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BY ROBERT HOLLIER
The Battalion

...ens every fall: Before the Aggies take... for their first practice, A&M football... critics start discussing the same thing:... Texas, to an... 't the Aggies playing tougher compe... low a young... Joshua on... and get to... who choose... Theater goes... on the comm... the demon... gious hymns... "It's all... They have the... theater has... have the right... lace Simon... After being... watch the play... of Greenwich... understood why... "It may not... but I thought... the transcende... us," he said... e was an out...

...When I came here (A&M) in '93, I had some open dates on our schedules for future years that had to be filled," Groff said. "We had some teams drop out of their verbal agreements to play us and we had seven slots to fill for games in the '90s.

...example, we had agreed to play Ne... Colorado in a home-and-home se... 1995, but those contracts were voided... when we entered the Big 12. We played... at their place in 1995, and they were... d to come here in 1996. Because of Big... duling, they came here anyway, but... our signed contract."

...said with seven open dates to fill, he... have much of a choice on who the Ag... ld play.

...said A&M was supposed to play LSU... ars in a row and play Auburn in a home... ne series in 1997 and 1998, but both... backed out of their agreements for var... sons.

...didn't have much of a choice," Groff... We had agreements with LSU and... but they changed their minds at the last... We also had an agreement to play Air... a two-for-one series, but their new head... id not want to play us under those terms.



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Tiki ineligible for UNT

STAFF AND WIRE REPORTS

Texas A&M running back D'Andre Hardeman will remain suspended for Saturday's game against the University of North Texas while school and NCAA officials try to determine his eligibility.

Athletics Director Wally Groff declined to say Tuesday what Hardeman's case involved. He said university officials were looking into the case and Hardeman would be sidelined until the issue is resolved.

Coach R. C. Slocum suspended Hardeman before Saturday's 24-6 victory over Southern Mississippi.

Hardeman scored three touchdowns in the Aggies' 28-7 victory over Louisiana Tech.

The Bryan-College Station Eagle reported Tuesday that Hardeman may have been given an incorrect grade in a course, raising questions about his eligibility. Consequently, A&M may have to forfeit its win over Tech.

"I guess there's always that

possibility just like anything else," Groff said.

Slocum refused to comment on Hardeman's situation due to the Buckley Amendment, an NCAA rule prohibiting university officials from commenting on student-athletes' grades.

"I really don't have a lot of discussion about what happened, whose fault it was," Slocum said. "It would serve no purpose for me to discuss my opinions about the issue. There are a very few things that I don't talk about, or won't talk about. But I do get some situations that I can't talk about."

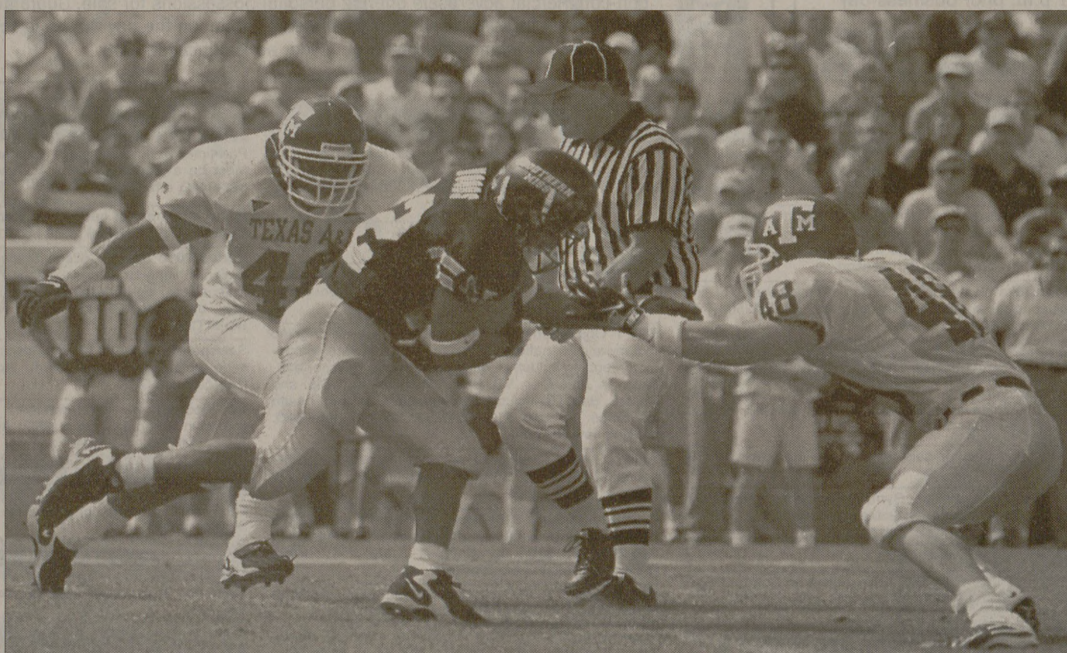
Hardeman, a senior, was A&M's leading rusher through the first two games with 105 yards and scored four touchdowns this season.

Hardeman holds the school record with a 95-yard touchdown run against Baylor in 1996. He is also seventh on A&M's career touchdown list.

Ja'Mar Toombs, who made his first career start against Southern Miss, will be Hardeman's replacement. Due to an injury to junior fullback Jason Bragg, former walk-on Will Simpson will be Toombs' backup.



HARDEMAN



GREG McREYNOLDS/THE BATTALION

Sophomore linebacker Cornelius Anthony (left) and senior safety Rich Coady converge on a Southern Mississippi player in A&M's 24-6 victory Saturday. The contest was scheduled 12 years ago.

"When those schools dropped their agreements with us, we had to fill the slots as soon as possible, and there were not very many options left for us. We had to fill them with whoever was willing to play us."

Groff also said many of the games the Aggies are playing now were scheduled 10 to 12 years ago. Slocum was not the head coach 12 years ago and had no control over the 1998 schedule.

"We're playing Southern Mississippi in a home-and-home," Groff said. "We scheduled them years in advance to fill an open date. We wanted a two-for-one with them, but they would only agree to a one-and-one."

For the fans who want to see the Aggies play a more competitive schedule, Groff said he has scheduled some bigger non-conference games for the future.

The Aggies have a home-and-home with Notre Dame in 2000 and 2001 and with Florida State in 2005 and 2006. They will play Washington and Virginia Tech in 2002 and will play Michigan State, Wyoming and Clemson in 2004.

Slocum said one reason for the scheduling difficulties was when the Big 12 Conference was

formed, which caused difficulties in keeping contracts with other schools.

"When the Big 12 Conference came together, it facilitated making a schedule," Slocum said. "Our home-and-home contracts with Colorado and Nebraska were voided to facilitate the merging of the two leagues. That put us in a tough situation and on short notice to try to get teams to play."

Slocum also said Texas A&M is not the only school that schedules weaker opponents. He said other top programs do the same thing every year, but do not get as much criticism for it.

"If you look around, there are a whole bunch of teams in the country that end up playing one or two teams like that every year," Slocum said. "Florida opened up with The Citadel and played Northeast Louisiana the next week. Penn State played Bowling Green."

"The only thing that I have requested in our scheduling is that we'll play anybody, anywhere as long as they agree to a home-and-home. I'll take my team to South Bend, but I want them to come here, too. The good programs all do that."

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Madden proceeds to qualifying final

Texas A&M sophomore Shuon Madden advanced to the final round of qualifying Tuesday in the 1998 T. Rowe Price National Clay Court Championships in Baltimore.

Madden defeated Danny Erez of the University Nevada-Las Vegas 6-7, 6-1, 6-1 in the qualifying round of 64 Tuesday.

Madden, who earned All-Big 12 honors in singles and doubles as a freshman, will face No. 72 Marco Baron of Mississippi State in the round of 32 Wednesday morning.

Nguyen named to Good Works team

Texas A&M senior linebacker Dat Nguyen was named to the 1998 American Football Coaches Association Good Works Team Tuesday.

The Good Works Team honors athletes who show exceptional dedication to community service and to the improvement of the communities in which they live.

"The Good Works Team attempts to recognize those student-athletes who go above and beyond in service to others," Grant Teaff, AFCA Executive Director said.



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