

A&M looking for second Big 12 win in Austin

By **STEPHEN BOUDREAU**
Staff writer

The Texas A&M Soccer team (9-0) heads to Austin tonight to duel the University of Texas (6-3) in a battle of ranked opponents. "Texas had a great win over Nebraska earlier this season, they are ranked in the top 25, they're playing with a lot of confidence...they're hot. So there will be a lot on the line," coach G. Guerrieri said. Texas claimed the 25th spot in the nation after two impressive victories over Oklahoma and Oklahoma State, outscoring them 17-0 in two games last week. The previously un-

ranked Longhorns have been winners in four consecutive conference games. "The games that I worry about are conference games that sometimes look like they don't mean anything. Those are the games that are hard to get up for," Guerrieri said. "Texas is not a tough game to get up for because they are the biggest rival of this university. Also, they are the only team in the conference, except for us, that has less than two losses in the conference." Earlier this season the Longhorns were steamrolled by Missouri 4-1 in their only conference loss. Last month the Aggies crushed the Tigers 5-2 in Columbia.

"We know if we can go into this game and win then we have really set ourselves up for a great run through the rest of the conference race," Guerrieri said. "The importance of the game is that they stand between us and winning the outright Big 12 championship." If the Aggies hope to take the conference championship and then make a run for the national title, they will have to do it without sophomore defender Ashley Fendley. The Houston native tore her anterior cruciate ligament late in the second half in Sunday's game against top ranked North Carolina.

"Losing Ashley is huge, but this team has a lot of depth. Elizabeth Pavlas will step into her place. So that means that we have six freshman now starting for us. Binky (Pavlas) is very athletic and very capable of playing the position," Guerrieri said. "Really, all this really does is speeds up her development. She's had some good performances all season, so it's not like she's coming in without any experience." Prior to the injury, Fendley had started each game and was having the best defensive season on of her college career. Fendley also contributed one goal on the offensive end of the game.

A&M is in the midst of what Guerrieri called their "tour of Texas." Following their two games in Houston this past weekend and tonight's clash in Austin, the Aggies will be on the road playing games against Southern Methodist, Texas Tech and Baylor. "Being on the road makes it that much more difficult for us, but we are always looking to challenge ourselves," Guerrieri said. "Actually, this team rises to challenges much more than it does to lesser opponents. We definitely have our work cut out for us, but we've had some of our best results on the road."

THE DYNAMIC DUO

Athletic Spiller brings speed, power to Aggies

By **JEFF WEBB**
Staff writer

Normally when someone touts a football player as a "tremendous athlete" and "tremendous athlete" and "tremendous athlete" running backs or wide receivers come to mind. However, when Randy McCown says these things about Derek Spiller, he's talking about a tight end. "This year, we've tried to get the ball more to our tight ends, and Derek has done a good job of catching the ball better. He's got all the other tools, he just needs to work on catching the ball," McCown said. "I pride myself on my pass-catching ability and my ability to make big plays when I get the ball," said Spiller. "I try to play a big part in every game. Hopefully in Colorado, we'll be able to break it open." The LaMarque, Texas native has been able to break it open so far this season, grabbing four receptions for 22 yards and a whopping 22.8 average. While that's a gaudy average for



DAVE HOUSE/THE BATTALION

Junior tight end **Derek Spiller** breaks free of a North Texas defender in the Aggies' 36-10 victory over the Mean Green. most tight ends, his speed allows him to stretch most opposing defenses. Spiller has split much playing time this year with tight end Dan Campbell. In fact, playing time was the main reason he chose to attend Texas A&M. "When I came out of high school, they had one tight end who was a junior [Heyward Clay], so I looked at it basically as an opportunity to play early," Spiller said. He did get many opportunities to play, starting his sophomore season, only missing the North Texas game due to injury. While improving many facets of his game, Spiller has fo-

PLEASE SEE **SPILLER** ON PAGE 8.

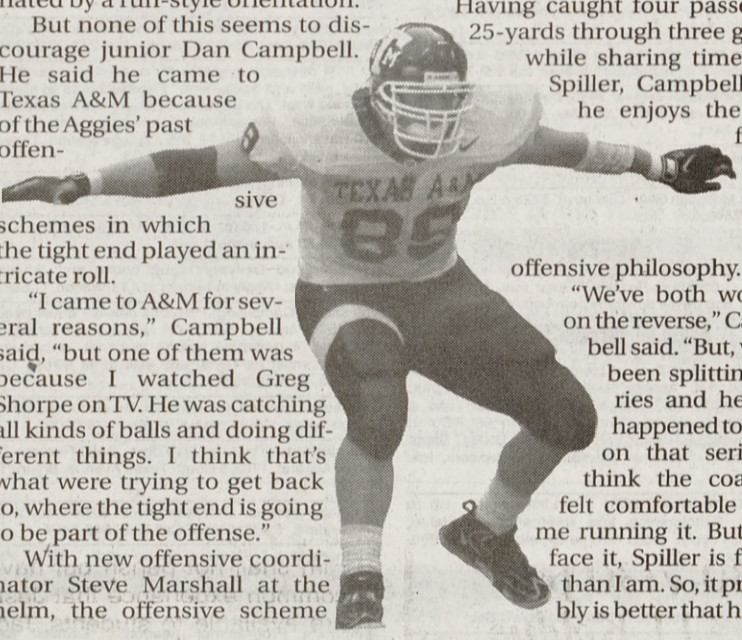
Campbell helping to expand tight end position

By **JAMIE BURCH**
Staff writer

Playing the tight end position does not usually garnish recognition or glory. The position is similar to a fullback because tight ends are often used as blockers against blitzes and on runs. Even less attention is given to the unsung heroes when the offense is dominated by a run-style orientation. But none of this seems to discourage junior Dan Campbell. He said he came to Texas A&M because of the Aggies' past offensive schemes in which the tight end played an intricate roll. "I came to A&M for several reasons," Campbell said, "but one of them was because I watched Greg Shorpe on TV. He was catching all kinds of balls and doing different things. I think that's what were trying to get back to, where the tight end is going to be part of the offense." With new offensive coordinator Steve Marshall at the helm, the offensive scheme

has undergone a metamorphosis in the young season. Dante Hall twice received the call for a half back pass last week against the University of North Texas. The second attempt was caught for a touchdown that was called back on an infraction. And, against the Ragin' Cajuns of Southwestern Louisiana, tight end Derrick Spiller ran a rare tight end reverse for nine yards. Having caught four passes for 25-yards through three games while sharing time with Spiller, Campbell said he enjoys the new offensive philosophy. "We've both worked on the reverse," Campbell said. "But, we've been splitting series and he just happened to be in on that series. I think the coaches felt comfortable with me running it. But let's face it, Spiller is faster than I am. So, it probably is better that he ran

it. It's fine with me." The tight end is not the only one who is impressed with the new system. Coach R.C. Slocum said he's thrilled to have the versatility of a dual tight end position. "It really helps us just to have two tight ends," Slocum said. "We're running a lot of two tight end offenses. So, it really helps us to have a second tight end who I consider as good as a starter." But Campbell's future did not always appear so bright. After being red-shirted his first year at A&M (1994), Campbell saw some action his freshman season (1995) on special teams. But during practice in the bi-week following the Colorado game, Campbell suffered a broken leg, causing him to miss the remainder of the season. The tight end said this setback was difficult for him to handle. "It's the toughest thing I think I've ever gone through," Campbell said with a tear in his eye. "It was a battle. That first year I was Hayward Clay's back-up. I still needed to improve and I felt like I was doing just that. Then the injury came along and it almost crushed me." Fortunately for Campbell, this was not the first obstacle he has had to overcome. PLEASE SEE **CAMPBELL** ON PAGE 8.



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