

THE END OF THE ROAD

Season comes to early end as SMU upsets A&M in NCAA first round

By STEPHEN BOUDREAU
Staff writer

Soccer is a game that can be won or lost in a minute. Yesterday at the Aggie Soccer Complex, the Texas A&M Soccer Team found out just how true that is.

For the second consecutive year, the Aggies were dismissed from the NCAA National Championship tournament in the first round. This time it was Southern Methodist University who stunned the favored Aggies 1-0 before a crowd of 836, the smallest crowd the Aggies have played in front of at home all season long.

"In one word, it's frustrating. This is the second year in a row we've been able to play at home, we have an unbelievable record and we hit everything but the back of the net. We squandered our opportunities," coach G. Guerrieri said.

Despite dominating the flow of the game and demonstrating offensive and defensive dominance, A&M could not put the ball in the back of the net. The Aggies outshot the Mustangs 18-5, led by Bryn Blalack who had seven.

"In championship play you've got to put them away," Guerrieri

said. "You can't give a team that fights as hard as SMU a chance to stay in the game and defend. They are a team that is based on defending all over the field."

With under two minutes remaining in the first half, Mustang forward Laura Snyder set up a cross pass to the A&M goal. What seemed like a routine grab resulted in what would be the difference in the game.

The pass slipped through A&M keeper Melanie Wilson's gloves as she prepared to send the ball away.

"It was a cross, not even a shot. It wasn't even a good cross, wasn't even a good shot. It's kind of ironic that our

strength throughout this year has been our defense and our goal keeping," Guerrieri said. "It's the first soft goal we've given up all year, probably the first soft goal we've given up since Melanie has been keeper. She's an outstanding keeper. It was a ball that was too easy, she looked away for a brief second and the slippery ball went through her hands."

With ten minutes to go in the game, panic set in, focus was lost and the Aggies appeared to fall apart.

"I hate to say it was one of those days, but it really was. SMU came in here to frustrate us and they did," Guerrieri said. "If anyone watched the game they know who was the more talented group."

The Aggies had plenty of opportunities to put the ball in the back of the net, but could not finish off plays.

The best opportunity for the Aggies was in the 51st minute when a Bryn Blalack shot ricocheted off the top goal post, but bounced away from the net.

"We came out ready to play, we just didn't take care of business," Blalack said. "Bottom line was, we just didn't do it."

The game marked the end of the road for the seniors on the A&M squad. Seniors Bryn Blalack, Sonia Ibanez, Diana Rowe and Jessica Mousse suited up for the last time as members of the team.

"It's disappointing. I don't know what to think," Rowe said. "I keep telling Bryn and Sonia I'll have to take up a new sport now. I just don't think it's really sunk in yet."

The Mustangs move on now to take on the winner of the UCLA vs. Portland game in the second round of the playoffs. For the Aggies, this marks the disappointing end to an incredible, and what seemed like a championship season.

"They've been given don't-hang-your-head speeches since they were five years old," Guerrieri said. "People deal with losses in their own individual ways, we'll give them time to get over it, we'll get back together tomorrow and move on."



Junior Emily Elias collides with an SMU player during a very physical first round game of the NCAA Soccer Tournament.



DAVE HOUSE/THE BATTALION

A&M sophomore goalkeeper Melanie Wilson dives to stop a ball in the first half of SMU's 1-0 victory over the Aggies in the first round of the NCAA Soccer Tournament Sunday afternoon at the Aggie Soccer Complex.

Aggies earn trip to San Antonio with 51-7 drubbing of OU

By JEFF WEBB
Staff writer

NORMAN, OK — The wheels finally fell off the Sooner wagon in the frigid air of Owen Field Saturday evening as Texas A&M secured berth in the Big 12 Championship game by beating the University of Oklahoma 51-7. The win stands as the most lopsided in the history of the series that dates back to 1903.

Perhaps the beating that Oklahoma received was best summarized by the blind side block delivered by A&M senior offensive guard Steve McKinney on unsuspecting OU defensive end Corey Callens in the second quarter. Callens made an attempt to go to the huddle but collapsed on the field where he was carted off on a stretcher.

The R.C. Slocum plan was executed to perfection against the Sooners. The Aggies mixed the run and pass for a balanced offense and were able to hold the ball for lengthy periods in the first half, when the game was in doubt. At the end of the half, the Aggies had 92 rushing yards and 98 passing yards. Aggie quarterback Brandon Stewart was 9-16 for 133 yards, com-

pleting passes to seven different receivers. Once again, the double-team of Sirt Parker and Dante Hall disappointed no one. Parker had 22 carries for 123 yards and Hall rushed for three touchdowns and 139 yards.

"The offensive line did a great job and had good execution," Hall said. "They made it easy for me to clear the line of scrimmage. Our coaches all week stressed execution and ball control and not to make mistakes."

The back-breaking chain of events occurred in the third quarter when, after a Sirt Parker fumble on the goal line, the Aggies stopped Oklahoma on fourth and 11. Three plays after taking possession, A&M scored on a 60-yard touchdown by Dante Hall.

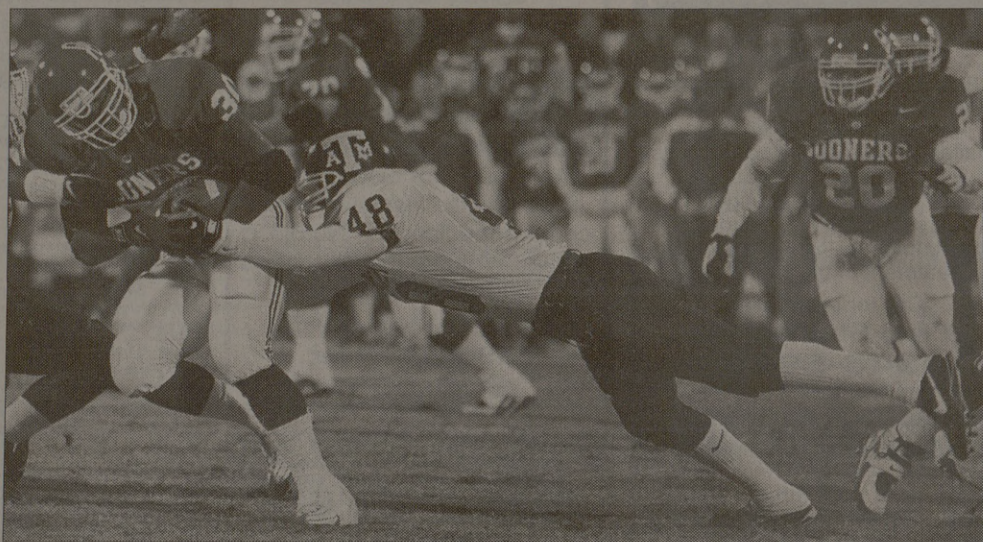
After a Rich Coady interception on the Sooners' next offensive play, Sirt Parker broke off a 40-yard touchdown of his own to make the score 51-0. Oklahoma avoided the shutout by scoring a touchdown early in the fourth quarter.

Oklahoma miscues were the main reason for the "Norman Massacre." The Sooners fumbled four times, losing two and threw three interceptions, all by sophomore Justin Fuente. He played quarterback during the second half once Oklahoma was forced to abandon their option attack.

"It's disappointing to go out and play the way I did, even though the score was bad when I went in," Fuente said. "I didn't expect to play, but I did prepare myself in practice this week. I turned the ball over too much and had a couple of miscommunications that resulted in interceptions."

The Sooner offense did not fare much better under quarterbacks Brandon Daniels and Eric Moore, who went 2-6 for minus eight yards. The Sooners had more penalty yards (51) than total offense (33) in the first half.

That faithful Sooner crowd was nonexistent in the second half with most Oklahoma fans watching the end from their cozy living



RYAN ROGERS/THE BATTALION

Junior safety Rich Coady drags down Oklahoma's Jermaine Fazande during A&M's 51-7 win.

rooms. The attendance at the Oklahoma victory over Jackson State in basketball earlier in the day drew 11,123 fans, but barely that many were left after the whistle blew on the hapless football team.

With Oklahoma State losing to Texas Tech earlier in the day, the game carried extra significance. The Aggies knew when they left the locker room that if they could defeat the Sooners, they would be on their way to San Antonio for the Big 12 Championship game.

"We knew Oklahoma State had lost when we came out on the field," linebacker Dat Nguyen said. "Coach Slocum told us to have fun and execute. On defense we tried to fly to the ball and cause turnovers. It feels good to know that we're in the championship game, but we still have a very big regular season game left."

"I was pleased with our focus," Coach R.C.

Slocum said. "We knew that Oklahoma State had lost and that the Big 12 race had come down to this one game. We wanted to come out swinging and jump on them early to win this game and move on to San Antonio. This is the ninth straight week of games for us and I was pleased with our focus."

A few more milestones were achieved in the win. A&M place kicker Kyle Bryant broke school records for extra points made (141) and field goals (58). Bryant is also the first Aggie to break the 300 point barrier with 311 career points. Aggie Coach R.C. Slocum tied Homer Norton for the most career wins by a head coach with 82.

The Aggies must now focus their attention on the showdown with Texas next Friday and not overlook the fact they will be facing powerhouse Nebraska in the Big 12 Championship game.

AP Top 25

	Record	Pts
1. Michigan (44)	10-0	1,723
2. Florida St. (24)	10-0	1,695
3. Nebraska (2)	10-0	1,622
4. Ohio St.	10-1	1,513
5. Tennessee	8-1	1,442
6. Penn St.	8-1	1,401
7. UCLA	8-2	1,296
8. North Carolina	9-1	1,264
9. Kansas St.	9-1	1,198
10. Florida	8-2	1,066
11. Wash. St.	9-1	1,054
12. Arizona St.	8-2	1,027
13. Auburn	8-2	888
14. Georgia	7-2	838
15. Miss. St.	7-2	686
16. Texas A&M	8-2	657
17. Washington	7-3	514
18. Syracuse	8-3	506
19. Virginia Tech	7-2	494
20. LSU	7-3	456
21. Missouri	7-4	277
22. West Virginia	7-2	208
23. Purdue	7-3	185
24. Wisconsin	8-3	178
25. Colorado St.	8-2	168

Others receiving votes: Southern Miss. 70, Air Force 68, Mississippi 46, Toledo 33, Oklahoma St. 31, Iowa 28, Marshall 27, Texas Tech 26, Louisiana Tech 23, New Mexico 21, Southern Cal 11, Clemson 5, Virginia 4, Utah St. 1.

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