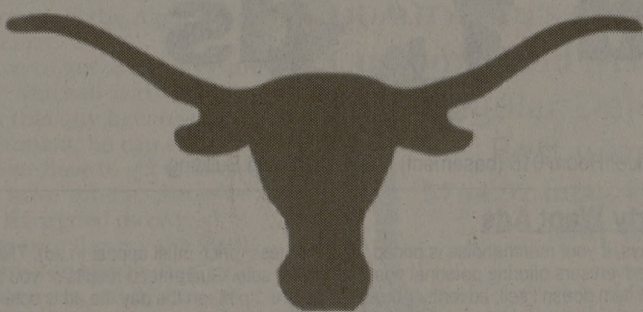


& Ms. Texas

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 Series: Leads 65-32-5
 Last Year: 16-6 at Kyle Field



Texas Longhorns (6-4, 5-2 vs. Big 12) with a victory: they win the Big 12 South title outright and earn a trip to the conference championship game.

Longhorns look to build on breakthrough victory

By ROSS HECOX
THE BATTALION

When the University of Texas defeated Texas A&M to conclude Southwest Conference play last season, the Longhorns snapped a four-game losing streak to their old archrival. The feat not only stopped a maroon streak over burnt orange, but it also took place on A&M's hallowed stomping grounds of Kyle Field — a place where the Aggies had won 31 straight games.

That would seem to brighten the Longhorns' prospects in 1996, especially since several current Texas players took part in last year's victory. "For a while, we never could quite get over the hump (of beating A&M)," Texas Head Coach John Mackovic said. "Last year, we were able to understand how to do it. We have some players who played in that game. They know what it took to win."

James Brown, Bryant Westbrook, Mike Adams, Ricky Williams, Pat Fitzgerald and Chris Akins are some of the present Longhorns who know how to beat A&M.

And this time around, Texas has the home-field advantage.

Several factors seem to give the Longhorns

an edge, but defensive nose guard Chris Akins knows past performances and favorable odds have little bearing on who will win state bragging rights this year.

"We gained a lot of confidence from playing and beating [the Aggies] on Kyle Field," Akins said. "But they're going to be hungrier this time because we beat them. The rivalry is what it should be. It brings out the best in both of us."

Texas (6-4, 5-2 in Big 12 Conference) has not met preseason expectations. Losses to Notre Dame Sept. 21, and Colorado Oct. 26 were near-victories. But their 30-27 loss to the University of Oklahoma Oct. 12 most signifies their disappointing season.

The Sooners were behind by 11 points, but a touchdown run from the two-yard line in overtime sealed the victory for the 22-point underdogs. If not for Oklahoma's comeback win, Texas would be a lock for the Big 12 Championship Game in St. Louis.

Now, the Longhorns must defeat A&M.

"We have to win to go to St. Louis," Longhorn tight end Pat Fitzgerald said. "To go or not to go is what [this game] gets down to."

See LONGHORNS, Page 9

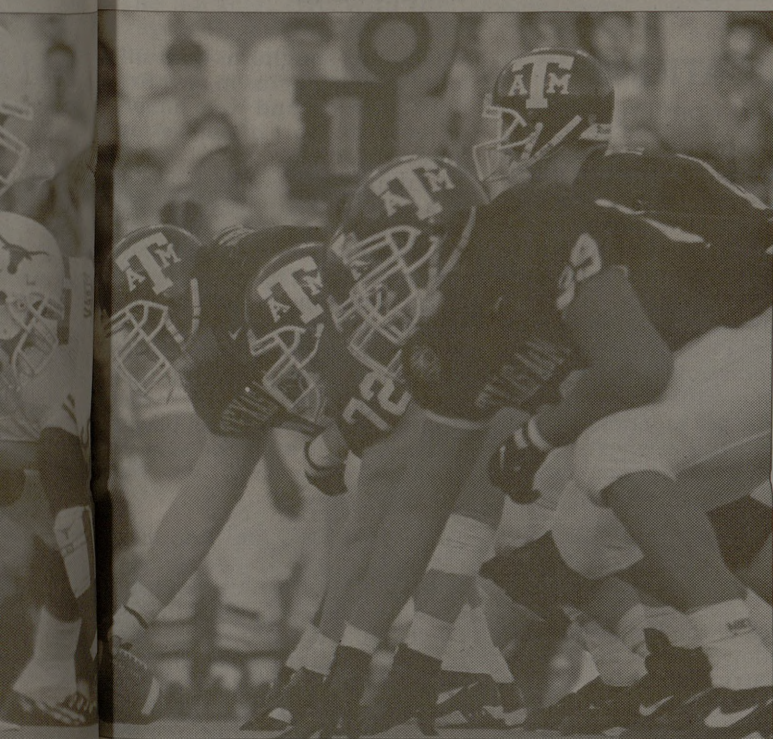
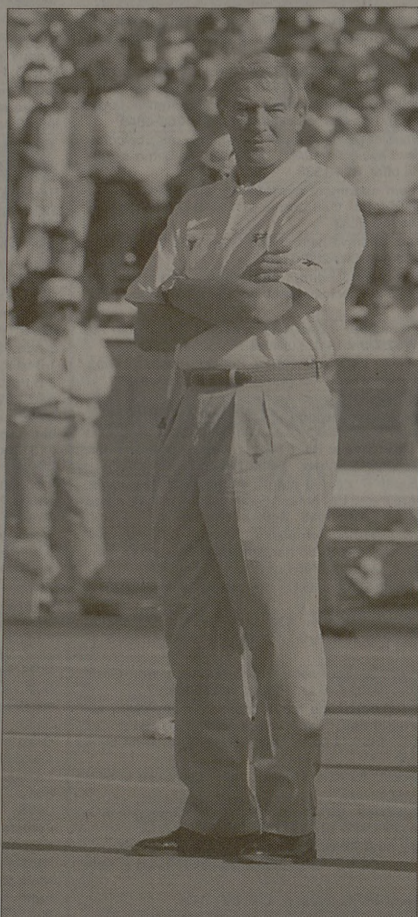


Photo by Milne
Moog

Aggies, Longhorns suffer similar bruises, growing pains in Big 12 South

By MATT MITCHELL
THE BATTALION

When the Aggies and Longhorns renew their storied rivalry Friday, it will mark the culmination of an inaugural Big 12 season that began with promise for both teams. The two archrivals bear a certain resemblance to one another that goes beyond the spirited and influential alumni and the fiercely spirited student bodies.

Both Texas and A&M, along with Baylor and Texas Tech, were eager to make a splash in the first year of the heralded Big 12 Conference. Sneered at by certain former Big 8 schools for not being up to par with the competition, all four refugees of the former Southwest Conference felt they had something to prove.

But after a promising 3-0 start, Baylor stumbled to a 1-7 finish, prompting the firing of Head Coach Chuck Reedy. Tech fared a little better, finishing the season at 7-4 while maintaining hopes of a South Division championship.

Texas, meanwhile, entered the year with the high expectations that

accompany a high national ranking, something Aggie fans know all too well. The Longhorns boasted a powerful offense, a hard-hitting secondary rated by many as the best in the country, and a schedule that would allow them to prove their mettle against some of the best competition in the land.

But after a promising start, the steers suffered last-minute setbacks against Notre Dame, Oklahoma and Colorado, and were completely outplayed in a loss at Virginia. For a veteran team laden with talent, these fourth-quarter collapses proved bewildering. With its confidence shaken, Texas never fully recovered.

A&M also began the season with high expectations, but the Aggies' youthful inexperience proved to be their downfall in several early games before they rebounded down the stretch. Although differences between A&M and Texas exist, A&M senior outside linebacker Keith Mitchell sees little difference in the efforts of the two teams.

See IMPLICATIONS, Page 8

Most on the Texas rivalry and biggest collegiate game:

... because it still hadn't dawned on me that it's going to be thinking that this could be my last go out in style.

... the loss last year with them running on our field special." — Keith Mitchell, outside linebacker

... would be my last time out. I'm going to get out there and remember about my college career.

... Texas, so I definitely want to go out with a win.

... when you have that, you don't need any more motivation. It's a heated battle." — Calvin Collins, center

... have to go out and play hard because we can't lose. We can win." — Albert Connell, wide receiver

... the type of game where both teams get up for each other. We're going to beat Texas as bad as we can.

... much harder knowing this could be the end of the line." —

— Compiled by Jamie Burch



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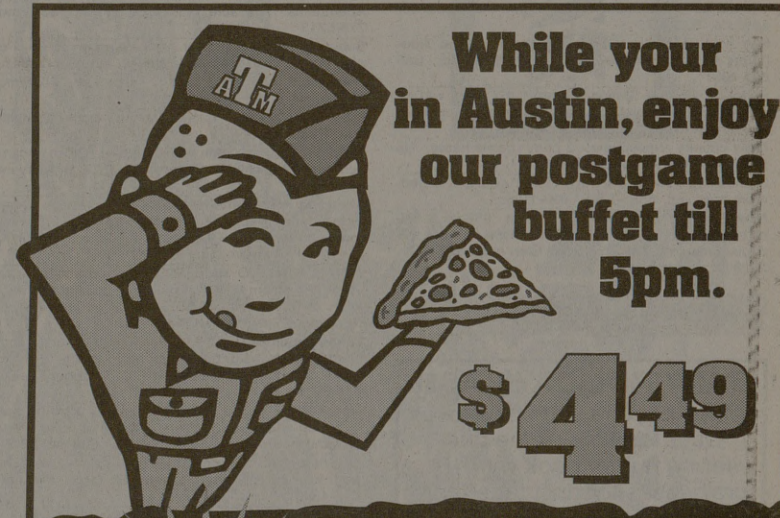
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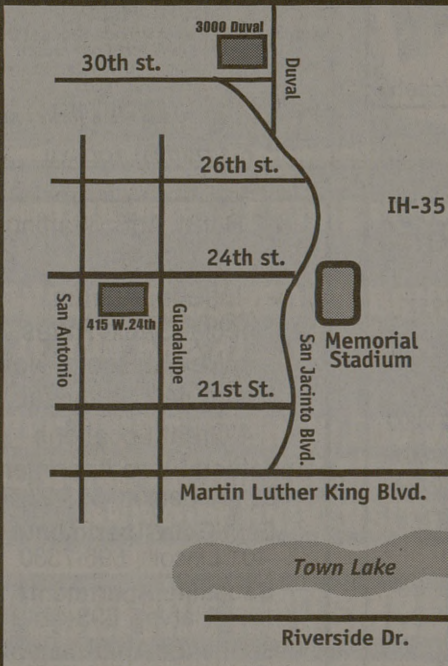
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