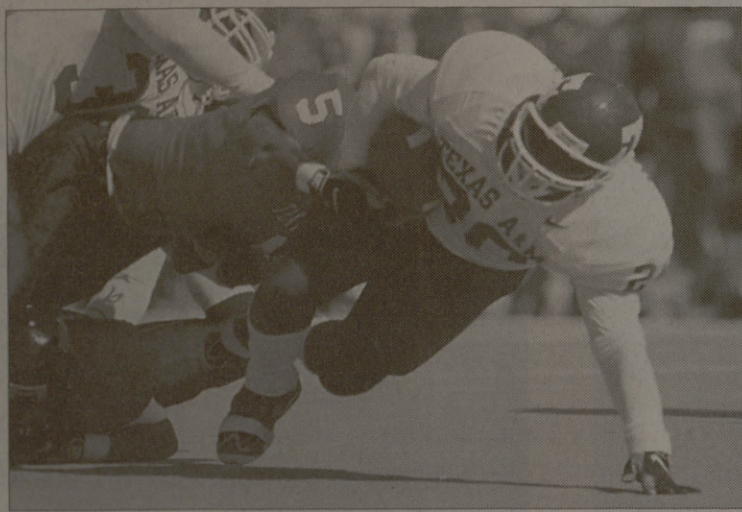


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Grin and Bear it

A&M not looking past Baylor

By JAMIE BURCH
Staff writer



RYAN ROGERS/THE BATTALION

Junior running back **D'Andre Hardeman** runs against Texas Tech. Hardeman and the Aggies are wary of an up-and-coming Baylor team.

And although the rustiness of being shelved for the entire season was apparent, he now is available if four-year starter Jeff Watson is unable to produce.

Baylor's leading rusher, Jerod Douglas, has been injury-prone throughout his career. But freshman tailback Darrell Bush and sophomore tailback Elijah Burkins have stepped up to fill the void. Against the Longhorns, Bush and Burkins combined for 201 yards and a touchdown.

"When you look at the backs and check the pedigrees of Jerod Douglas, Bush and Elijah, those guys together had about a million yards between them in high school," Slocum said. "You won't find a more heralded group of backs than those guys."

The Bears' biggest weakness is rushing defense. Baylor ranks 110th out of 112 Division I-A schools versus the run. Texas running back Ricky Williams ran 31 times for 241 yards Saturday, his fourth-straight 200-yard game. Overall, the Bears possess the 103rd-ranked de-

fense in the country.

However, A&M offensive coordinator Steve Marshall said the Baylor defense still presents the Aggies with several problems.

"They're a big physical bunch," Marshall said. "They play hard. They really got after Texas pretty good. They're going to try and force you to be one-dimensional. They fly around, and it looks like they're well-coached. They pride themselves in having a physical defense. We've got to go out and play very strong, very physical, and take it one play at a time."

The biggest obstacle for the Aggies will be putting last week's thrilling overtime victory behind them and facing the challenge at hand. If the Aggies continue to dwell on past successes and Baylor feeds off its biggest win in the Roberts Era, A&M may miss out on the fruits of a winning year.

"We're playing for a bowl game," Marshall said. "We're bowl-eligible if we win this game. If that doesn't have any motivating factor, then we're in a lot of trouble. This is a big, huge game for us. It's a one-game season for us now."

Meyers rises to forefront in senior campaign for Aggies

By JASON WHITCOMB
Staff writer

There were ten minutes left in the game, the Big 12 South title race was in jeopardy, there was widespread panic in the stands and Oklahoma State players were so confident with their 15-point lead they proceeded to taunt the 12th Man.

Suddenly, the offense put together a scoring drive, and it was up to the Wrecking Crew to come up with a quick defensive hold.

This was crunch time. This was the time when the strong would survive and the rest would be sent home, hoping for next time. This was the time when true leaders had to step up and make something happen, and that is exactly what senior outside linebacker Phillip Meyers did.

"It was all about confidence at that point," Meyers said. "Offense got the touchdown, and we knew it was up to us to go out and stop them. There was absolutely no doubt in my mind that we would do it, and with the offense rolling, I could just feel that we were going to win."

As it turned out, the Wrecking Crew did its job, and the Aggies came away with a huge overtime victory thanks in part to the senior leadership of players such as Meyers.

"He is just tremendous," linebackers coach Shawn Slocum said. "I like to call him 'Steady Eddie,' because he is always there when you need him. He is talented enough to play all of the linebacker positions and has actually done that at times when we have needed him to do so."

"He chooses to lead by example. I remember back in two-a-days when one of the younger guys had some extra running to do, and instead of walking off the field with everybody else, Phillip went over and ran with him to lend some moral support and lead by example."

Meyers grew up in Galveston and played for Ball High School, where his presence on the field attracted the attention of the A&M coaching staff. He comes from a close family whose class and character impressed Head Coach R.C. Slocum when he visited them on a recruiting visit. Slocum was particularly impressed with the character exhibited by his mother, and there was no doubt to the coaching staff her personality rubbed off on her son.

"We look back on things now and we are really excited that we got Philip on our team," Shawn Slocum said. "He has grown so much mentally and as a person that we really wish we (had) redshirted him his freshman year so that we could have him for another year. He has been a solid individual, and his character and class shows everyday."

As for Meyers, there was almost no doubt in his

mind A&M was the place for him. Not only did his athleticism fit the Wrecking Crew style of linebacker, but he also was particularly impressed with the extra incentives A&M offered.

"I was really excited about the tradition of the 12th Man, and academically, A&M speaks for itself," Meyers said. "When we are on the field, we draw our energy from the 12th Man crowd. When we go to other stadiums, their fans start to lay down when their team is down. Here, our crowd keeps yelling, and it helps fire us up to get back into the game."

In his first two seasons, Meyers saw limited playing time, but when he did get on the field he was asked to play all four linebacker positions to benefit the team. He found a way to persevere through the confusion and eventually got his first start, at outside linebacker, in the middle of his junior year. Since then, he has not missed a game as a starter and has continued to improve and contribute to the swarming Wrecking Crew defense.

"Starting my first game against Kansas State was my greatest day in football," Meyers said. "I was so excited to be out there in front of the 12th Man."

As Meyers begins to face the end of his time here at A&M, he is looking forward to winning the next three games and going to the Big 12 Championship against Nebraska. He knows it is almost over, and he realizes how special it was to be part of the Aggie football tradition.

"Being here was fun, and it was a big learning experience for me," Meyers said. "This place taught me how to be a man and how to handle challenges within my life."

There is no doubt the Aggie coaching staff will miss Meyers' experience and dedication. His leadership and thirst for improvement did nothing but benefit the team and served as a great influence on the younger players. Meyers also has had a lasting influence on Slocum, who could not stop smiling each time he was asked to talk about him. Slocum said he firmly believes Meyers' attitude will allow him to be tremendous success in life, as he was on the football field.

"He is an absolute delight," Slocum said. "I don't know if I have ever coached a guy that has been more fun to coach. He always shows up to meetings, and when I ask him a question he is always ready to answer it. If there is a question that another player doesn't know, he is there to answer it for them. He really helps the other guys and is just a real joy to coach. No matter what he decides to do in life, he will be a success."

"Throughout his career here, he has had to play four different positions and play under three different defensive coordinators, and he has adjusted to every situation perfectly. He will be a success in life, that is just the kind of person he is."



The Battalion's 1997 Staff Picks

Match-Ups	Chris Ferrell	Paul Mitchell	Jeremy Furtick	Kristina Buffin	Jamie Burch	Matt Mitchell	Stephen Boudreau	Travis Dabney	Margaux Harris	Len Callaway	Jeff Schmidt	Jeff Webb	Jason Whitcomb	Consensus
#21 Texas A&M (-21)	Texas A&M	Texas A&M	Texas A&M	Texas A&M	Texas A&M	Texas A&M	Texas A&M	Baylor	Texas A&M	Texas A&M	Texas A&M	Baylor	Texas A&M	Texas A&M: OSU momentum carries over
Nebraska (-28.5) @ Missouri	Nebraska	Nebraska	Nebraska	Missouri	Missouri	Nebraska	Nebraska	Nebraska	Nebraska	Nebraska	Nebraska	Nebraska	Missouri	Nebraska: Husker steamroller continues
#11 Kansas St. (-22.5)	Kansas St.	Kansas St.	Kansas St.	Kansas St.	Kansas St.	Kansas St.	Kansas St.	Kansas St.	Kansas St.	Kansas St.	Kansas St.	Kansas	Kansas	Kansas St.: KU can't wait for basketball
OSU (-5) @ Oklahoma	OSU	OSU	OSU	OSU	OSU	OSU	OSU	OSU	OSU	OSU	OSU	OSU	OSU	OSU: Tries to rebound against rival
Tech @ Texas (PK)	Texas Tech	Texas	Texas Tech	Texas	Texas	Texas	Texas	Texas	Texas	Texas	Texas	Texas Tech	Texas Tech	Texas: Could still finish at .500
Colorado (-20) @ Iowa St.	Colorado	Colorado	Iowa St.	Colorado	Colorado	Colorado	Colorado	Colorado	Colorado	Colorado	Colorado	Colorado	Colorado	Colorado: Almost as disappointing as UT
Michigan @ #2 Penn St. (-3)	Michigan	Penn St.	Michigan	Michigan	Penn St.	Penn St.	Penn St.	Michigan	Penn St.	Penn St.	Penn St.	Michigan	Michigan	Penn St.: Home field (big) advantage
Florida St. (-6.5) @ #5 N. Carolina	Florida St.	Florida St.	N. Carolina	N. Carolina	Florida St.	Florida St.	Florida St.	Florida St.	Florida St.	Florida St.	Florida St.	N. Carolina	Florida St.	Florida St.: UNC has never beat top 5 team
Tennessee (-18.5)	Tennessee	Tennessee	Tennessee	So. Miss	So. Miss	Tennessee	Tennessee	So. Miss	Tennessee	Tennessee	Tennessee	Tennessee	So. Miss	Tennessee: So. Miss drops out of top 25
LSU (-6) @ Alabama	LSU	LSU	LSU	LSU	LSU	LSU	LSU	LSU	LSU	LSU	LSU	LSU	LSU	LSU: Tigers roll over Tide
Cardinals @ Cowboys (-8.5)	Cardinals	Cowboys	Cowboys	Cardinals	Cowboys	Cowboys	Cowboys	Cardinals	Cowboys	Cowboys	Cowboys	Cardinals	Cardinals	Cowboys: Playoff drive starts here
Jaguars (-3.5)	Jaguars	Jaguars	Jaguars	Jaguars	Jaguars	Jaguars	Jaguars	Chiefs	Jaguars	Jaguars	Jaguars	Chiefs	Jaguars	Jaguars: Elvis has been carried off the field
Four Weeks	24-22-2	22-24-2	29-17-2	22-24-2	25-21-2	25-21-2	20-26-2	22-24-2	23-23-2	27-19-2	21-25-2	26-20-2	26-20-2	Last Four Weeks: 312-286-26
Cumulative	58-47-3	52-53-3	57-48-3	52-53-3	52-53-3	53-52-3	55-50-3	51-54-3	50-55-3	27-19-2	33-37-2	48-57-3	53-52-3	Cumulative: 682-648-38

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