

SPORTS

Bayou Breakout

The Battalion



"We have a whole heap of good receivers. I can only come in and just be a part of that."

—Bethel Johnson on his role in A&M's offense

"Every time I go out there, I expect to make them, and everybody else is starting to feel that way too."

—Terence Kitchens on gaining confidence after kicking two 50-yard plus field goals

"It's popular. But they got a popular loss tonight."

—Dante Hall on Louisiana Tech's passing attack

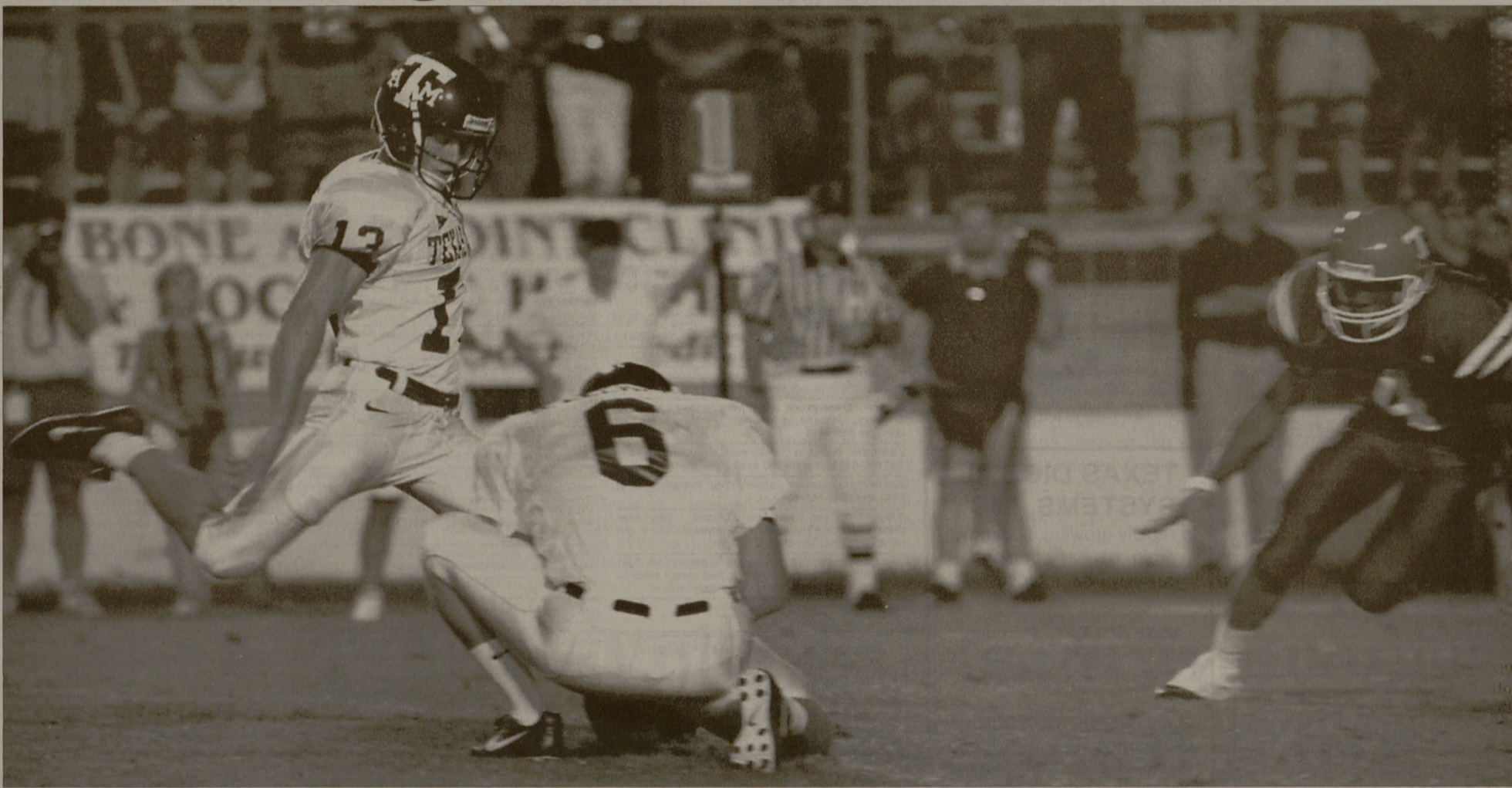
The Battalion Top 25 Poll

Team	Record
1. Tennessee	(1-0)
2. Florida State	(1-0)
3. Penn State	(2-0)
4. Florida	(1-0)
5. Texas A&M	(1-0)
6. Michigan	(1-0)
7. Nebraska	(1-0)
8. Miami	(2-0)
9. Wisconsin	(1-0)
10. Georgia Tech	(1-0)
11. Georgia	(1-0)
12. Arizona	(1-1)
13. Ohio State	(0-1)
14. Arkansas	(1-0)
15. Virginia Tech	(1-0)
16. Alabama	(1-0)
17. UCLA	(1-0)
18. Kansas State	(0-0)
19. Purdue	(1-0)
20. Marshall	(1-0)
21. Virginia	(1-0)
22. Louisville	(1-0)
23. N.C. State	(2-0)
24. Colorado State	(1-0)
25. Texas	(1-1)

Big 12 Standings

	North			
	W	L	PF	PA
Oklahoma St.	1	0	33	7
Missouri	1	0	31	28
Nebraska	1	0	42	7
Kansas St.	0	0	0	0
Colorado	0	1	14	41
Kansas	0	1	13	48

	South			
	W	L	PF	PA
Oklahoma St.	1	0	24	7
Texas A&M	1	0	37	17
Texas	1	1	89	40
Oklahoma	0	0	0	0
Texas Tech	0	0	0	0
Baylor	0	1	29	30



GUY ROGERS/THE BATTALION

Junior place-kicker Terence Kitchens kicks a second quarter field goal against Louisiana Tech University. Kitchens finished the game with three field goals, including two over 50 yards.

Aggies show balanced attack in 37-17 opening win against Louisiana Tech

BY AL LAZARUS
The Battalion

SHREVEPORT, La. — After a seemingly endless supply of hype, hope and wide-eyed optimism surrounding the Texas A&M Football Team as it headed into the 1999 season, the Aggies did a funny thing in their opener against Louisiana Tech University Saturday night in Shreveport: They lived up to the expectations — and then some.

Using a balanced — yes, balanced — offensive attack against the Bulldogs, A&M rolled to a 37-17 win in front of 40,328 fans at Independence Stadium.

The Aggies got 252 of their 471 total yards in the air and 219 on the ground. "We've got a lot of weapons on this team, and we've got to utilize them," senior quarterback Randy McCown said. "And we can't do that running the ball every play, so we really tried to spread things out and get everybody the ball."

The talk throughout spring drills and summer two-a-days centered around the Aggies' passing game, and McCown and A&M's highly-touted group of receivers did not disappoint.

McCown had the top passing game of his career, completing 17-of-28 passes for 252 yards and two touchdowns. Sopho-

more Bethel Johnson caught four passes for 106 yards and scored a touchdown in his first collegiate game.

Junior receiver Chris Taylor picked up where he left off last season, catching three passes for 58 yards and a touchdown.

While expectations surrounding the Aggies' passing game have been high since spring drills, the same could not be said for A&M's kicking game, which raised question marks more than anything else.

But junior place-kicker Terence Kitchens, whose experience before Saturday's game consisted of one extra-point last year against the University of North Texas, went a long way in giving the Aggies some much-needed reliability at the position. Kitchens connected on a 50-yarder and a 51-yarder in the first quarter, giving the Aggies a six point lead.

"I was glad the coaches were confident enough in me to send me out there, especially on my first one of the year," Kitchens said. "That makes me a lot more confident for the rest of the year."

Kitchens admitted he was looking for something less challenging on his first opportunity.

"Coming into the game, I was kind of hoping my first one would be an extra point," he said. "But he asked me if I want-

ed to kick it, and I said, 'yeah.'"

He went on to kick one more field goal and four extra points, giving him 13 points for the game.

A&M coach R.C. Slocum said he was not surprised at Kitchens' performance. "All summer long, since two-a-days started, he's been really consistent in practice," Slocum said. "We say what you do in practice carries over into the ball game, and he did about what he's been doing in practice."

On the ground, the Aggie trio of seniors D'Andre "Tiki" Harde-man and Dante Hall and sophomore Ja'Mar Toombs combined for 159 yards, with McCown scrambling for another 43.

McCown spoke highly of bruising fullbacks Harde-man and Toombs.

"They're awesome," McCown said. "They take a lot of pressure off of everybody, they just bang it in, and let the time run off the clock."

On the defensive side of the ball, cornerback Jason Webster led the Aggies with 10 tackles. The Wrecking Crew seemed to get along fine without Rich Coady, Warrick Holdman and Dat Nguyen, limiting the Bulldogs to just 10 rushing yards on 20 attempts.

After scoring 30 points and racking up 308 yards in the first half, the Aggies' offensive



GUY ROGERS/THE BATTALION

Senior quarterback Randy McCown scrambles from a Louisiana Tech defender. McCown completed 17-of-28 passes for 252 yards and two TDs.

pross disappeared in the second half, making for some tense moments when Tech was driving and the Aggies were clinging to a 30-17 lead. But the Aggies' defense held the Bulldogs in check, and one more A&M touchdown

finished off the Bulldogs.

"In the first half, that's the best we've looked in a while," McCown said. "But we've got to play that way both halves. Fortunately in the second half, we got away with not playing up to par."

Johnson, Kitchens impress in debut game

SHREVEPORT, La. — Welcome to Texas A&M Football Bethel Johnson and Terence Kitchens. Glad you could finally make it.

After months of waiting, the new Aggie wide receiver and place-kicker didn't take long to make their presence on the field known as both contributed right off the bat in Saturday night's 37-17 defeat of the Louisiana Tech Bulldogs.

In his first game as a starter, Kitchens was thrown into the fire immediately.

Just 5:31 into the game, he was asked to do something that he had never done before in a game on any level — make a 50-yard field goal. With Coach Slocum's blessing, Kitchens went out and kicked his first collegiate try right through the uprights.

Slocum said he was excited with the job Kitchens did.

"I felt great about Terence," he said. "What a way to start a career. In the first quarter, I asked him, 'How do you feel?' He said, 'I can make it; so I told him to go get it, and he did.'"

Kitchens liked kicking 50-yarders so much that six minutes after his first collegiate try, his second try was — that's right — a 50-yarder.

His first one must have been too easy because he added a little spice to the second.

This time Kitchens made like he was in a Larry Bird/Michael Jordan commercial as he hit his 51-yard attempt off the right upright,

then off the crossbar and over.

It was the longest field goal for A&M since Kyle Bryant kicked a 51-yarder against North Texas in 1997.

After his run-in with the crossbar, Kitchens decided to stay on the easy road, kicking a 26-yard field goal as time ran out in the first half and four extra points as he capped off a successful debut.

"My main goal is to go out there and make every kick I can no matter what the yardage," Kitchens said. "It does feel good to go out and have a good game under my belt."

After Kitchens' field goal show, Johnson stepped into the spotlight.

He entered his first game with immense pressure on his shoulders. He entered this season as the most hyped player since Brandon Stewart transferred from Tennessee to A&M in 1995.

He was supposed to be A&M's last piece in its receiving puzzle. With all that pressure, Johnson might have been setup for a disastrous opening. Wrong.

He made his presence known on the Aggies' second drive. After catching a hitch pass, Johnson blew by his defender and turned the play into a 15-yard gain.

On the Aggies' first drive of the second quarter, Johnson jump started the offense when he hauled in a 46-yard pass from quarterback Randy McCown, outleaping the Tech defender for the ball.

Four plays later junior running back

Dante Hall took it 18 yards for the Aggies first touchdown.

"I was so happy for him to see him finally come out and show what he could do," Hall said. "I knew he was going to live up to the hype."

Right before the half, Johnson set up another Aggie score when his 33-yard catch moved the Aggies up at the Tech eight with three seconds left in the half to set up Kitchens' third field goal of the game.

Johnson then put the icing on the cake when he caught the first touchdown pass of his career with 47 seconds left.

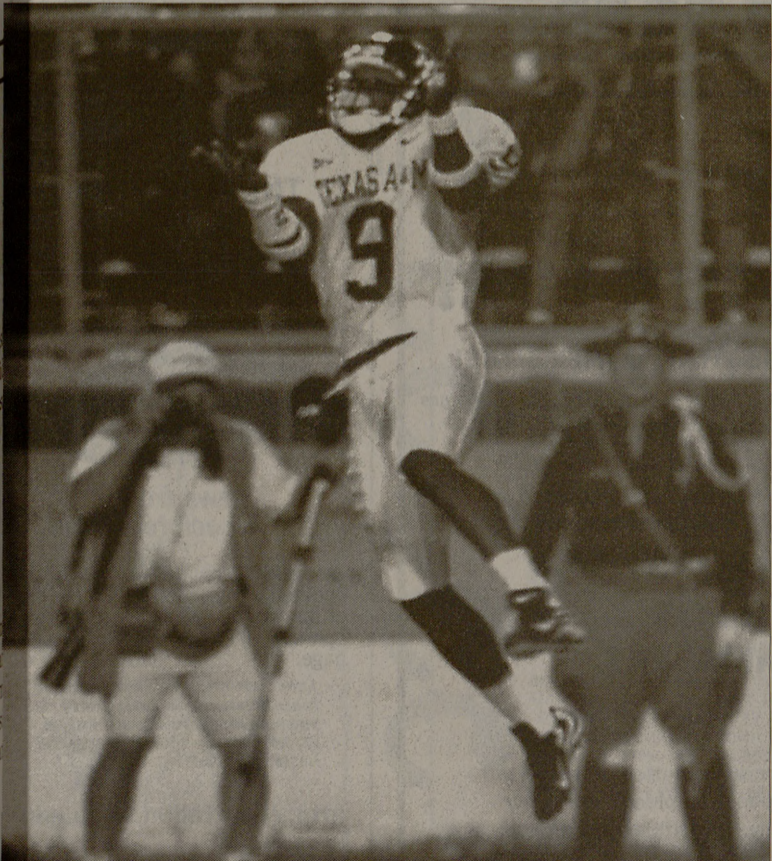
In all, he ended the night with four catches for 106 yards and one touchdown.

With all of the hype before the game, Johnson said he was happy with just getting a game under his belt.

"I had the feeling like I had to get some of the pressure off of me with the hype they have had on me earlier in the year," Johnson said. "After today, I officially feel relief."

Before his first game, Johnson was still an unknown commodity to fans and opposing teams alike. Afterwards though, sophomore fullback Ja'Mar Toombs said that it won't be so easy to keep a wrap on Johnson.

"We [the team] all knew," Toombs said. "Nobody else knew but us. He was like a secret. I guess our secret is out now."



GUY ROGERS/THE BATTALION

Sophomore wide receiver Bethel Johnson leaps for a pass against Louisiana Tech. Johnson had four catches for 106 yards and one TD.

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