

## Turnabout is fair play Aggies reverse turnover trend, capitalize on OSU giveaways in 38-19 victory

By ROSS HECOX  
THE BATTALION

STILLWATER, Okla. — In a season where turnovers have led to its heartbreaking demise, the Texas A&M Football Team finally used a giveaway to its advantage Saturday.

Trailing Oklahoma State University 13-10 at the start of the third quarter, the Aggies reversed their fortunes when senior linebacker Keith Mitchell snagged his first career interception and sprinted into the end zone. From there, A&M rolled to a 38-19 victory before a Lewis Field crowd of 41,250.

The play turned the tide for a squad that has struggled to find any positive momentum all season. Following a Brannndon Stewart fumble at the Aggie 34-yard line that set up a Cowboy field goal to break a 10-10 tie at the end of the first half, Mitchell's game-breaking play could not have come at a better time for the Aggies.

A&M Head Coach R.C. Slocum said he told the team at halftime not to let the negatives carry over into the rest of the game.

"It was very disappointing, but we had to grab hold of the situation," Slocum said. "We talked at halftime about being positive and opportunistic when opportunities present themselves. I'm delighted that our team came out in the second half and did the things needed to win the ballgame."

Opportunity came knocking when Cowboy quarterback Tone' Jones attempted to lob a screen pass over Mitchell's head. The Aggie linebacker

leaped into the air for the interception behind the line of scrimmage and carried it 42 yards into the end zone, giving the Aggies the lead for good.

Mitchell said the touchdown interception tipped the scales in A&M's favor.

"We needed a big play like that, and it was a blessing to get [the interception]," Mitchell said. "It has been my intention that when my team needs a big play, that I can make one for them. We've been having bad things happen to us all year long. It's about time something went our way."

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R.C. Slocum  
A&M Head Coach

A&M turned things around from there. After totaling only 93 yards in the first half, the Aggies ran 43 plays for 275 yards and three touchdowns.

Freshman quarterback Randy McCown was inserted into the lineup 3:37

into the third quarter. In his second series at the helm, McCown connected with senior wideout Albert Connell down the right sideline for 47 yards. The play set up a 7-yard touchdown run by sophomore running back D'Andre Hardeman.

In the meantime, the Wrecking Crew limited the Cowboys to 131 yards and six points in the final two quarters.

With A&M ahead 24-13 late in the third, Cowboy fullback Brian Akins rushed 35 yards into the Aggies' end zone. After failing to complete the two-point conversion, OSU stood within five points of the A&M lead.

However, A&M's defense kept the Cowboys off the scoreboard from then on, while the offense grounded out two more touch-

downs on the strength of Hardeman, who finished with 109 yards on 18 carries and three touchdowns for the day.

Senior noseguard Edward Jasper said Hardeman's 94-yard, three-touchdown second half performance helped set the tone for the rest of the game.

"When they started going Tiki left and Tiki right, that was hard on the (OSU) defense," Jasper said.

Hardeman's 1-yard surge into the end zone with 11:04 left in the game capped a 61-yard drive by the Aggies and gave A&M a commanding 31-19 lead.

Junior linebacker Phillip Meyers forced OSU to fumble on the first play of its following possession, and freshman safety Brandon Jennings recovered the ball at the OSU 43-yard line. Four plays later, Hardeman rumbled 35 yards into the end zone, providing the final margin.

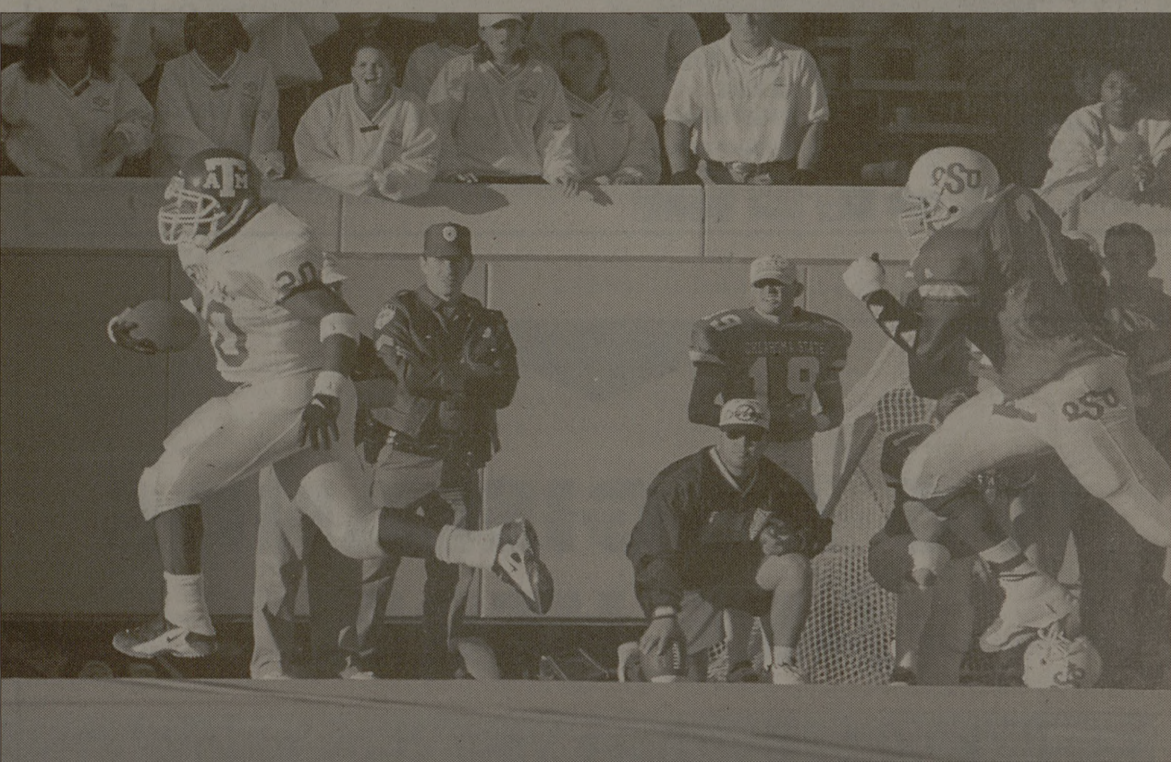
Sophomore linebacker Dat Nguyen's third pick of the season set up an early A&M scoring drive. Brannndon Stewart's quarterback sneak gave the Aggies a 7-0 lead 3:21 into the first quarter.

Oklahoma running back David Thompson's 5-yard touchdown run with 1:53 left in the first evened the score. Thompson, the fourth-leading rusher in the nation (138.6 yards a game), was held to 43 yards on 25 carries.

A&M and OSU swapped field goals before Stewart was sacked and fumbled the ball, setting up another Cowboy field goal, this time a 32-yard Tim Sydnes chip shot as time ran out in the first half.

McCown said in a season marred with games that fell apart for the Aggies, it was encouraging to see their efforts produce a win.

"It was a big win for us," McCown said. "We've struggled this season, but today everything came together. We had some great momentum."



Sophomore running back **D'Andre Hardeman** breaks away for a 35-yard touchdown in the third quarter.

## McCown vacates bench to lead Aggies

By DENNIS RAMIREZ  
THE BATTALION

STILLWATER, Okla. — "Let his will be done ..." was part of the prayer A&M redshirt freshman quarterback Randy McCown said to himself before entering Saturday's game in the third quarter with the Texas A&M Football Team holding a slim 17-13 lead over Oklahoma State University.

Senior outside linebacker Keith Mitchell had just recorded his first ever interception and touchdown return, providing McCown with a four-point lead as he replaced starting quarterback Brannndon Stewart with 11:23 left in the quarter.

After an unsuccessful first series, McCown passed for 108 yards, the remainder of the contest, as the offense racked up 167 rushing yards, 21 points and no turnovers to take control of the game.

Prior to the game, Head Coach R.C. Slocum said McCown would probably see playing time, and the first-year sig-

nal-caller was ready to play.

"As the backup quarterback, I'm always ready to go in and do whatever the team needs me to do," McCown said. "I have to be ready to step up and perform. Going in there I just said a prayer and left everything up to Him."

"All I wanted to do is execute plays. I get plenty of reps in practice, and so when I get the opportunity, I have to perform."

And perform he did. McCown energized an A&M offense that had only rushed for 43 yards, passed for 50 yards and put 10 points up on the board before he entered the game.

Slocum said McCown's leadership and chemistry may have proved to be a winning combination, but there is no quarterback controversy.

"I played Randy McCown and we had some good things happen, but that doesn't mean that we have a quarterback controversy or that we've made a monumental change," Slocum said. "I

started the game with Stewart, but at the same time I had said that I wouldn't hesitate to put in other quarterbacks to get a look at them before spring training."

McCown proved adept at throwing deep downfield, connecting on passes of 47 and 24 yards to senior wide receiver Albert Connell and sophomore tight end Derrick Spiller, respectively. At the same time, he dismissed rumors he did not have enough speed to be a top quarterback.

"I run a 4.8 (40-yard dash), but if someone is chasing me down, I'll run a 4.5 or 4.6 easy," McCown said. "As for the passes, I basically just put it out there and let them make the play. Albert Connell is a great player and he made me look good."

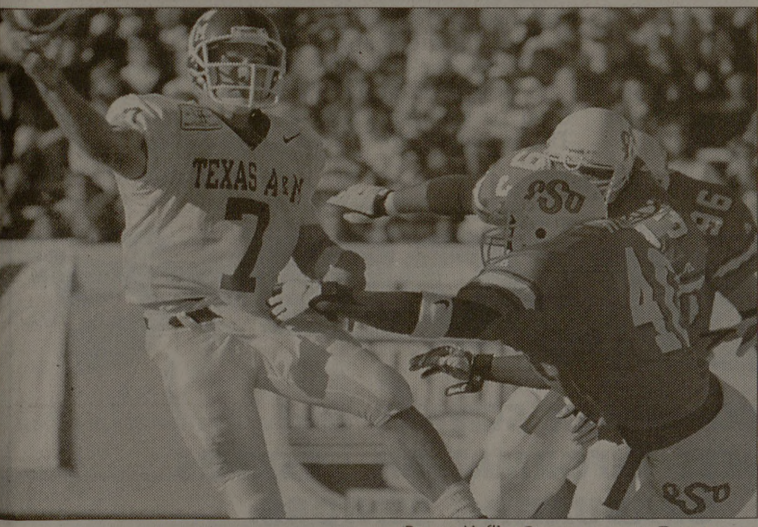
Displaying mobility and quickness in the third quarter, McCown scrambled out of the pocket twice for 13 yards, breaking two tackles and turning a potential big loss into a gain in one instance.

McCown also offered a boost of confidence to the team. Sophomore tailback D'Andre Hardeman rushed for 94 yards in the second half, compared to just 15 yards in the first half.

"It is something good for the team when a guy can step up and get the job done," Mitchell said. "For now, we will have to wait and see what happens and hope for the best. We got some good momentum today."

Slocum said the team will re-evaluate its quarterbacks' performance this week, and then make any decisions regarding changing the lineup.

"We don't have a quarterback controversy," Slocum said. "What we will do is go into practice this week and then we can make a decision as to what happens," Slocum said. "For now, I am very pleased and confident with the outcome. We are just going to take things one week at a time."



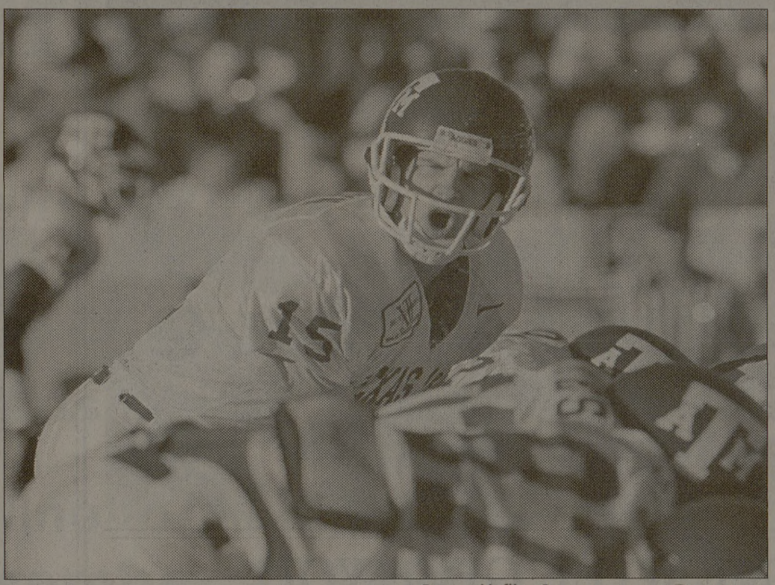
Rogge Hefflin, SPECIAL TO THE BATTALION

A&M junior quarterback **Brannndon Stewart** is pressured by Cowboy defenders. Stewart was sacked three times for a loss of 18 yards.

### Texas A&M 38, OSU 19

A&M	7	3	14	14	—	38
OSU	7	6	6	0	—	19

	A&M	OSU
First Downs	19	16
Rushes-yards	48-210	34-121
Passing yards	158	199
Comp-att-int	10-24-0	17-35-3
Return yards	42	10
Punts-avg.	7-38	6-48
Fumbles-lost	1-1	2-1
Penalties-yards	5-39	1-6
Time of possession	30:46	29:14



Rogge Hefflin, SPECIAL TO THE BATTALION

Redshirt freshman **Randy McCown** completed 5 of 11 passes for 108 yards with no interceptions.

## Aggie Soccer clinches fourth Post Oak Classic title

By NICKI SMITH  
THE BATTALION

The sixth-ranked Texas A&M Soccer Team put an end to its regular season play this weekend while hosting the Post Oak Mall Classic at the Aggie Soccer Complex, but to say that the team went out with a bang would be an understatement.

Not only did the Aggies take first place in the tournament for the fourth year in a row, but they increased their overall record to 18-2, while maintaining a perfect record at home.

The Aggies hosted the ninth-ranked University of North Carolina-Greensboro, the 20th-ranked University of Massachusetts and 15th-ranked George Mason University. A&M Head Coach G. Guerrieri said all three teams played extremely well.

"There was a terrific level of play everyone got to see this weekend," Guerrieri said. "All four of the games were very entertaining and we all got to see a wide variety of styles with each of the teams that played."

In first-round action Friday, the Aggies took on North Carolina-Greensboro after Massachusetts defeated George Mason 2-0 in an earlier game.

Less than 25 minutes into the A&M-UNCG game, junior forward Bryn Blalack scored off a penalty kick from senior forward Yvette Okler's attempt 15 yards out from the goal.

It would be the only goal either team would score in the first half. In the second half, it was all Blalack as she scored her second unassisted goal at the 36:05 mark.

Blalack would be the only player to score in the game, which put the Aggies up 2-0 over the Lady Spartans and into the championship game against the UMass Minutewomen.

Guerrieri said the win, which marked the Aggies second against top 10 teams, was a great result for the Aggies.

"It was great for us to be able to beat another top 10 team this close to the end of the season," Guerrieri said. "These challenges are exactly what we look forward to."

Blalack said because the Aggies lost their first contest against the Spartans a year ago, they knew they had to improve this time around.

"I think they played about the same," Blalack said. "We improved the way we played and we came out this weekend knowing every game was going to be tough. I think we showed them we can play with top level teams."

Guerrieri said he expected Massachusetts to be the Aggie's toughest home opponent.

"This game made for a terrific championship game for this tournament," Guerrieri said. "Typically, teams for the East Coast don't play a quick game, but more of a physical and direct game."

"We were expecting UMass to be organized de-

fensively and for their goalie, Danielle Dion, to make spectacular saves."

"This was the game we were looking for to head us into the Big 12 Championships."

Blalack sparked the Aggie offensive attack again with 29:24 left in the first half as she took a cross from Okler.

Blalack attributed the three goals she scored this weekend to her teammates.

"This team is phenomenal," Blalack said. "I am surrounded by the best players in the nation and I just happened to be in the right place at the right time."

Senior forward Kristen Koop continued the offensive attack at the headed in a goal off a corner kick from senior midfielder Tania Castillejos, which was then headed off Blalack.

The only other goal scored in the game came with only 35 seconds left as freshman midfielder Julie Pinkerton blasted in the ball in front of a wide-open goal.

The 3-0 final score was the Aggies' second shut out of the weekend, and their 10th on the season. It was also the Aggie's 17th straight win at home.

Guerrieri said UMass did not give the Aggies any easy opportunities.

"All of our goals were quality goals," Guerrieri said. "The first half was one of our better halves we have played, and this was a great experience for us leading into the Big 12 Finals and NCAA Champi-



Ryan Rogers, THE BATTALION

Senior forward **Kristen Koop** scores against Massachusetts in the championship game Sunday.

onships. We now have beaten teams that are better than we will face all season."

Aggies nominated to the All-Tournament team included Koop, Okler and sophomore defender Emily Elias.

Blalack took home MVP Offensive honors and freshman goalkeeper Melanie Wilson won MVP Defensive honors.

The Aggies will resume play Nov. 7-10 in St. Louis, Mo., for the Big 12 Conference Championships.