Aggies' comeback effort in the second half.

It was A&M's inability to make a play — particularly in the first half — that significantly hindered their cause.

The Aggies' failure to put the ball in the end zone after Dat Nguyen recovered a Kansas State fumble on the Wildcat 11-yard line less than four minutes into the contest hurt. But what was even harder to swallow was the Wildcats' ensuing 15-play, 74-yard scoring drive. The Aggies were unable to stop KSU on five key third-down plays, including a third-and-19 situation where they surrendered a 36-yard pass play to Kevin Lockett.

A Brannon Stewart interception on the next series set up the Wildcats at the A&M 36, and before the Aggies knew it, they were down 10 points after one quarter.

The Aggies' self-destruction continued on the next series as Stewart fumbled and Kansas State recovered at the A&M 31, setting up another Wildcat touchdown.

As if that turn of events weren't enough, things got uglier.

In a fluke play indicative of how the entire season has gone for the Aggies, A&M special teams player Jason Webster was hit in the back on the run by a KSU

punt. The Wildcats recovered the live ball and regained possession.

It was that kind of evening — one when a wide open Dante Hall lets a sure-touchdown pass hit him in the shoulder pads and fall incomplete. It was an evening when Albert Connell catches eight passes for 127 yards, but gets overthrown on two big-gain opportunities when he had his man beat.

But the play that hurt the most was Stewart's decision to try a sneak into the end zone on the Wildcat goal line with 12 seconds remaining in the first half. Although the play called for a D'Andre Hardeman sweep, Stewart made a split-second decision to try for the end zone himself. He didn't make it, the Aggies had no timeouts remaining, and the clock ran out with A&M coming up empty.

The Aggies did fight back in the second half, basically shutting down the Wildcats and putting themselves into a position to win, but they couldn't come up with the big finishing play to pull out the game. And the heartache continues.

There is no finger pointing on the team, only a burning curiosity as to why it can't do what it knows it is capable of — winning.

The Aggies weren't any less talented than Kansas State. Hell, they outgained the Wildcats by 100 total yards in the game, and completely outplayed them in the second half. But the Aggies took themselves out of the game early.

A&M has gone way beyond shooting themselves in the foot, as their season has been ruled by nagging miscues. At some point soon, they are going to have to turn the corner and eliminate the mistakes and make the big plays. If they can't get out of their rut, they'll keep losing in the same agonizing fashion they did Saturday.

After winning 31 consecutive home games, dating back to the 1989 season, the Aggies have dropped three of their last five at Kyle Field.

Now with a 3-4 record, it's sobering to think the team must win four of its last five games to be eligible for a bowl bid.

However, the Aggies can't lose faith like many of their fans have. They are convinced they can win, they just have to prove it by executing like they are capable of.

The Aggies may be singing the blues right now, but they've yet to hear a peep out of the fat lady.

Hatchell discusses the Big 12, Aggies at Bogey With Barone Dinner

By ROSS HECOX
THE BATTALION

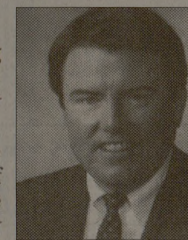
Big 12 Conference Commissioner Steve Hatchell was the guest speaker at the Fifth Annual Bogey With Barone Golf Tournament and Dinner at Pebble Creek Country Club Friday night. He answered questions from the media concerning the Big 12 and specifically Texas A&M's role in the new superconference.

•On the struggles Big 12 football teams have had this season against non-conference opponents:

"Everyone thought (the Big 12) would be the second coming of the NFL. We certainly wanted all the teams to be undefeated in non-conference play. I still think an awful lot of the conference. I'm glad we played those games, and now we have some more meaningful games now. We have different dynamics than we did before. There is a chance some people can move back into the top 25. It takes two to three years to get all the spurs out of the way. This is clearly one of the best football operations in the entire country."

•On the possible rivalry between the North and South Divisions:

"We've tried to stay away from North-South conversations. We like to say we have one conference, not a North and South Division."



Hatchell

•On the performance of other sports in the Big 12:

"We have great programs. Basketball will start off on a higher level than people think. We are having a good year for soccer, volleyball is terrific, and frankly you can't overlook cross country. Looking at the conference, we have a history and a presence in every sport."

•On Texas A&M improving facilities, including renovations (past and future) to Kyle Field, the building of Reed Arena and the tennis complex, the state-of-the-art natatorium in the A&M Student Recreation Center and the Soccer Complex:

"If you're going to be a top program in the country you have to make a commitment. I think Texas A&M is clearly at the forefront of [improving facilities]. (Athletic Director) Wally Groff and Dr. Ray Bowen (Texas A&M President) make a wonderful combination. They not only settle current problems, but look ahead. That is why A&M is ahead — because it is willing to look ahead."

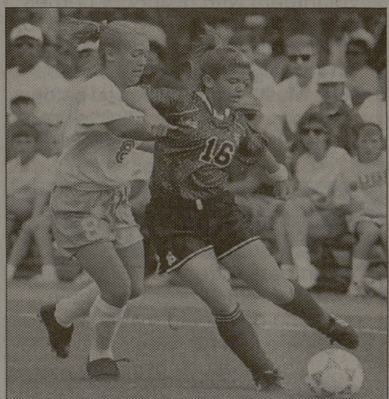
•On the current situation with football bowl games:

"The bowl business right now is different. I think records are less important. Now they want names. But look at the A&M-Michigan game (in the Alamo Bowl). The [TV ratings] were off the charts."

•On the location of the 1997 Big 12 Championship:

"It would be ill-advised to announce a new city at this point so soon, when we haven't even been to (1996 Championship Game city) St. Louis yet. We are going to invite all the (possible) cities to come to St. Louis (for the Championship game). But realistically, we'll probably be coming to Texas (in 1997)."

Aggies finish adidas College Classic, 1-1



Stew Milne, THE BATTALION

A&M defender **Ashley Fendley** battles UNC forward **Debbie Keller** in UNC's 3-0 win.

STAFF AND WIRE REPORTS

KLEIN, Texas — The seventh-ranked Texas A&M Soccer Team split its matches at the adidas College Classic in Klein, Texas, this weekend by blanking Duke University 3-0 Friday and losing to the second-ranked University of North Carolina 3-0 Sunday.

After 27 scoreless minutes against the Blue Devils, junior midfielder Diana Rowe broke the scoring silence by scoring on a rebound off a blocked attempt by

senior forward Kristen Koop.

Seven minutes into the second half, junior forward Bryn Blalack dished the ball to Rowe, who passed it to Koop, who scored from 15-feet out against Duke goalkeeper Dana Piper. Six minutes later, Koop passed the ball to senior forward Yvette Okler, who passed the ball to senior forward Yvette Okler who scored the insurance goal for the Aggies.

Although Duke is only 6-8-1 on the season after being ranked as high as sixth this season, A&M Head Coach G. Guerrieri said it was a good win for the team.

The Aggies had to play the Tar Heels yesterday without their third leading scorer Okler who was ejected in the final minutes of the Duke contest for tripping a Duke player. The red card means an automatic one-game suspension.

"It's disappointing that because of a poor decision by the referee, we lose one of our most important players for a very important match," Guerrieri said.

The last time the Aggies faced North Carolina, they lost 4-0 in the first round of the SMU Puma Classic in the two team's sole meeting in history. UNC extended that streak Sunday by shutting out the Aggies 3-0.

Braves blitz Yankees 12-1

NEW YORK (AP) — The Atlanta Braves showed the New York Yankees that what they saw on TV was no fluke.

Nineteen-year-old Andruw Jones homered twice and drove in five runs as John Smoltz and the Braves sent the Yankees to their worst World Series loss ever, 12-1 Sunday night in Game 1.

The Braves brutalized New York the same way they humbled St. Louis in winning the NL playoffs. The Yankees had a week off to watch Atlanta outscore the Cardinals 32-1 in the last three games.

And now they know the defending champions are just as potent in person — despite a one-day rain delay, a three-hour traffic jam and jeering Yankees fans.

Jones hit a two-run homer off Andy Pettitte in the second inning, then lined a three-run shot off Brian Boehringer in the third that made it 8-0. By then Yankees fans, who had waited 15 hits for the Series, were already silent.

Game 2 will be Monday night. Greg Maddux, moved up a day because of the rain, will start for Atlanta against Jimmy Key.