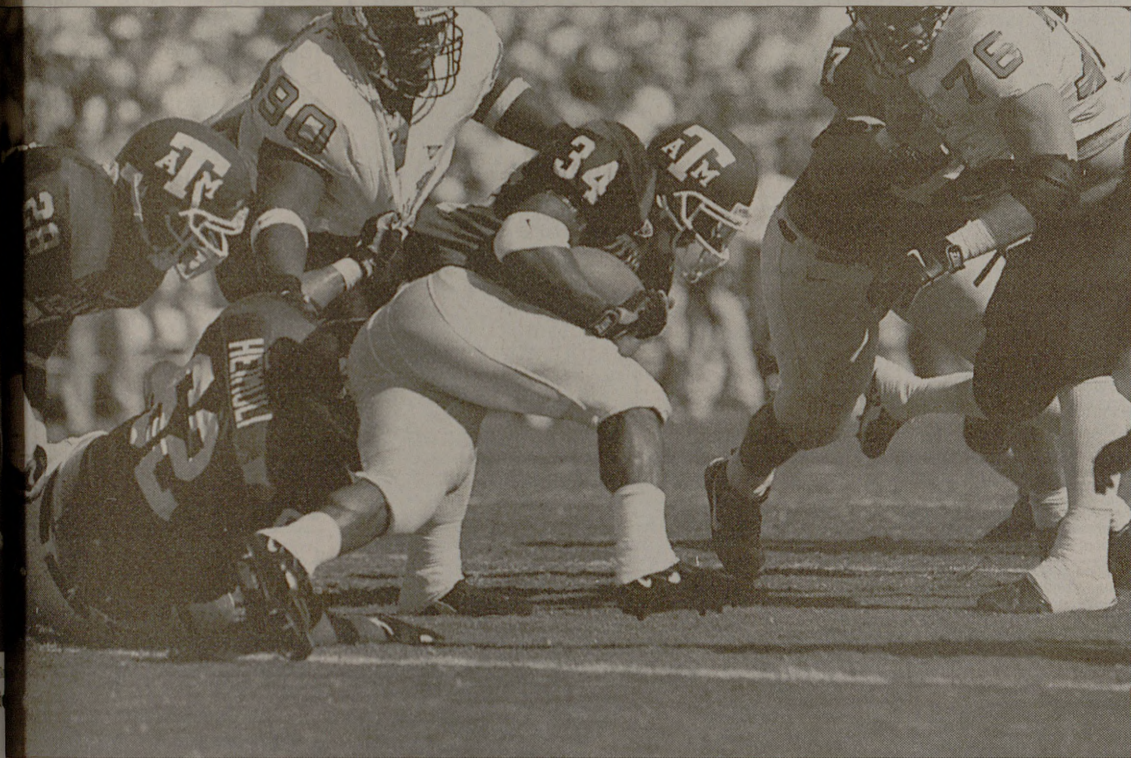


Ags look to avoid Stillwater scare

Football cruises to Oklahoma for Halloween rumble with OSU Cowboys



ROBERT MCKAY/THE BATTALION

BY JEFF SCHMIDT
The Battalion

Oklahoma State University (3-4, 2-3) will eschew typical Halloween garb and dress up as the spoiler when they host the No. 8 Texas A&M Football Team (7-1, 4-0) on Halloween, Saturday.

Kickoff is scheduled for 6 p.m. and will be broadcast nationally on Fox Sports.

The Cowboys may have visions of last season's game against A&M. OSU dominated the Aggies for 55 minutes before A&M rallied for 15 points in the last five minutes to tie the game.

Ineligible running back D'Andre "Tiki" Hardeman rumbled six yards for the winning score in A&M's 28-25 overtime victory. It was the first overtime game in A&M history.

Senior quarterback Brannon Stewart, the forgotten man this season, went 9-of-13 passes for 113 yards and one touchdown in the fourth quarter.

A&M coach R. C. Slocum presented Stewart with the game ball, the first time Slocum has ever awarded a player with a game ball.

"I think they [OSU] will be motivated because of several factors," Slocum said. "They're coming off a big confidence-building win over Oklahoma. They get us up there. We played an evening game last year and won it in overtime, so I'm sure there's some motivation to replay the game."

"We're ranked in the nation and we're leading the

South Zone, so there's a whole lot of motivation there. We know they will be ready; we don't have any doubt about that."

OSU had a Cinderella season last year. While most preseason prognosticators ranked the Cowboys near the bottom of the Big 12, OSU reeled off an eight-win season and earned a trip to the Builders Square Alamo Bowl.

The clock may have struck midnight for the Cowboys this season. OSU was stunned by the University of Tulsa earlier and lost nail-biters to the University of Nebraska and Texas Tech University.

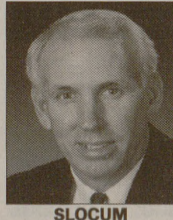
The Aggies come into Saturday's game as the masters of their domain.

A&M sits alone atop the Big 12 South standings. A win over a tough OSU team and a University of Texas loss to Nebraska could cement A&M's stranglehold on the South Zone.

"This is a big game," Slocum said. "We have to go on the road and play a tough team. I know as sure as I'm sitting here that it's going to be a tough ballgame. If you can come out of that then you feel better about coming home and having to play Missouri, which is a probable bowl team."

However, Slocum is quick to point out that there are plenty of games left in the conference schedule and that the Big 12 race is not over.

"What concerns me is that we're only halfway through the conference schedule. That's my biggest concern," Slocum said. "It's way too early. We're only halfway through the eight-game conference schedule, so to me it's way too early to start worrying about anything except what we have to do this week."



SLOCUM

Cross country prepares for conference meet

BY TOM KENNEDY
The Battalion

When freshmen Brandon Beasley and Melissa Gulli signed with the Texas A&M men's and women's Cross Country Teams last year, they were busy setting high school records and advancing to the cross country and track and field meets. Both individuals were seniors with the most high-profile experience.

A year later, they find themselves in team-leading roles once again, but this time they are short on the experience of racing against collegiate elite.

As both squads head into the Big 12 Conference Meet at Pioneer Stadium in Lincoln, Neb., Saturday, the experience factor has not gone unnoted. Coach Dave Hartman, whose traveling roster of 18 runners consists of 15 freshmen and two sophomores, feels this could be a starting point for the young runners to gain experience.

"We've got a young team with freshmen (on each squad)," Hartman said. "There are so many freshmen on the team that it will be a [challenging] field like this. [That way] in the years in the future, we can be one of the teams competing in the top two or three."

The Big 12 is one of the top conferences in the nation, so the freshmen will need to adjust early in the season in order to compete.

On the men's side, the University of Colorado will try to remain the school to win a Big 12 title, having won the first two in '96 and '97. The Buffs are currently ranked 11th nationally and are expected to retain the title; their main competitor is ninth-ranked Oklahoma State University.

The University of Missouri, ranked 17th, and the University of Texas, which is receiving votes, should battle for third and fourth.

Colorado's Adam Goucher is the clear-cut favorite for the individual title and should have no problem repeating last year's win in Stillwater, Okla.

Beasley said he is eager to run against the high level of competition. "I haven't ran against [Colorado] yet," Beasley said. "But I look forward to it, and it definitely will be a fast pace."

Freshman Chris Lee is optimistic about the Aggies' chances this weekend.

"I think, since the level of competition is so great, that we'll run a lot harder," Lee said. "We'll definitely step up to [the ranked teams]."

The women's race has no clear favorite, but Colorado, ranked 20th after peaking at No. 4 this season, has also won the first two Big 12 Championships and remains in title contention.

Kansas State University, the highest-ranking women's team in the conference at No. 18, and Baylor University, ranked 21st, are also expected to fend for the team championship.

Oklahoma State and Texas are the dark horses of the conference, and either team could take the title. The individual title also has no clear-cut favorite, but Baylor's Sherri Smith, Oklahoma State's Hanna Smedstad, and the University of Nebraska's Jeannette Zimmer are among those expected to be in the front pack.

Gulli feels that the Big 12 meet is a good tune up for the regional meet, which will decide what teams will advance to the NCAA Championships.

SEE HARRIERS ON PAGE 8.

Volleyball plays BU, Tech

•A&M humbled by four-game losing streak and loss of All-American Stacy Sykora.

BY AARON COHAN
The Battalion

The 19th-ranked Texas A&M Volleyball Team is seeking to get back on track after a series of tough road trips.

The Aggies, currently tied for fifth with Texas Tech University in the Big 12, have lost a season-high four games in a row to a respected group of top-25 teams. After losing to Colorado (12th), Nebraska (3rd), and Texas (13th), Coach Laurie Corbelli said she is not the least bit worried.

"As young as we are, I am really pleased with what we took home from these losses," Corbelli said.

The one thing Corbelli said she is not pleased about is losing All-American outside hitter Stacy Sykora to a sprained ligament in her left foot

against Kansas State University last Saturday. Sykora has led the team all year in hit average, kill average and dig average. In place of Sykora will be redshirt freshman Erin Gibson. Gibson, making her first career start, will give A&M three freshmen in the starting line-up.

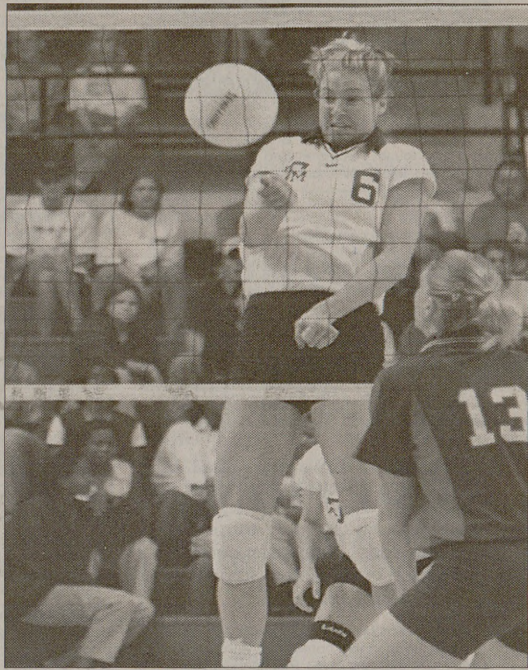
"Initially, the loss of Stacy affected our chemistry," Corbelli said. "But during these last few practices this week, the team has really jelled and come together."

The Aggies face Baylor University tonight in Waco ending their five-game road trip. The Bears, currently on a three-game winning streak, are currently tied for seventh in the Big 12 with the University of Kansas. Earlier in the season, the Aggies man-handled the Bears in College Station for a 3-0 win. Baylor is led by power-hitter Elisha Polk.

When the Aggies come home on Sunday, the Red Raiders will be waiting to avenge a loss earlier in the season. Tech, led by junior Lori Garber and senior setter Lisa Helgers, is 0-7 against Top 25 teams this year.

The Aggies seem to be well prepared for both of these matches even without Sykora at the helm. Coach Corbelli feels the team is ready to break out of its slump.

"All the girls are stepping up and meeting the challenge (with Sykora out)," said Cor-



ERIC NEWNAM/THE BATTALION

Junior middle blocker Amber Woolsey digs in A&M's win over the University of Kansas.

belli. "We feel like we are ready to start playing well again."

Aggie soccer team travels to Oklahoma for two-game set

BY AARON COHAN
The Battalion

The Texas A&M Soccer Team has the mind-set to finish the season strongly this Halloween weekend.

The 24th-ranked Aggies play a young and tough Oklahoma State University Friday in Stillwater, Okla., and then finish up the road trip Sunday with a match against the University of Oklahoma.

The Aggies are coming off an impressive 2-0 win against arch rival the University of Texas, which marked their final home game of the season.

With the win, the Aggies

clinched at least the third seed in the Big 12 Tournament next weekend in San Antonio.

The team might have lost a top player. Junior defender Ashley Fendley was injured in Wednesday's match.

Her knee may have been hyper-extended. A game-time decision will be made on her ability to play.

Coach G. Guerrieri said the match against OSU is pivotal because they want to keep their current winning streak of three games alive.

"OSU is a very tough team that believes in themselves," Guerrieri said. "They have nothing to lose

and everything to gain playing a ranked team like us."

Of the seven losses OSU has this season, three have been in overtime, and four have been by a goal.

"They are a very gritty team that sticks it to you till the end," Guerrieri said.

The Cowgirls post an impressive 5-1-1 record at home this season, led behind goal keeper Chrytal Emerson. Currently ranked fifth in the conference with a 1.47 goals against average, Guerrieri said Emerson will give the Aggies a hard fight.

"We are going to battle a very

physical team that will play us extremely hard," Guerrieri said.

Sophomore forward and leading scorer Nicky Thrasher said she believes that this weekend will give the team a chance to finish the season with a bang.

"We have to go into these games tough," Thrasher said. "It's a big weekend because we want to finish off strong before the Big 12 tournament begins."

The Aggies, who boast an 11-6 overall record, need all the confidence and poise they can muster out of OSU and OU to defend the Big 12 title they claimed last season.

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