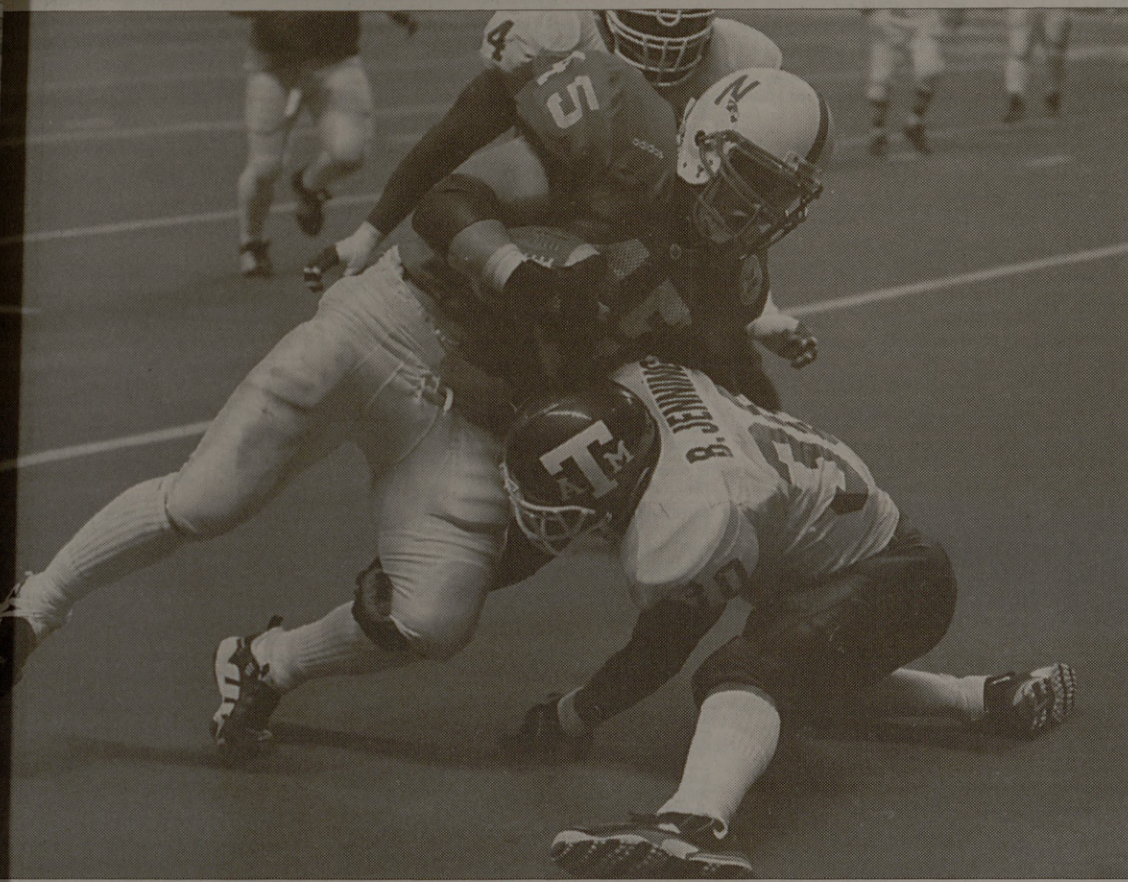


Monday • December 8, 1997

# BIG RED MACHINE

## Nebraska runs over A&M 54-15 to claim Big 12 title



Sophomore safety **Brandon Jennings** brings down Nebraska fullback **Joel Makovicka** during Saturday's Big 12 championship game in San Antonio.

By **CHRIS FERRELL**  
Sports editor

SAN ANTONIO — The Texas A&M Football Team came into Saturday's Big 12 Championship game playing for respect. Unfortunately for the Aggies, the Nebraska Cornhuskers were playing for a national championship.

A&M became a sacrificial lamb which Nebraska happily offered up to the poll gods as the Cornhuskers crushed the Aggies 54-15 at the Alamodome in San Antonio.

The game also helped to avenge Nebraska's loss to Texas in last season's Big 12 title game.

"All throughout the season that has been our battle cry," Nebraska's All-American defensive end Grant Wistrom said. "We've always had a chip on our shoulder because of what happened last year in St. Louis."

Nebraska seized control of the game early, scoring on their first seven possessions of the game.

"We didn't want to get knocked out early," coach R.C. Slocum said. "I don't think we got knocked out early but we had some bumps and bruises."

The hardest blows were delivered by Nebraska quarterback Scott Frost. Frost, who was upset earlier in the week when he was snubbed by voters in favor of Oklahoma State's Corby Jones on the All-Big 12 first team despite rushing

and throwing for 1000 yards, passed for a season high 201 yards and ran for 91 more.

The Aggies could not stop Nebraska's option attack. Led by tailback Ahman Green's 181 yard, three touchdown performance, Husker backs racked up 335 yards on the ground and scored six touchdowns.

"Defensively, it seemed like we always had our backs to the wall and we made a lot of mistakes that hurt us," junior linebacker Dat Nguyen said. "We spotted them a lot of points."

Thirty seven to be exact in the first half as Nebraska scored every

Aggies. Their defense, the fourth ranked unit in the nation, turned in one of their top performances of the day.

A&M managed only 277 yards of total offense, of that, only 13 came on the ground.

The Aggies came out looking to establish a strong passing game, but from the first play of the game, a play in which junior quarterback Brandon Stewart was sacked by Nebraska's Jason Peter, it was obvious that the Aggies were outmatched.

"They are definitely a lot faster on the field than they looked on film," senior tackle Chris Ruhman said. "The holes were opening up and closing really fast. They threw a couple of blitzes that we haven't seen. But a lot of that was just a lack of execution on our part."

The lack of execution was especially evident in the first half. A&M managed only 83 yards of total offense and 63 of those yards came on one play—a pass from Stewart to junior tight end Derrick Spiller which set up a 32 yard field goal by senior Kyle Bryant.

A&M was able to get the offense going at times in the second half but in the end it proved too little, too late.

The Aggies will now move on to the Cotton Bowl January 1st to face UCLA. Nebraska will look to make another claim for the national title against Tennessee in the Orange Bowl.

"They are definitely a lot faster on the field than they look on film."

**CHRIS RUHMAN**  
SENIOR TACKLE

time they touched the ball in the first half. The A&M defense did not stop a Nebraska drive until the third quarter when Green fumbled on the Husker's first possession of the second half. Nebraska's first punt did not come until the 12-minute mark of the third quarter.

However, it was not just the Husker's offense which hurt the

### Aggies should not let the loss put damper on successful season

It hurts. I know how everyone feels right now. Even though it's been two weeks you still feel like someone cheap-shotted you right in the gut. I was a senior. I never got closer than we were at kickoff.



**JEREMY FURTICK**  
assistant sports editor

But strangely enough, I don't feel like I did after the Kansas State or Tech games. I don't have the same anger and I'm not pointing fingers at anyone. I realized something Saturday: Nebraska is awesome.

From the first play of the game we were overmatched and reality started to set in on my hope. And the reality was simple; there is an enormous difference between the top three or four teams in the country and everyone else. Sure, they can be beaten, and have been, but when a team like Nebraska comes in completely focused and firing on all cylinders, well, you saw.

For us to have beaten the Huskers, I thought, everyone on our team would have to have a ureter day. We would have to play the game of the century, get a few lucky breaks and put ourselves in a position to win in the fourth quarter. But the one thing I didn't count on was Nebraska winning all of those things also. We played hard and never quit, but no one was going to beat the Huskers on Saturday. They could have played with the best NFL teams the way they were clicking.

But I'm not writing this to brown-nose Nebraska, I'm trying to make a point. I love A&M, but if you rate me by the book, I'm a three-percenter on a good day. I don't get into the yells, I'm not big on Bonfire and I've never said "Howdy." But no one ever bad-mouths my Aggies in front of me.

I was turned off early by the traditional Aggie fan. Either you were so blinded by your love for A&M you never thought we lost a game, we just ran out of time, or you "loved" the school so much all you could do is complain about how this person needs to be fired and we need to do it this way to make it like Ol' Army. I'm not either of those types of Aggies and I've got news for everyone — if we hadn't run out of time from Saturday the score would be about 900-25 and, no, Coach Slocum does not need to be fired because we lost three games this season.

I'm pleading with every Aggie out there to put aside all the anger and frustration, quit blaming certain players and coaches and stop complaining about our team and realize one thing: We are not as good as Nebraska. But we are a good football team.

So I recommend we not dwell on this game anymore. The season's not over yet, there is still a light at the end of the tunnel. There's no reason for us to hang our heads and settle for a 9-4 season when we can put Saturday's game behind us and come out gunning for UCLA in the Cotton Bowl.

We're all Aggies, we need to put aside our differences of opinion and band together. We need to be the ones picking up our players and coaches instead of shaking our heads and complaining about the season. We've only got a couple of weeks left in the semester but we need to make them positive ones.

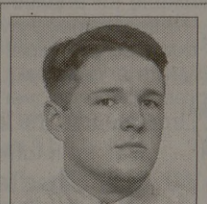
There are players in your classes, pat them on the back and tell them good luck over the holidays. These guys are just students like we are, they have other things to worry about besides football. A little encouragement from their fellow Aggies would go a long way. The team needs to know its fans are behind them 100 percent.

So instead of worrying about what happened Saturday, we need to let the players and coaches know we'll be there New Year's Day in full force to help our team, you guessed it, beat the hell outta' UCLA.

Jeremy Furtick is a senior journalism major

## Aggies still a long way from playing with college football's elite programs

SAN ANTONIO — College football's elite: Florida State, Penn State and Nebraska. Each and every preseason these three teams top the gamut of prognosticator's polls. And by season's end, all three of these monsters of the gridiron can be found hovering like a vulture over road kill, gunning for a coveted national championship.



**JAMIE BURCH**  
staff writer

And then there's the rest of the pack. They include the Associated Press' "other's receiving votes" and those who have pipe dreams of knocking off the heralded champs. Smack dab in the middle of the wanna-be's is Texas A&M. Each year the Aggies begin with aspirations of a top-ten ranking and a prayer of a National Title. And by season's end, a winning record against mediocre talent lands the Aggies a 15 to 25 ranking and into a New Year's Day Bowl. It's a never-ending, self-destructive cycle that keeps the Aggie faithful falsely believing A&M will one day belong to the aristocracy of Division I-A's best.

The problem with this delusion is the fact that A&M never has and never will win the 'Big Game.' Case in point — Nebraska 54, A&M 15.

In Saturday's Big 12 Championship, A&M found themselves down 23-0 before Kyle Bryant's 32-yard field goal with 8:53 remaining in the second quarter. Nebraska scored on its first seven possessions and held the 'Rushing Crew' to minus-five yards rushing at the half.

A&M coach R.C. Slocum said he was not pleased with his team's

effort in the biggest game of the season.

"I was disappointed with the way we played," Slocum said. "I thought (Nebraska) beat us convincingly in every area of the football game — offense, defense and special teams."

The offense's performance was so poor that a computer services account representative from Tulsa, Okla., had achieved more by half-time than the sputtering eleven. Jack Webb booted a 30-yard field goal just over the cross bar for \$250,000. He was presented with a check from Dr. Pepper and a 1998 Dodge Dakota truck.

Unfortunately, it was not any prettier in the second half. Down 37-3 at the intermission, the stage was set for one of the biggest comebacks in NCAA history. But it was not meant to be.

Nebraska began the second half by putting the ball on the carpet on its second play from scrimmage. The Aggies took over at the Cornhusker 45-yard line, but came away empty, going three-and-out.

Punter Shane Lechler's 42-yard boot pinned Nebraska at its own three-yard line. The Aggies returned the favor and forced the Huskers to punt on fourth-and-nine from the four. The 39-yard punt was taken by Dante Hall at the Nebraska 44 and returned 26 yards to the 18. Again, the Aggies failed to convert.

On fourth-and-three from the 11-yard line, offensive coordinator Steve Marshall pulled out the trickery. It appeared that back-up quarterback Randy McCown lined up in the back field. But when Brannon Stewart ran out to a receiver slot, McCown was left to throw the ball. An incomplete pass to tight end Derrick Spiller left the Aggies' offense in disarray and disbelief.



DAVE HOUSE/THE BATTALION

Freshman linebacker **Roylin Bradley** dives for Nebraska's **Scott Frost**.

"We came here representing all the teams in the South (Division)," Stewart said. "We're a reflection of how strong the south is this year. We didn't do a good job of that. I'm embarrassed by the way we came out and played today. Nebraska was the better team today and deserves to win the conference."

So the question remains, will the Aggies ever be able to consider themselves one of college football's elite?

Not according to Slocum, who said because of the numerous schools in Texas, it's hard for one school to recruit the cream of the crop.

"Obviously we need more talent and bigger players," Slocum said. "Our defensive line, in particular, is undersized. We need to get bigger and more physical in that area. One good thing about playing Nebraska is that you get a measuring stick as to where you are. But there are some things, some aspects that I don't know if we'll ever catch up. With the number of players they have in their program, they have an advantage on us and a lot of other teams."

Jamie Burch is a senior speech communication major

## Bruins and A&M set to meet in Cotton Bowl

### After one year hiatus, team returns to post-season for annual New Year's Day

DALLAS (AP) — Cotton beckons for No. 5 UCLA and No. 20 Texas A&M.

UCLA, the Pac-10 co-champion, and A&M, the Big 12 runner-up, received bids Sunday to compete in the 62nd Southwestern Bell Cotton Bowl in Dallas on Jan. 1.

"The Southwestern Bell Cotton Bowl Classic is thrilled to host these two outstanding football teams and universities in Dallas this New Year's Day,"

said Mike Baggett, chairman of the Cotton Bowl Athletic Association.

"UCLA clearly is one of the strongest teams in the country, while Texas A&M is unsurpassed in its football tradition and game pageantry. It's going to be an exciting matchup," Baggett said.

UCLA (9-2) is one of Division I-A's hottest football teams. The Bruins have won their last nine

games and finished with a 7-1 conference mark, their only conference loss coming in their Aug. 30 season opener at Washington State.

The only time UCLA has played the Cotton Bowl, future Dallas Cowboys quarterback Troy Aikman led the Bruins to a 17-3 win over Arkansas in 1989.

This will be the first time UCLA and Texas A&M have squared off in 42 years. Aggies fans might best re-

member the Bruins for the 66-3 whipping they gave Texas Sept. 13, breaking the back of the Longhorns' season.

Texas A&M (9-3) will be coming off Saturday's 54-15 loss to Nebraska in the Big 12 Championship game in San Antonio.

Although this will be the Aggies' first appearance since 1994, the Cotton Bowl is familiar territory for Texas A&M, having played in six of the last 12 classics, including consecutive appearances in 1986-88 and 1992-94.

