

SPORTS

THE BATTALION

Aggie running game ready for Cowboys

By JASON LINCOLN
The Battalion

The Texas A&M offensive backfield is loaded. This Saturday will give the Aggies a chance to prove that against the Wyoming Cowboys, whose Achilles' heel appears to be running.

The Aggie backfield trio — consisting of redshirt-freshman tailback Richard Whitaker, sophomore tailback Joe Weber and junior fullback Ja'Mar Toombs — is poised to show the Cowboys what a ground game really is.

Last week in Wyoming's season opener against Auburn, the Cowboys allowed 177 yards rushing, in addition to 266 in the air.

But the 177 ground yards could be big for the Aggies, who have struggled to break open its ground game.

Last week against Notre Dame, the Aggies came away with 119 yards on the ground. The Irish limited both Toombs and Weber to a less-than-three yards-per-carry average, a significant drop-off from their norms last season.

In the meantime, Whitaker made up the difference, running for 71 yards on only 13 carries.

The Wyoming defense should allow any one of the Aggies' backs to break out at will. Each member of the trio will create a different challenge for the Cowboys.

Richard Whitaker

Against the Irish, Whitaker made a successful bid to be A&M's top threat in the backfield. In his first performance on college turf, he succeeded where Toombs and Weber struggled. His 71 yards against a solid Notre Dame defense showed his speed and vision. Now, Whitaker gets to perform at Kyle Field without the first-game stigma.

Joe Weber

In the late part of 1999, Weber came up big, adding another threat to the ground game. Saturday, his carries were limited when A&M began to fall behind later in the game. A&M went to the air in an effort to close the gap. This week should be a different story. If A&M stays ahead, Weber will

See RUNNING BACKS on Page 3B.

Texas A&M ready to debut in Kyle

A&M looks for offensive success against the Wyoming Cowboys Saturday

By BLAINE DIONNE
The Battalion

The Texas A&M football team opens up its four-game home stand at Kyle Field this Saturday at 6 p.m. against Wyoming.

This is the first time the schools have met and the first time A&M has played a member of the Mountain West Conference since the 1996 Pigskin Classic against Brigham Young University.

The Aggies, coming off last week's loss to Notre Dame, are trying to avoid a letdown against a less established team like Wyoming. A&M coach R.C. Slocum said he is doing everything in his power to keep A&M from underestimating the Cowboys, who gave Auburn a run for their money on national television on Aug. 31.

"As a coach, I know dang good and well that Wyoming is capable of coming in here and hitting two or three big plays, and all of a sudden you're in a dog-fight, with them having a chance to win it," Slocum said. "You've got to convince your players that can happen. That's one of your hardest coaching jobs."

One of Slocum's concerns is the Cowboys' passing-oriented offense. The Aggies are bringing along a rookie defensive backfield and will be without the services of senior safety Michael Jameson this week, due to his high-ankle sprain.

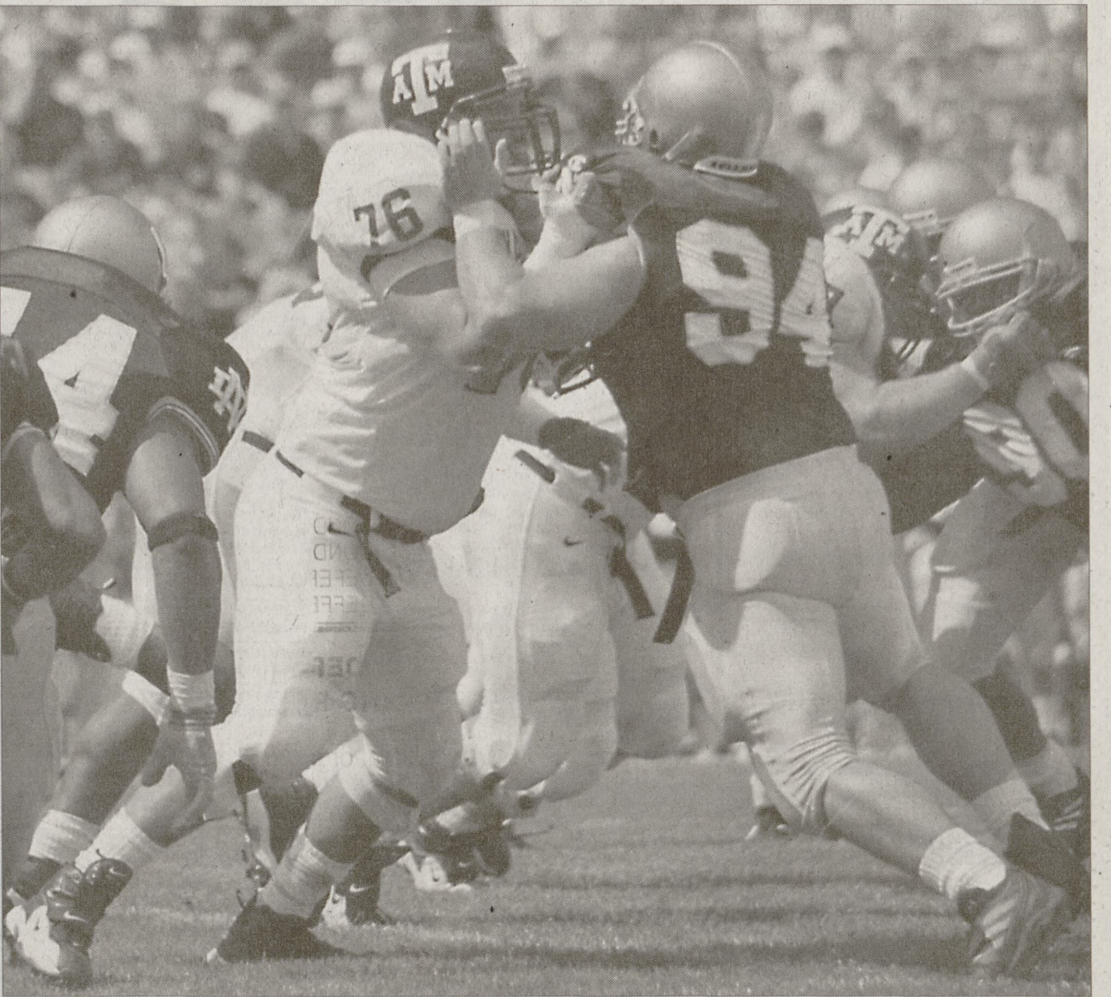
Making matters worse for A&M are the mistakes the defensive backs made last week against the run-happy Notre Dame offense — the Aggies gave up two passing touchdowns to the Irish.

"This is about as big a challenge as we can face in terms of what our concerns are," Slocum said. "We've got a team (Wyoming) that is good at throwing the football, and they're gonna throw it a bunch of times. They will run a few options in there, just to keep you honest. But most of their attack is aerial, and they can be very effective."

Defensive coordinator Mike Hankwitz said the Aggies will be focusing on Wyoming's quarterback, Jay Stoner.

"Notre Dame played to their strengths," Hankwitz said. "They had a speedy, mobile quarterback that created opportunities for them. Wyoming will play to theirs — they have a veteran throwing quarterback, and they try to spread you out to keep you off balance."

As far as the A&M offense goes, fans can expect to see more formation experimentation than in the



BRADLEY ATCHISON/THE BATTALION

Texas A&M sophomore right tackle Michael Mahan looks to clear the way for the Aggie ground game and give quarterback Mark Farris the time he needs to air the ball against Wyoming on Saturday.

Notre Dame game. Offensive coordinator Steve Kragthorpe said the Cowboy defense is not a weak link. He said it is a physical team that can create problems for anyone, as it did at Auburn last week.

"Wyoming's a fine football team," Kragthorpe said. "We've got to play well, I don't think there's any question about that. They've got a couple of guys on their defense that could play anywhere in the country right now."

Kragthorpe also said the Aggies have been working on their red-zone execution all week to avoid settling for field goals inside the 20-yard line, as they did last week in South Bend.



BRADLEY ATCHISON/THE BATTALION

Texas A&M freshman tailback Richard Whitaker looks to continue to lead the A&M running backs as A&M looks to Saturday's showdown with Wyoming.

A&M volleyball travels to Longhorn Classic

By JASON LINCOLN
The Battalion

The No. 18 Texas A&M volleyball team will travel to Austin this weekend to participate in a demonstration of the Big 12 South's ability against a pair of Washington opponents.

The Aggies will represent the Big 12 South along with the Texas Longhorns as each team faces off against Washington and Eastern Washington in the two-day event.

However, A&M and Texas will have to be content to watch their rivals. The two will not meet on the court until the middle of October.

A&M is currently 2-2 on the season with its only losses coming from No. 1 UCLA and No. 5 Hawaii last weekend in

the Hawaiian Airlines Wahine Classic in Honolulu.

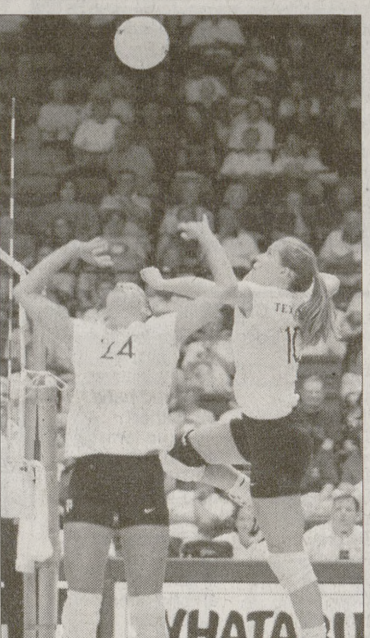
The Aggies' two wins have been convincing shows of power in defeats of Iowa and Houston in straight sets.

The Aggies are led offensively by their top two middle blockers, senior Heather Marshall and redshirt freshman Tara Pulaski, who are both hitting above .300.

Marshall most recently led A&M's defeat of the Cougars in their home opener Wednesday night with 12 kills and no errors.

A&M's three junior outside hitters, Brandi Mount, Michelle Cole and Erin Gibson, round out A&M's scoring threat with hitting percentages of .294, .241 and .220, respectively.

See VOLLEYBALL on Page 10.



PATRIC SCHNEIDER/THE BATTALION

Texas A&M senior Heather Marshall leads the Aggies to Austin.

Texas A&M / Wyoming
SUN. 6 P.M.
TV: FOX SPORTS NET (NATIONAL)

Players to Watch:
Previous game statistics

Robert Ferguson - WR
-5 Catches
-79 Yards
-Drew 2 pass interference calls against Notre Dame

Jay Stoner - QB
-19 for 35
-158 yards
-Threw to 8 different receivers against Auburn

BRANDON HENDERSON/THE BATTALION

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