

BACK TO BUSINESS

Ruhman returns to action for the Aggies

By CHRIS FERRELL
Sports editor

There is one word to describe senior left tackle Chris Ruhman for the past four years, it's

Ruhman and his teammates ran on the field to begin the A&M-Kansas State game, he was making his 30th consecutive start and 34th of his career.

Ruhman had been a mainstay of the Aggie offense since 1994 when he made five starts as a red-freshman.

When during A&M's first series, Ruhman went down with an injured right ankle, an injury which appeared to be very bad.

"It was devastating," Ruhman said. "I thought it was over when it happened. (I thought) 'Oh my God, I have to go to class on Monday because I'm never going to play football again.' I said, 'I've got 17 hours left in this semester to graduate.' That's what was going through my head."

Ruhman and sophomore tackle Dante Hall and junior tackle Aaron Spikes all injured, the Aggies were for negative 35 yards in their loss to the Wildcats.

The next week, Ruhman sat on the bench and listened to the Aggies 16-13 to the Texas Tech Red Raiders on the radio. And as he sat trying to picture the action on the field in his head, he couldn't but feel upset.

Ruhman didn't let the injury keep him from contributing. With junior Rex Tucker stepping into his spot as his first career start, Ruhman used his knowledge with Tucker.

"I've tried to lead by example," Ruhman said. "I've tried keeping the guys on the offensive line in line and show them what I know. Especially with Rex. With him playing that or they're doing this. I've tried to show him they're doing that or they're doing this. I want him what I know and try to get experience off to him to help



COURTESY TEXAS A&M SPORTS INFORMATION
Senior left tackle **Chris Ruhman** should return against Baylor this weekend.

him in the game."

But a player like Ruhman, someone who has been so important to the Aggies for so long, cannot just sit and watch.

Monday, Ruhman returned to the practice field for the first time since the injury, weeks before team doctors thought he could play.

"I'm just happy to be back a few weeks earlier than they thought I would be," Ruhman said. "I'm about two, three weeks ahead of schedule."

When Ruhman returned, the ankle was a little weak, and he was little timid, but he was back.

"It wasn't the prettiest thing in the world. I don't have much confidence in it right now. It's not like it hurts, it's not real strong. My ankle just gives out a little bit when I do certain things."

"I just hope by the end of the week I'll have all the thoughts out of my head about it and just go out

there and not think about getting hurt. That's my biggest goal."

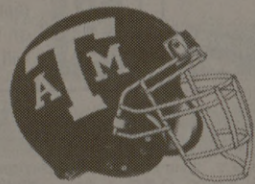
Junior quarterback Brannan Stewart said the team has missed Ruhman the past couple of games.

"He's an experienced guy," Stewart said. "He knows how to handle different situations. He can keep a handle on things out there. He's level headed, a down to business kind of guy. He's not going to yell a lot out there or scream. He does what he's supposed to do."

But focusing on himself is not Ruhman's style. While he is anxious to get back on the field, he is also excited about the opportunities a win this week will bring the Aggies.

"If we win this week, we're eligible for a bowl," he said. "And each week after that we're just improving our bowl chances. I think it's great. There's a new commitment to this team and everyone's excited about it. We're going out and showing it on the field."

A&M stays alive in South race with Oklahoma State victory



NOTEBOOK

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CHRIS FERRELL
Sports editor

The Texas A&M Football Team has just completed arguably its toughest stretch of the season with a 1-2 record against No. 11 Kansas State, Texas Tech and No. 25 Oklahoma State.

Now the Aggies set their sights on a three-game stretch which begins with Baylor (2-6), moves on to Oklahoma (3-6) and concludes with Texas (3-5).

And people laughed at the preseason schedule. With a win over Baylor this week, the Aggies will become eligible for a bowl.

San Antonio or Bust.

With A&M's 28-25 overtime win over OSU, the Aggies were able to save their season. After back-to-back conference losses, the team was in danger of dropping out of the race for the Big 12 South crown. However, A&M's win, coupled with Kansas State's 13-2 victory over Texas Tech, placed the Aggies in a three-way tie with Tech and Oklahoma State at the top of the southern division.

But for the Aggies to earn a trip to San Antonio, they need some help.

A&M must win its remaining three games and have Texas Tech lose one of its last three games at Texas, at Oklahoma State, or against Oklahoma.

The Aggies own the tie-breaker over OSU by virtue of Saturday's win. Tech has the tie-breaker edge over A&M because of its 16-13 victory in Lubbock two weeks ago.

All of this could become null and void if Tech disqualifies themselves from bowl participation this year.

On Monday, the NCAA delivered an official letter of inquiry involving alleged rule violations by the Tech Athletic Department. Earlier in the week, Red Raider officials said they would consider removing themselves from the bowl picture as punishment.

The Big 12 said Tuesday that Tech would be ineligible for the Big 12 Championship Game if they

declare themselves bowl ineligible. If Tech is out of the picture, the Aggies control their own destiny.

Stewart Gaining Respect.

Going back to the second half of the Texas Tech game, junior quarterback Brannan Stewart has shown signs of being the player that caused fans and alumni to salivate when he transferred from Tennessee.

After leading the Aggies back from a 22-7 deficit in the fourth quarter of Saturday night's game, he was named the Big 12 offensive player of the week and was presented the game ball by coach R.C. Slocum. It was the first time in Slocum's coaching career he had done that to a player.

Slocum said he has been very proud of the way Stewart has handled the pressure of being the most celebrated transfer in A&M history.

He said the pressures of being the starting quarterback are often similar to those expectations put on a head coach. Slocum continued by saying those expectations levied against Stewart are unfair.

"When I called him up there to receive the game ball, I talked about all the flak he had put up with, and that goes along with being in a leadership position," Slocum said. "He didn't ask for that. He didn't ask for all the fanfare when he transferred here. He didn't ask for all the expectations. He never came out and said, 'I'm going to this or that.' He didn't do that. Other people did that to him. They put expectations on him."

Bear-ly Made It.

When Baylor travels down Highway 6 from Waco to College Station, its journey will be nothing compared to the one endured by BU defensive end Troy Hamilton.

In August, Hamilton, a Baylor recruit, had to make the trip from his home in Sacramento, Calif. to Waco.

His dad was supposed to give him a car for the trip, but that fell through. So instead, Hamilton set off for Waco with \$20 in his pocket and a sign which read, "I'm going to Baylor University in Waco, Texas."

He lived off of 99-cent hamburgers and water for six days while he hitchhiked across the Southwest.

Hamilton was picked up by a truck driver who said he was going to "Mo-Javey." Thinking this was a town in Arizona, Hamilton got in. However, it turned out that the driver was headed to the Mojave Desert.

PLEASE SEE FERRELL ON PAGE 10.

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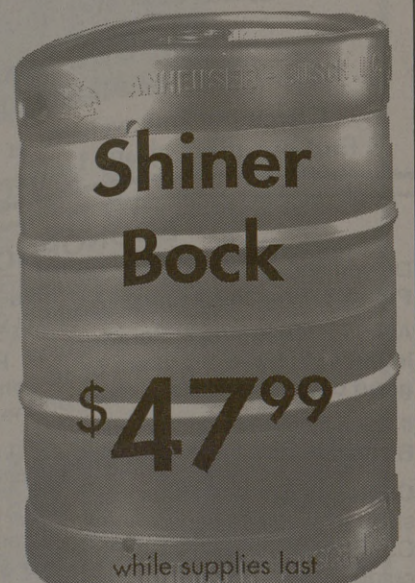
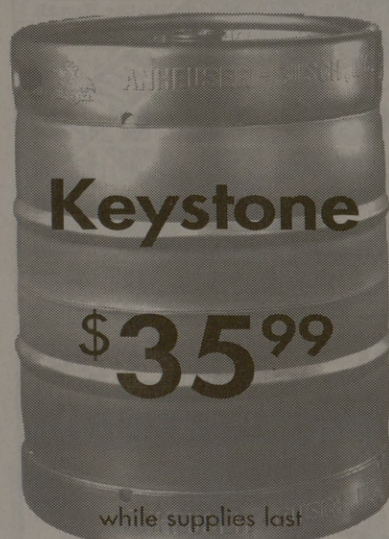
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