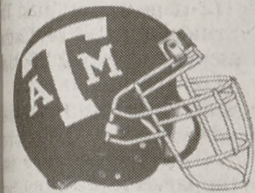




TEXAS A&M
• October 4, 1997 •
COLORADO



A&M football returns to the scene of one of the programs biggest losses



CHRIS FERRELL
sports editor

NOTEBOOK

It's almost here, the day which has been circled on everyone's calendar for months. Saturday, October 4, 1997, a date A&M fans have been looking forward to almost as much as Marv Albert looks forward to Fredrick's of Hollywood catalog day. The Aggies have whipped the Bearkats, the Ragin' Cajuns and the Mean Green as they were expected to win their first real test comes against the University of Colorado in Boulder.

There are about as many question marks as a 3-0 team can have surrounding the Aggies.

How much better is the secondary?

Can the A&M offense really throw the ball?

Are these Aggies really a Top 25 team?

This weekend will go a long way towards answering many of those questions.

Rocky Mountain Low

Two years ago, then third-ranked A&M went to Boulder with national championship aspirations. They had a bonafide Heisman candidate in Leeland Leroy and a picture of the Fiesta Bowl (site of the title game) on their wall. With one game against the Buffaloes, it all came crashing down.

The 29-21 loss the Aggies suffered that day sent them into a downward spiral which many believe still have not come out of.

In the 25 games prior to that Colorado matchup, Aggies were 22-2-1; since then they are 16-9.

Win this weekend in Boulder could bring the Aggie full circle and help to reestablish them as one of the nation's premiere programs.

Too young to remember?

Much has been made about the Aggie's return to Boulder this weekend but for many of the Aggies, it will be their first opportunity to contribute at the Rudder Fountain.

Two years ago, quarterback Brannndon Stewart watched the A&M-Colorado game from his living room in College Station. Running back Dante Hall and safety Brandon Jennings were still in high school.

In fact, 34 of the 44 players on A&M's two-deep depth chart were either freshmen, being red shirted or in high school when the game was played.

Only three starters from the 1995 Colorado game are going to be in Saturday's starting line-up: senior center Koby Hackradt, senior tackle Chris Ruhman and junior linebacker Dat Nguyen.

Double Trouble

Running backs Sirr Parker and Dante Hall became the first Aggie duo to both go over 100 yards rushing in a game this season. Hall carried 19 for 156 yards and Parker had a career high 124 yards on 17 carries. The 280 combined yards was the most by an Aggie backfield tandem since Greg Hill and Rodney Thomas combined to run for 320 yards against Texas Tech in 1992.

Junior running back D'Andre Hardeman also rushed for two touchdowns on the afternoon, giving him three on the season and 22 for his career.

The A&M backs will face a tough challenge this week as they face a Colorado defense which is allowing 81.3 yards per game on the ground.

The match up between A&M's offensive line and the Buffaloes front seven becomes an even bigger factor when you consider that since 1985, Colorado is 52-1-1 when holding opponents under 100 yards rushing.

Last season in CU's 24-10 win at Kyle Field, A&M backs were limited to 62 yards on 33 carries.

No "O" in Colorado

The Wrecking Crew will have an equally important task with regards to the running game. Since 1989, the Buffs are 66-2-3 when they have out-rushed their opponents.

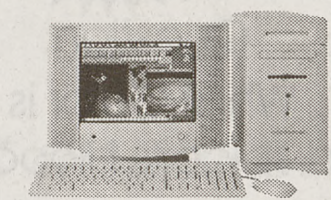
CU's ground game has struggled this season. Senior Herchell Troutman, the team's leading rusher has been held to 168 yards on 58 carries.

He has not been the only highly touted CU player to struggle.

Senior quarterback John Hessler, who made a name for himself after replacing an injured Koy Detmer against the Aggies two years ago, has not lived up to Rick Neuheisel-coached-quarterback expectations. He has completed only 48 percent of his passes while compiling a 2:7 touchdown/interception ratio. He has also had a hard time handling pressure. Michigan, whose defensive style of attack is similar to that of the Aggies, was able to give Hessler fits all day long in the Wolverines 27-3 win over Colorado.

Chris Ferrell is a sophomore journalism major

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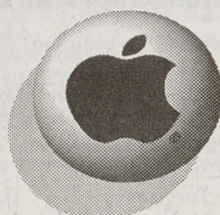
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