

Friday • August 29, 1997

Picking up the pieces

Jarrell football players dedicate season to fallen teammates

JARRELL, Texas (AP) — Jarrell quarterback Ernest Vidaure looked at the white cloth tape stuck to the back of his blue helmet. In black marker was written: "John R., Michael R., Erik M., Ryan M., John I., Michael C. In loving memory." Then he looked around at the fatigued, sweaty faces of his teammates on the bench and began stomping his feet into the dried brown grass on the sidelines. "Erik (doesn't) get to get tired anymore. Suck it up," he yelled with an intense look on his face, slapping his helmet for emphasis. It was just a preseason scrimmage against Navarro in preparation for the season opener Sept. 5 against

Bruceville-Eddy. Maybe a couple hundred people filled the five rows of wooden bleachers on either side of the field. But it was much more than a scrimmage. It was the first chance for Jarrell players to pay tribute to six of their teammates killed along with 21 others in a May 27 tornado. John Ruiz and Erik Moehring would have been playing on the varsity for the first time, both contending for a starting position at wide receiver. Michael Ruiz, John's brother, and Ryan Moehring, Erik's brother, as well as John Igo and Michael Carmona would have played on Jarrell's junior varsity.

"This year, everybody is playing as hard as we can because we have some friends who don't get to play anymore," Vidaure said. As the winds gusted and the sky turned a wet charcoal on May 27, the Ruiz brothers stopped shooting baskets at the high school gym and returned to the family's trailer home. With a tornado warning in effect, they did what they thought would be safe and went to the Moehrings' home, a larger, two-story structure. The Moehring home was destroyed and all four boys were killed. The Ruiz trailer home was undamaged. Before the scrimmage kicked off, running back Matt Kitchens walked over to Vidaure and said, "The first play we run is for John (Ruiz) and Erik (Moehring)." When Jarrell went onto the field, Kitchens said the same thing to the offensive linemen in the huddle, telling them to hold their blocks and he would make something happen. He did, breaking up the middle for a 70-yard touchdown run on the first play. As his teammates celebrated, Kitchens looked upward, beyond the slightly bent goal post in the south end zone and pointed his finger to the sky. "I told John that was for him," Kitchens said. "I've been playing for John. He was a big buddy of mine, the funniest, nicest guy. It's been really hard not having him and the other guys around. They were supposed to be here."

"After the scrimmage was pretty tough. I looked around and just kept expecting them to be there."

JOHN MARTONE
JARRELL DEFENSIVE END

"After the scrimmage was really tough," said Johnnie Martone, a defensive end. "I looked around and just kept expecting to see them."

Jarrell is a farm town of roughly 1,000, set on rolling prairie about 40 miles north of Austin. Locals meet regularly for lunch at Joe's Country Barbecue and buy feed



FILE PHOTO/ASSOCIATED PRESS

for their cattle at Jarrell Farm Supply. Slowly, the 50 or so houses that were sucked into the sky in May are being rebuilt, and the town is moving forward. Although the coaches had expected 50 or more football players this year, the junior varsity and varsity teams combined have 46.

"We are just carrying on as normally as we can," said head coach Tracy Burke. "It has impacted our players, and we knew them as coaches. We miss them not being in practice and not seeing them around."

Jarrell Superintendent Larry Hausenfluke said he would like the media attention to end.

"We have had our memorial service," he said. "We have brought what we are calling an appropriate end to the problems caused by the tornado, which is not to say we are forgetting, but we don't want it to be the center of everything we do."

Jarrell's football team was 3-7 last year. Burke hopes the team can contend for the playoffs this year.

Vidaure said the team is considering a formal helmet sticker or jersey patch to memorialize its fallen members.

"The past few years, Jarrell really hasn't been a great football team," Vidaure said. "This season, we are lot closer and we are playing a lot more like a team."

"We are looking to shock some people. But our whole season is for the guys we lost, and they will be right there with us every step of the way."



FILE PHOTO/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Six Jarrell High School football players were killed when tornadoes ripped through the community on May 27.

Sixth-ranked soccer team set to get season off and running

Aggie Soccer Complex plays host to team's first night game

By Kristina Buffin
Staff Writer

For the first time in the Texas A&M Soccer Team's five-year history, the Aggies are starting a majority of new people in the face. The initial nine recruits, who built a program from the relative unknown to a top 10 team, have graduated and 10 freshmen have arrived to fill the footprints left at the Aggie Soccer Complex.

The test of how the program will integrate these new faces comes Saturday night as the sixth-ranked Aggies host conference foe, the University of Oklahoma at 7 p.m. But A&M Head Coach G. Guerrieri says this new crop of freshmen could possibly be more talented than the 1994 harvest.

"We knew coming into this season that losing nine seniors would not be easy," he said. "But it is never easy. It is difficult losing the experience but these freshmen may be more talented."

Among the new faces are Elizabeth Pavlas, Michelle Remington, although she will not see action this season because of a torn ACL, Claire Elliott, Katie Offutt, Heather

Wiebe, Nicky Thrasher, Gillian Gandy, Amber Reynolds, Alison Peters and Stefani Chaney.

One of four seniors, forward Bryn Blalack, said it is up to the upperclassmen to help the freshmen adjust and become an integral part of a winning program.

"Being a senior puts the leadership role in our hands," the preseason All-American said. "It is our job to show them the ropes. But they are doing great."

Last season ended on a sour note for the Aggies, who were expected to contend for the national championship. A&M finished second in the Big 12 after losing a heartbreaker to the University of Nebraska 1-0 in overtime. Then, in the first round of the NCAA Championships, the Aggies lost 5-3 to San Diego, in a game many thought they would win.

However, the past is the past for the Aggies and they are looking at the prematurely-shortened season as a learning experience.

"G. (Guerrieri) will bring it up every once in a while but that's it," said senior midfielder Diana Rowe. "But we have learned from it."

The Aggies' motto for the 1997

season has been take it one game at a time. Guerrieri pointed out that being in the top 10 in the preseason polls is expected but it is the team's job to maintain that ranking.

"Both inside and outside of this campus were are expected to be highly ranked," he said. "We have a talented team but my main concern is that we have a lot of inexperience. It is up to the rest of the team to set the pace for the freshmen."

Inexperience or not the Aggies are expected to make an impact on the national map again in 1997. A&M is 3-1 in season openers and 2-0 in conference openers. This is the first and last time the Aggies will open with a conference game. Next season, the Big 12 will begin scheduling conference games for the latter part of the season.

The last time A&M faced the Sooners, the Aggies blanked OU, 4-0. However, Guerrieri said Oklahoma has a defensive, hard work philosophy that will force the Aggies to be prepared.

Saturday's game will be the first night game held at the Aggie Soccer Complex thanks to the addition of permanent lights.



STEW MILNE/THE BATTALION

Senior Bryn Blalack and the sixth ranked Texas A&M Soccer Team will start their season Saturday night in the team's first night home game.

Ags go for first win in Georgia

Staff and Wire Reports

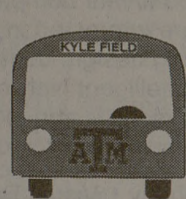
The Texas A&M Volleyball Team (0-2) will continue its search for the win column this weekend as the Aggies take part in the Georgia Invitational in Athens, Georgia. The 13th ranked Aggies will battle Arkansas-Little Rock Saturday at 10 a.m., the University of Georgia on Sunday at 12 noon followed by William and Mary at 2 p.m.

A&M is fresh off a two game skid after losing consecutive matches at the State Farm/NACWAA Volleyball Classic last weekend in Palo Alto, California. The Aggies lost the season opener against the top-ranked and defending national champion Stanford Cardinals, four games to one. Sophomore outside hitter Stacy Sykora took match-high honors with 21 kills and a .325 hitting percentage.

Brigham Young University shut-out the Aggies in the consolation match, winning all three games, 15-5, 15-8, 15-10. Sykora led the Aggies with 16 kills. Cindy Vander-Woude-Lothspeich chipped in with 10 kills and a team-high .474 hitting percentage.


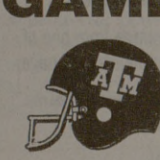
•STUDENTS and FACULTY/STAFF•
•PLUS GUESTS•

RIDE THE SHUTTLE BUSES TO KYLE FIELD



The Texas A&M Athletic Department will be running student shuttle buses to home football games again this season! The buses will run on their normal routes. Students and Faculty/Staff plus their guests may ride FREE!! Just show your game ticket to board the bus. The Student shuttle buses will start their regular routes 2 hours before kickoff and depart campus for 1 hour after the game is over.

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