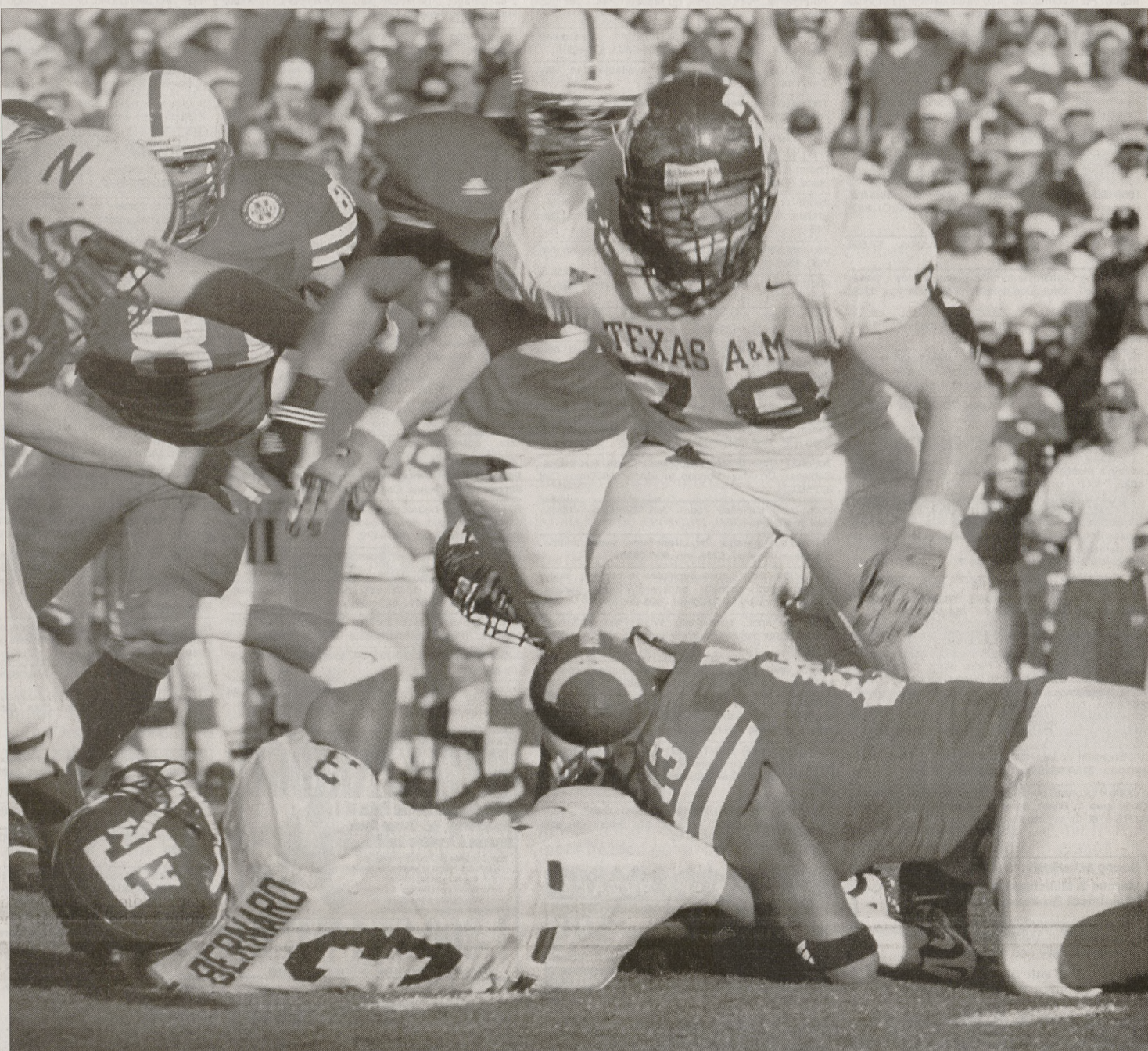


Shucked

Aggies dominated by 'Huskers in 37-0 loss

BY DOUG SHILLING
The Battalion



GUY ROGERS/THE BATTALION

A&M senior running back **Eric Bernard** fumbles the ball in the second quarter of the Aggies' 37-0 loss to the University of Nebraska Saturday in Lincoln, Neb. The Aggies recovered the ball on the play but finished the game with five turnovers.

LINCOLN, Neb. — Before the season, the Texas A&M Football Team's game against the University of Nebraska was being built up as one of the games of the year in college football. Not only was the game supposed to decide the Big 12's champion, it supposedly had national title implications.

But after losses earlier in the season, both teams showed up to the game just trying to keep their conference title hopes alive.

It was the Cornhuskers who kept their hopes alive while in the process crushing the Aggies' as they shrugged off a slow start to dominate in the second half en route to a 37-0 thrashing of A&M Saturday in Lincoln.

It was the first time since 1988, when Louisiana State University blanked the Aggies 28-0, that A&M was shut out — a span of 142 games.

With its third conference loss, A&M (6-3, 3-3 Big 12) was officially eliminated from the Big 12 South race and with the win, Nebraska (8-1, 5-1 Big 12) sets itself up for a Big 12 North showdown when Kansas State travels to Lincoln this coming weekend.

A&M coach R.C. Slocum said the Aggies' problems were the cause of the offense never getting on track.

"We didn't perform on offense," Slocum said. "We were very inept. We couldn't run the ball and when we tried to throw it basically we couldn't protect long enough to get the ball off. We had a very disappointing day offensively."

Things started off well for the Aggies as the Cornhuskers turned the ball over on the game's first play.

Nebraska wingback Bobby Newcombe fumbled the pitch from quarterback Eric Crouch and A&M recovered the ball at the Nebraska 11 yard line.

It was as close as the Aggies would get to the end zone all day.

After going three-and-out, A&M junior place-kicker Terence Kitchens' 28-yard field goal attempt was blocked by Nebraska lineman Kyle Vanden Bosch.

On the ensuing possession, Nebraska drove the ball all the way to the A&M 4 yard line, but the drive ended with place kicking troubles of its own.

Cornhusker place-kicker Josh Brown booted his 21-yard attempt off the left upright to keep the game scoreless.

Neither team mounted a scoring threat until the second quarter when A&M marched down to the Nebraska 14 yard line.

Once again, however, the drive ended in no points for the Aggies. Kitchens' 31-yard field goal was once again blocked by Vanden Bosch. It was the seventh blocked against Kitchens this year.

Kitchens, who has had troubles with low kicks this year, said having two more

blocked in the game was very disheartening.

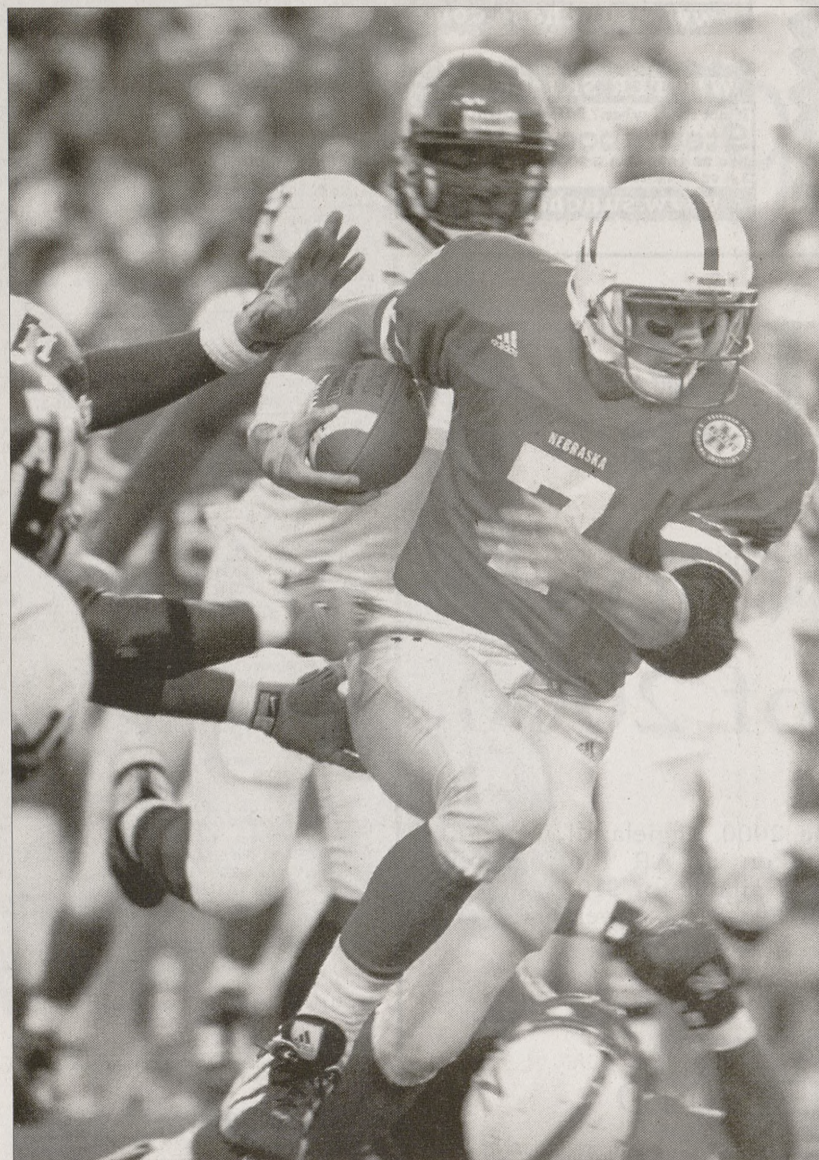
"It's very frustrating because I'm trying to kick the ball high," Kitchens said. "The first one I thought I hit well and it got blocked. The second one I didn't hit too hard, so I'm frustrated because it seems

the harder I try, the more it has gone wrong."

After the blocked field goal, Nebraska tallied two Brown field goals in the second to take the lead 6-0 going into halftime.

SEE LOSS ON PAGE 10.

With conference race out of picture, Ags need to face the truth



GUY ROGERS/THE BATTALION

University of Nebraska quarterback **Eric Crouch** eludes the grasp of A&M defenders in the third quarter of Saturday's game.

LINCOLN, Neb. — If Terence Kitchens' field goal attempts in the first half had been a little higher, then the Aggies could have been tied with Nebraska at halftime, instead of trailing, 6-0.

And with the game tied, who knows what would have transpired in the second half of A&M's 37-0 loss to the Cornhuskers Saturday?

Let's go ahead and answer that question right now.

The Aggies still would have lost — badly.

We could play the "if-thens" all day. If the offensive line could have given Randy McCown a little more time to work, then A&M might have gotten its passing game going.

If the Wrecking Crew did not have to spend most of the first half on the field, then it could have played as well in the second half as it did in the first.

But all those scenarios avoid looking at the big picture.

How about this one: If A&M were even close to as good as the Nebraska team it ran into, then the Aggies might have left Lincoln with some shred of dignity.

Before this season began, many people pointed to Nov. 6 in Lincoln as a day that would decide one of the teams that would play for the national championship.

It seemed everyone from coaches to players to fans to — especially — sportswriters was comparing A&M to the nation's top teams — the Florida States,

Tennessees and, yes, Nebraskas.

Here's a new one to compare the Aggies to: Baylor.

What, you say? Those creme puffs 90 miles up Highway 6?

If Baylor had road games against Texas Tech, Oklahoma and Nebraska this year, the Bears probably would have lost those games by a combined score of, oh, something like 109-25. In other words, exactly what the Aggies lost those games by.

It's safe to say A&M has more talent than its down-and-out neighbor to the north. But the Aggies, as a team, are much closer to Baylor's level than that of a top-five team — as crazy to suggest as that seems.

A&M can't be that bad, right? After all, we're talking about a college football powerhouse here.

And Baylor is, well, Baylor.

Maybe that mentality is part of the problem. Just because the school is called A&M doesn't necessarily mean its team is almighty.

The name of your school may get you respect in the polls, but it won't intimidate your opponents.

A&M knows all about that.

When the Aggies and Bears squared off at Kyle Field earlier this season, Baylor put up a pretty good fight in the first half and trailed the Aggies, 17-6, at halftime. A&M went on to win, 45-13, but one got the feeling if the game had been in Waco — where the Bears might have been less likely to suffer a second-half meltdown — things may have gone a little differently.

Of all the teams the Aggies have beaten this season, only Southern Miss seemed to be a legitimately good team. True, USM probably would beat Baylor, but remember that the Aggies were

shut down offensively and needed two defensive touchdowns and three field goals to get past the Golden Eagles.

Why have the Aggies fallen so far, so fast?

Punter Shane Lechler offered one explanation after the Nebraska game.

"We've got to come together as a group," he said. "My hat's off to Dan (Campbell) and Dat (Nguyen) and those guys; they helped us out in that aspect last year."

The tendency is to point to a couple of things that went wrong in each game as the reasons for losing. A lack of team leaders may be one thing, but to blame that — or the offensive line, kicking game or coaching — would be missing the underlying problem.

The fact is, if the Aggies want to remain competitive in the Big 12 the next few years, then they better realize something pretty soon: The main difference between A&M and a team like Baylor right now is that the Bears know they're bad. And acknowledging the problem is the first step.

The Aggies may not be as bad as Baylor, but it would not hurt for them to think so.

"Any time you can't put any points on the board ... it hurts your pride," A&M offensive lineman Chris Valletta said. "But this team is full of guys with a lot of character and a lot of heart."

"There's no way [the loss] is going to break our character and our pride. It got bent today, but we're not going to let it affect us."

Don't you think they should?

Al Lazarus is a senior journalism major.

The Battalion



"We didn't perform on offense. We were very inept. ... We had a very disappointing day offensively."
— R.C. Slocum on the Aggies' offensive performance Saturday

"We've got to come together as a group. My hat's off to Dan (Campbell) and Dat (Nguyen) and those guys. They helped us out in that aspect last year."
— Shane Lechler on the team's lack of leadership

"I'm frustrated because it seems the harder I try, the more it has gone wrong."
— Terence Kitchens on his recurring problems with low kicks

"We were all pumped up and ready. ... And they came out with a lot of momentum. We couldn't match up with their momentum."
— Jason Glenn on the team's attitude coming into the second half

The Battalion Top 25 Poll

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

Associated Press Top 25 Poll

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

Big 12 Standings

	W	L	PF	PA
North				
Kansas St.	9	0	352	103
Nebraska	8	1	315	99
Colorado	5	4	276	250
Kansas	4	6	250	281
Owaha St.	4	5	209	210
Missouri	4	5	210	254
South				
Texas	8	2	364	219
Texas Tech	5	4	208	196
Oklahoma	5	3	302	147
Texas A&M	6	3	247	178
Kla. St.	3	5	181	203
Baylor	1	8	123	343