

FIRING BACK

A&M answers critics in 21-3 victory over Oklahoma State

BY BLAINE DIONNE
The Battalion

After last Saturday's debacle at the University of Oklahoma, the Texas A&M Football Team was given no time off.

The Aggies came back to College Station and had to practice Sunday evening, beginning their search for answers to the many questions about them found smattered across newspapers Sunday morning.

Evidently, those answers were found. The Aggies (6-2, 3-2 Big 12) returned to Kyle Field Saturday and handed the Oklahoma State University Cowboys (3-4, 1-3 Big 12) their third defeat in their last four games, 21-3.

The Aggie offense hit on all cylinders, with senior quarterback Randy McCown leading the way with one of the most effective throwing days of his career, completing 20-29 passes for 242 yards and two touchdowns.

Senior wide receiver Matt Bumgardner had a big day as well, hauling in seven catches for 77 yards and two touchdowns. The oft-injured Bumgardner said he was glad to be given an opportunity to score, but was quick to point out he is not the only A&M receiver capable of making big plays.

"It's funny how it works out sometimes," he said. "It almost seems like every week guys take turns having big games. I don't think I've had a catch the last two games, but I guess it was my turn [today], and next week it'll be somebody else."

The Aggies began their scoring with 8:17 left in the first half, as McCown hooked up with Bumgardner on an 11-yard pass to go up on the Cowboys, 7-0.

The offense scored twice more, in the third quarter with a D'Andre "Tiki" Hardeeman one-yard run and another McCown-Bumgardner connection in the fourth — this one for 14 yards — to put OSU in hole it could not dig itself out of.

The two second-half touchdowns turned out to be moot, as the Wrecking Crew was its dominating self again after a one-week hiatus, holding Oklahoma State scoreless until a 36-yard field goal in the fourth quarter let the Cowboys avoid a shutout.

After last week's torching by the Sooners, the A&M defense had something to prove. Junior linebacker Roylin Bradley said he wanted to make sure his side of the ball lived up to the standards of past A&M defenses.

"Last week, we were embarrassed," he said. "51 points — that's not Wrecking Crew football. We feel like we need to keep up the tradition of those old Wrecking Crews, so we just came out and worked as hard as we could."

In addition to being important to this season, the win was an historic one for the Texas A&M Football Program and for A&M coach R.C. Slocum. It was the 600th victory in the history of Texas A&M football and the 100th for Slocum in his coaching career.

Since 1960, only two coaches have reached the milestone faster, Barry Switzer of Oklahoma and Steve Spurrier of Florida.

Slocum, however, said he was not as concerned with the milestone as he was with his team's ability to rebound from last week's loss.

"I was very proud of the team," he said. "They came back, went to work and I think their effort showed today. I thought we had good intensity and was pleased with the effort of the team."

Apparently still stinging from the past week's questions about his team's character, McCown reacted emotionally after the game.

"This team is all heart," he said. "To finally come together this year, and to play a game like we're capable of playing, it really means a lot to me."

"You may not see it from the outside, but from the inside, we pulled together like never before. I think now it's just going to get better each week."

Junior offensive lineman Chris Valletta agreed.

"Personally, I think this is when you find out about your team — how you bounce back from a loss like that, like we had against Oklahoma," Valletta said. "We knew in our hearts that today had to be a breakout game and I think we showed that."

As satisfying as their effort may have been to them, the Aggies don't have much time to enjoy the win. In just five days, they will travel to the University of Nebraska to face the Cornhuskers in a rematch of the Aggies' momentous upset last season.

Sophomore running back Ja'Mar Toombs said he thinks the Aggies will be up for the challenge.

"Next week, you can expect to see more intensity, more emotion and more enthusiasm," he said. "Because we're playing a big school at their home that we beat last year, so we know they're excited for us, but we'll be excited for them."

"To finally come together this year, and to play a game like we're capable of playing, it really means a lot to me."

— Randy McCown
A&M quarterback



"We're not losers; we're champions around here. We don't just give up."

— Randy McCown on A&M bouncing back from a 51-6 loss to OU Oct. 23

"I think today was a positive note. We can look at this game and really see that we can really do this if we put our minds to it."

— Ja'Mar Toombs on A&M's 21-3 win over OSU Saturday

"It's fitting that the 100th win was an enjoyable, appropriate time to have a win. Still, to me, the significance is that overall in this decade, we have won a bunch of games."

— R.C. Slocum on his 100th coaching win at A&M

"Just like Coach said, we're not used to what happened to us last week. It kind of shocked us as a team, as a whole."

— Matt Bumgardner on A&M's 51-6 loss to OU Oct. 23

The Battalion Top 25 Poll

Team	Record
1. Florida St.	(9-0)
2. Penn St.	(9-0)
3. Virginia Tech	(7-0)
4. Florida	(7-1)
5. Tennessee	(6-1)
6. Kansas St.	(8-0)
7. Georgia Tech	(6-1)
8. Mississippi St.	(7-0)
9. Marshall	(8-0)
10. Nebraska	(7-1)
11. Texas	(7-2)
12. Wisconsin	(7-2)
13. Alabama	(6-2)
14. BYU	(7-1)
15. Georgia	(6-2)
16. Michigan	(6-2)
17. East Carolina	(7-1)
18. Purdue	(6-3)
19. Michigan St.	(6-2)
20. Ohio St.	(6-3)
21. Miami Fla	(4-3)
22. Texas A&M	(6-2)
23. Arkansas	(5-2)
24. Southern Miss.	(5-3)
25. Boston College	(6-2)

Associated Press Top 25 Poll

Team	Record
1. Florida St.	(9-0)
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4. Tennessee	(6-1)
5. Florida	(7-1)
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7. Georgia Tech	(6-1)
8. Mississippi St.	(7-0)
9. Nebraska	(7-1)
10. Wisconsin	(7-2)
11. Texas	(7-2)
12. Alabama	(6-2)
13. Marshall	(8-0)
14. Georgia	(6-2)
15. BYU	(7-1)
16. Michigan	(6-2)
17. Purdue	(6-3)
18. East Carolina	(7-1)
19. Michigan St.	(6-2)
20. Ohio St.	(6-3)
21. Texas A&M	(6-2)
22. Miami Fla	(4-3)
23. Mississippi	(6-2)
24. Notre Dame	(5-3)
25. Southern Miss.	(5-3)

Big 12 Standings

North			
Team	W	L	PF PA
Kansas St.	8	0	332 89
Nebraska	7	1	278 99
Colorado	5	3	262 230
Oklahoma St.	4	4	193 182
Missouri	4	4	210 217
Kansas	3	6	205 271
South			
Team	W	L	PF PA
Texas	7	2	330 198
Texas A&M	6	2	247 141
Texas Tech	4	4	180 180
Oklahoma	4	3	265 147
Oklahoma St.	3	4	160 169
Taylor	1	7	113 298



JP BEATO/THE BATTALION



Oklahoma State quarterback **B.J. Tiger** loses his helmet after being sacked by junior defensive lineman **Rocky Bernard** and senior cornerback **Jason Webster**.

Aggies pull together in victory

As the Texas A&M Football Team entered its game against Oklahoma State Saturday, it arrived as a team at a crossroads. Fresh off a 51-6 defeat at the hands of Oklahoma, the Aggies faced a tough Cowboy team with a trip to Lincoln staring them in the face.



DOUG SHILLING

Not only were the Aggies having to bounce back from that loss, but numerous questions were hovering over the team.

What was wrong with the Wrecking Crew? What was wrong with the offensive line? Who would step up and lead the team?

Faced with such questions and adversity, the Aggies took a bold step forward Saturday that should help them for the remainder of their season.

Instead of blowing off the rest of the season and feeling sorry for themselves after the stunning defeat, the team came out and did something it had not done all year — played with the intensity and emotion that made A&M Big 12 Champions last year.

Sure, the Aggies got a rain-soaked 21-3 win over Oklahoma State and kept their slim Big 12 Championship hopes alive, but as the team looks back on this game, the final score will be of little consequence.

The Aggies will remember at this one as the game where they finally came together and

played as a team.

The much-maligned offensive line answered its critics and had its best performance of the year. Repeatedly, the offensive line controlled the line of scrimmage and blew the defenders off the ball. The Aggies have gained more yards in a game this year but not with the attitude as they did Saturday.

Junior offensive lineman Chris Valletta said Saturday was an important opportunity for the offensive line to prove itself.

"We knew in our hearts that today had to be our breakout game, and I think we showed that," he said. "We know we can run the ball. This offensive line prides itself on that and that's something you have to have as an offensive line."

The Wrecking Crew came out and showed that last week was the exception, not the rule. The Crew gave up only 260 yards of total offense and sacked Cowboy quarterback B.J. Tiger eight times. In its six times in A&M territory, OSU could muster only a fourth-quarter field goal.

But of all the positive things coming out of Saturday's game, the best was the emergence of senior quarterback Randy McCown as the team's leader.

His numbers were impressive — 20-of-29 passing for 242 yards and two touchdowns — but what was important was the leadership he gave the team.

Playing with a slightly separated left shoulder, McCown shrugged off the pain and rallied the

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