

Quarterback system keeping offense down



MATT MITCHELL
staff writer

Now that you've gotten your voice back from the delirious celebration following the Aggies' 16-10, it ain't over till the Hail Mary falls incomplete, somebody fall on that ball, shut-up about our schedule victory over Colorado, let's get back to the here and now. The Aggies' gutsy effort confirmed a few things we pretty much already knew about our intrepid gladiators. First, the offensive line is back to being as good as advertised after a decidedly lackluster performance last week against North Texas. Second, Dat Nguyen is a stud on par with any defensive player to come through Aggieland including Ray Childress, who still can't say the word "Isuzu" without getting the "z" and the "s" switched. The Wrecking Crew is back in top form, which everybody in Aggieland knows is more fun to watch than anything our quarterbacks can do, Bucky Richardson aside. Finally, it seems that harmony reigns in the Aggie backfield, with Sirr Parker and Nate Hall splitting the handoffs. While it goes without saying that they'd both rather be the featured back, both Hall and Parker realize that their dual success depends on the other giving them a breather and the opposing defense nightmares series after series. The one negative, if one can be gleaned from the Aggies' 4-0 start, is the platooning of quarterbacks Brannndon Stewart and Randy McCown. The Aggies' two-headed monster of a starting quarterback has been less than impressive through the first third of the season, or, said the other way, passing for a grand total of 79 yards against the Big 12's second-worst pass defense in Boulder didn't do much to make Aggie fans optimistic. The maddening thing to fans and coaches alike is that each possesses distinct talents and abilities that are less obvious in the other. Stewart's 41-yard bomb to Chris Cole against Southwestern Louisiana was as pretty a throw you'll see

anywhere this year. Yet his "pocket sense" leaves something to be desired. Meanwhile, McCown's scrambling ability and awareness in the pocket is a definite forte. But at times, he's almost too anxious to make something happen, and his arm has yet to be tested. If you could combine the two, you'd have one heck of a quarterback, but as it stands, the two quarterback system just doesn't work. No less an authority than former New York Giants quarterback and Super Bowl MVP Phil Simms, who knows a little something about a quarterback tug of war, believes a team is best run by a field general, not two colonels. "The best quarterback situation is when there's a clear, distinct border," Simms said in a Sports Illustrated interview. "If a team says, 'We've got two good quarterbacks,' they don't have any." Just take a look at some of the great teams of the past two decades and you'll find that not one of them achieved any measure of consistency or success with two QB's getting near-equal time. What's more, even the most decorated quarterbacks of the past decade weren't without equally talented successors, yet not once did Ty Detmer, Andre Ware, Charlie Ward, and Danny Wuerffel relinquish the reigns to John Walsh, David Klingler, Danny Kannell, or Doug Johnson, respectively. It says here that R.C. and Offensive Coordinator Mike Sherman need to get their heads together and figure out who's number one if the Aggies ever hope to be. With a schedule dotted with what should be only two tough games, and both of those at home, the Aggies could be in for a big year. OSU's spanking of Texas raised some eyebrows, but one look at the Longhorns' and Cowboys' run defenses should have Parker and Hall licking their chops. And OSU is still a pretender until they play a tough road game. The Aggies continued defensive excellence, running game, and the indefatigable 12th man should pave the road to victory over both orange and white obstacles. It's just a matter of who will be driving the bus.

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A BLAST FROM THE PAST

Mike Hankwitz brings nostalgia to program with antique football helmet collection

By CHRIS FERRELL
Sports editor

In the 13th-ranked Texas A&M Football Team's win over the University of Colorado this past weekend, A&M fans couldn't help but feel a little nostalgic while watching the Wrecking Crew shut down the Buffaloes. It was the Wrecking Crew of years past, there were multiple blitz packages and pressure on the quarterback. There were defensive backs making big plays when they needed to and bodies flying to the ball. It was defensive football as A&M redefined it in the mid-to-late eighties and early nineties. Much of that credit goes to first year defensive coordinator Mike Hankwitz, someone who knows a thing or two about nostalgia. Hankwitz has compiled a collection of football helmets which traces the games back to its origins. His collection began when he received a nose guard as a gift. "I always liked antiques," he said. "My sister gave me a nose protector for Christmas one year. They wore these before they even wore helmets. I thought, 'man, that's kind of neat, I'd like to find me a helmet like Red Grange wore.'" So he set out, picking up a helmet here and there at antique shows and garage sales. The demand for sports memorabilia was not as great in the late '80's as it is today so the helmets were easier to come by and available much cheaper. "There weren't many people looking for collectibles back then," Hankwitz said. "I was able to pick one up here and one there. Then I thought, I'd kind of like to find one from each of the different eras." Hankwitz was also able to pick up old helmets while serving on coaching staffs at other schools, such as one he found up in the rafters of the equipment room while defensive coordinator at Colorado. Today his 23-helmet collection displayed in his office is similar to the evolutionary charts found in an anthropology book. Beginning with a skimpy leather helmet from around 1910, the technological ad-



DEREK DEMERE/THE BATTALION

Texas A&M defensive coordinator Mike Hankwitz stands with one of the antique football helmets in his office. Hankwitz began collecting old football memorabilia in the 1970's. Advances in the art of football headgear are evident. As technology increased, the helmets went from leather to plastic. However, plastic helmets were not met with open arms at first. With the advances made during World War II, plastic helmets became easy to produce and were much safer. The only problem was that the men who went to fight in the big one had left a game with leather helmets and that is what they wanted when they returned. By the mid 1950's, the anti-plastic sentiment in the sport had left and everyone used them. At this point, helmets began to progress more rapidly. This presented Hankwitz with a problem while trying to date them. Because there is no clear-cut evolution in the development of helmets, he had to rely on old photos and books to try and match up the helmets he owned. By using dated photos, he was able to get a good idea as to the time period and order of each helmet.

Aggies remain red hot with big wins over Longhorns, Mustangs



NOTEBOOK



STEPHEN BOUDREAU
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Defeat came knocking at the Texas A&M Soccer Team's door, but the third-ranked team in the nation slammed it shut and concluded yet another weekend of perfect soccer. Thursday night the Aggies rolled into Austin and beat the 24th-ranked Longhorns to chig-a-rig-a-rum. Within two minutes of the opening kick the Aggies jumped out to a 2-0 lead with goals from freshman Alison Peters. Bryn

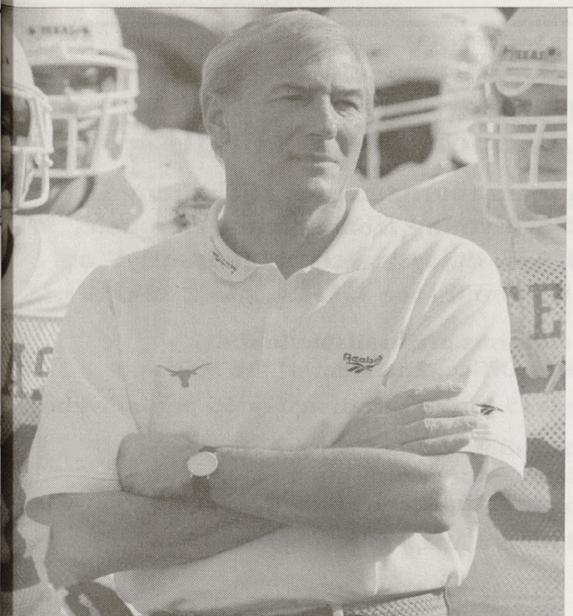
Blalack blasted two more balls past the Texas keeper as A&M dominated their interstate rivals for the entire game, giving up only one goal in the 4-1 pounding. The victory marked the seventh against Texas in the five-year history of the A&M soccer program. The Aggies have never lost to the Longhorns and have outscored them 19-1 in those contests. **One in a Gilian** It took double overtime, but the Aggies escaped the tight clutches of 18th-ranked Southern Methodist University Mustangs Sunday night. In the 117th minute freshman Gilian Gandy, who came into the game questionable with a sprained ankle, took a pass from Blalack and whipped the winning goal past the diving Mustang keeper. The lone goal marked the first of the season for Gandy and the second assist for Blalack. With the win, the Aggies evened the career series between the two schools at three wins each and one tie. In 1995 the Mustangs beat A&M 3-1 in the regular season, 4-2 in overtime of the championship game of

the now defunct Southwest Conference tournament and 2-1 in the "Sweet 16" of the NCAA championships. A&M has now claimed the last two meetings with the former conference foe. **Game of the Week** This coming Sunday the Aggies will travel north to Waco to tangle with Baylor. The unranked Bears are currently third in the Big 12 with an 8-3, 5-2 record. The Aggies will have to shut down Baylor forward Courtney Saunders. The sophomore ranks fourth in the Big 12 in points with 7 goals and 3 assists. The last meeting between the two teams was at last year's Big 12 conference tournament. In that game Saunders scored a hat trick against the Aggies in a losing effort. **Player of the week** Senior All-American Bryn Blalack is strolling up to the podium for a second time this season to receive the player of the week award. Blalack's two goals against Texas and game winning assist against Southern

Methodist were consistent with the play soccer fans have come to expect from her. Her presence in the game is quite evident in both the play of opponents and in the Aggies as well. As the team leader, Blalack gives the team confidence and motivation to put a greatest possible effort forth. Offense and the defense both clearly run more efficiently when number "6" is on the field giving the girls direction. **Full house** The 1997 season has marked record-breaking crowds both at home and away. On the 14th of September the Aggie Soccer complex was filled to the brim with 1,368 Aggie fans who witnessed A&M defeat then fourth ranked Nebraska 1-0. Thursday night in Austin, 1,964 fans jam-packed the Longhorn Soccer Complex to set the record for largest away crowd A&M has faced. Fortunately for the Aggies, a large percentage of the fans were rooting for the maroon and white. When the Aggies faced the No. 1 Tar heels, 5,400 people filled Meyer Park in Houston for the largest neutral crowd the Aggies have ever played in front of.

Important notes ■ The Aggies are now a perfect 4-0 on the road this season, out scoring opponents 15-3. Their lone loss came against top-ranked North Carolina in the Adidas Classic in Houston. ■ Sophomore goalkeeper Melanie Wilson has recorded six shut outs on the season and is ranked 11th in the nation in goals against average with a 0.52. ■ A&M is 4-2-2 in career overtime games. ■ This season's 11-1-0 start matches last year's 11-1-0 intro for the best start in the five-year history of the program. ■ Blalack's 73 career goals and 33 assists put her first and third on the all-time lists, respectively, in A&M soccer history. She also leads in total points with 179 and shots with 331. ■ The team will be on the road until Oct. 24th when they play host to Wisconsin. A&M still has three road games left with games at Texas Tech, Baylor and the St. Mary's Tourney in Maraga, California.

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COURTESY TEXAS SPORTS INFORMATION

Texas looking for answers to poor start

Defending Big 12 champions worried after bad games against UCLA, Rice and OSU

AUSTIN (AP) — What's wrong with the University of Texas? Just about everything. The defending Big 12 champion Longhorns are not just losing, they are losing badly. First, there was the 66-3 loss to UCLA. Now, a 42-16 loss to Oklahoma State. A team that had all but expected to be 6-0 heading into an Oct. 25 home game against Colorado is fighting for its life and probably won't be much of a favorite in its next two games against Oklahoma and Missouri. "We're fumbling, we're jumping offside, we're not moving the ball, the defense isn't stopping anything, the list goes on and on," said Texas tight end Steve Bradley. "Guys are just trying to figure out what's going on, and we're a little bit worried about the rest of the season." On Saturday, Oklahoma State avenged a 71-14 loss to Texas in Austin last year with its wipeout of the Longhorns in Stillwater, Okla. The Cowboys (5-0, 2-0) raced to a 22-

0 lead after the first quarter and Texas (2-2, 0-1) never threatened. The Longhorns have yet to score in the first quarter this season. They are 106th nationally (of 112) in rushing defense, 69th nationally in total offense and have lost their two games by a combined score of 108-19. "Clearly, from a confidence standpoint, we have a lot of work to do," Texas coach John Mackovick said Monday. "Last year, the games we lost were close and we could still get something positive from them," said center Ryan Fiebiger. "But when you're losing by 30 or 40 points, it doesn't help you at all." The UCLA loss rattled the foundation of the Longhorns' program — it was the worst loss by Texas in 93 years — and sent UT faithful, full of high hopes after last year's Big 12 championship, into a panic. The Oklahoma State loss has left fans simply disgusted. Letters to the editor of the Austin American-Statesman and calls to sports radio talk

shows are demanding Mackovick's job. "Coaches coach and players play," Mackovick said. "The coaches can't play, and the players shouldn't try to coach. The players have to do what you set out for them to do. As much as the coaches would like to get out there and show them, they can't." Players are at a loss to explain what's gone wrong. Running back Ricky Williams said the team came into the season overconfident and went into shock after the UCLA loss. Most expected Texas to struggle in the secondary and at receiver, where there have been wholesale changes. But even the strengths of the team — the offensive line and defensive front seven, have performed poorly. "I'm not going to publicly criticize them, but I think we need to get down and get a little hungrier in the trenches, on both sides of the ball," Mackovick said. The luster from the Longhorns' 37-27 victory over then-two time defending champion Nebraska for the

Big 12 title has all but disappeared. This year's Texas squad, who ranked as high as No. 11, once were viewed as a longshot national title contender with two potential Heisman Trophy candidates — Williams and quarterback James Brown. "I don't read a lot of things during the season," Mackovick said. "I learned a long time ago you are never as bad as they say you are and you're never as good as they say you are. "All of us would like to ride the crest of the highest waves. No one wants to ride in the valleys," Mackovick said. "It would be different if we were throwing up our hands and not trying, but we are working hard. Does anyone think that I enjoy what we're going through?" Injuries have stung the Longhorns. They were without Brown against UCLA and lost two starting defensive tackles (Chris Akins and Casey Hampton) and the team's top wideout (Wane McGarity) in an already-thin receiving corps to knee injuries prior to the Oklahoma State game.