

TEXAS A&M
September 6, 1997
SAM HOUSTON



Bearkats looking to gain experience in Aggieland

By TRAVIS V. DABNEY
Staff writer

Sam Houston University Head Coach Ron Randleman brings his 0-1 Bearkats to Kyle Field this weekend for what is most certainly going to be Sam Houston's biggest game of the year. The Bearkats suffered a tough defeat this past weekend to perennial Division II power Angelo State University but come to College Station planning to make a strong impression.

"We did not play well last weekend but we practiced well this week and plan on coming to A&M and playing a good hard football game," Randleman said. "You can never tell how your players will react after a loss like that but we are going to give it our best."

Sam Houston is coming of a 4-7 season in 1996 and are hoping to see improvement this season. The Bearkats return 49 letterman from last year's team that placed third in the Southland Football League and was marked by an upset win over East Texas piney woods rival Stephen F. Austin State University.

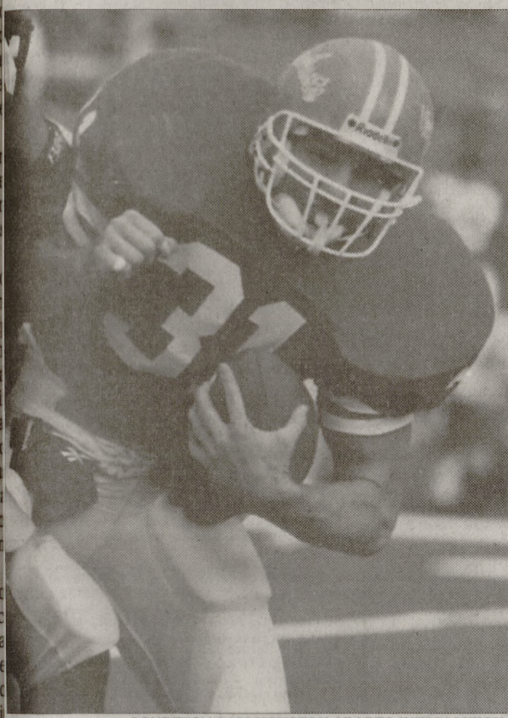
"We are definitely excited about the talent on this football team," Randleman said, who will begin his 16th season at the helm. On offense, the Bearkats return the entire offensive line headlined by all Southland Football League pick at tackle, Greg Studdard. The Bearkats also return both of last season's quarterbacks, Chad Schramek and Albert Bradley. "We return two quarterbacks who have shown they can win in the SFL," Randleman said. "Both had outstanding springs and give us something special on the field."

Perhaps the best player on the Sam Houston squad and the main target of both quarterbacks is tight end Kevin Pesak. Pesak is an SFL All-Conference pick as well as being an All-American candidate at the Division I-AA level. "Kevin Pesak is a great football player," Randleman said. "He can catch the football and run."

The main question mark for the Bearkats this season is their defense. They return six starters from the 1996 season and will be looking to those letterman for leadership.

"While we will have more depth at several areas on the defensive side of the ball, depth on the defensive line is certainly a concern," Randleman said. "We do look to be improved on the defensive side of the ball this season."

When asked about his chances this week against Texas A&M, Randleman seems to be keeping things in focus. "Let's face it: we are a decided underdog playing against one of the better programs in the country, but we are excited to have this opportunity and plan to take advantage of it."



COURTESY SAM HOUSTON SPORTS INFORMATION
Sam Houston State senior tight end Kevin Pesak is an SFL All-Conference candidate.

Lackluster opponent not in original plans



CHRIS FERRELL
sports editor

NOTEBOOK

Ah, Autumn. The weather starts getting cooler (but not in College Station), the leaves begin to change color (but not in College Station) and football season begins (one out of three's not bad).

College football season is under way and this weekend the Texas A&M Football Team gets in on the action. The Sam Houston Bearkats (0-1) will make the short drive down highway 30 to help the Aggies ring in the new season.

Before you bash the schedule...

Much has been made of the Aggie's weak non-conference schedule. Before rushing to pass judgment keep in mind that A&M, at one time or another was set to play three teams in the top 25 this year.

Most big name schools fill up their schedules several years in advance. The Aggies had agreed to begin a series with the sixth ranked University of Nebraska this season while still a member of the Southwest Conference. When the Big 12 was formed in 1996, they could no longer face each other in a non conference game. The Huskers will come on to the schedule next season.

A&M was also set to play LSU this season, a team they have played seven of the past nine seasons. The Tigers decided to get out of the deal with A&M.

When LSU bought out the remaining years, Athletic Director Wally Groff reached an agreement with the 16th ranked Auburn Tigers to fill the spot on this season's schedule. The agreement between the two schools fell through and the Aggies were left scrambling to pick up an opponent.

Left with the choice between Central Florida and Sam Houston, Head Coach R.C. Slocum opted

to go with the team from up the road in Huntsville because of the good working relationship between the two coaching staffs and the ability to draw on the Bearkats fan base.

The Aggies have signed an agreement to play a home and home series with Notre Dame in 2000 and 2001 and Florida State in 2005 and 2006.

Slocum closing in

Going into his ninth season at the helm, R.C. Slocum is in position to become the school's all-time winningest coach this season. His 74 career wins has him within eight victories of Homer Norton who coached the Aggies from 1934-47. Norton coached A&M to the 1939 national championship. Norton's '39 championship squad gave up 31 points in 11 games and were led by All-America running back John Kimbrough on offense.

The young get younger

With only 11 seniors on the roster, the Aggies rank as one of the nation's youngest teams. The youth movement will continue this weekend with nine true freshmen expected to see some action. Linebacker Roylin Bradley, defensive linemen Rocky Bernard, Ronald Edwards, Ronald Flemons, Evan Perroni and defensive back Michael Jameson should all see time on defense. On offense, running back Burnest Rhodes, wide receiver Chris Taylor and lineman Seth McKinney will get a look.

Rhodes, who has impressed coaches during practice can step may and feel the void left when junior tail back Eric Bernard who down with a season ending knee injury in August.

Out of the gates fast

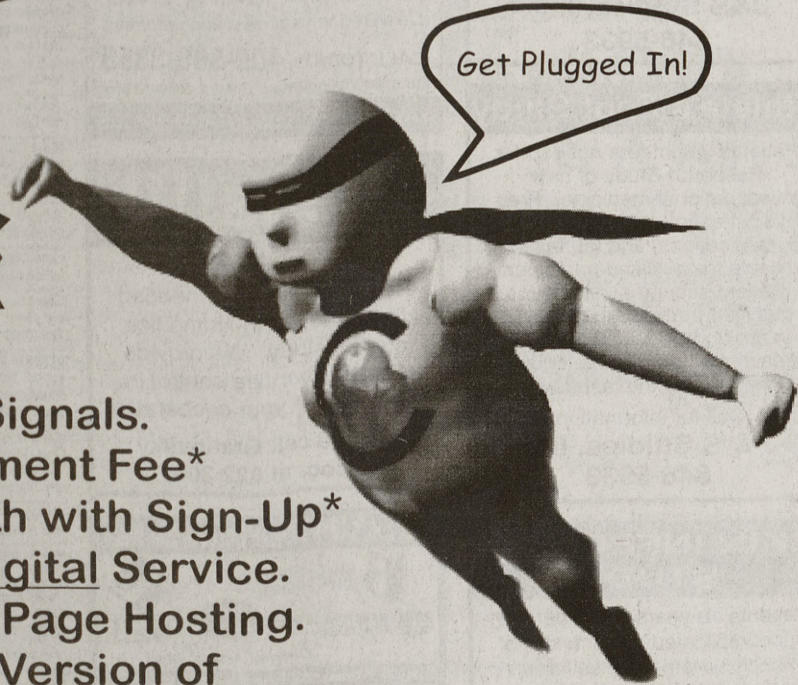
When the Aggies fell to BYU in the Pigskin Classic, it marked the first time the Aggies had lost their opening day game under Slocum. With the Sam Houston State coming to Kyle Field, the Aggies should once again get on the winning track.

Catch it if you can

For the A&M offense to become more balanced, a receiver is going to have to step up. Albert Connell and Donte Hawkins, last season's top two pass catchers are gone, taking 57% of last season's receptions and 67% of the receiving touchdowns with them. Tight end Derrick Spiller, who caught 14 passes a year ago is the top returning receiver.

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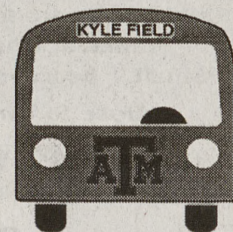
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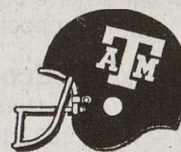
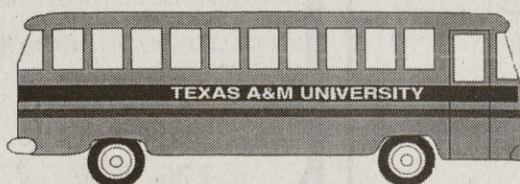


The Texas A&M Athletic Department will be running student shuttle buses to home football games again this season! The buses will run on their normal routes. Students and Faculty/Staff plus their guests may ride FREE!! Just show your game ticket to board the bus. The Student shuttle buses will start their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

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The linebacker said it was diffi- that's when I learned football was dinator Mike Hankwitz said none contribute as one member of a cess.