

SPORTS

THE BATTALION

Revenge Week

Aggies ready to protect sold-out Kyle Field against Texas Tech

By BREE HOLZ
The Battalion

As the Texas A&M football team prepares to battle with Texas Tech University this Saturday, last season's loss to Tech is on players' minds.

"We've got a lot to play for this year," quarterback Mark Farris said. "They've proven that they can beat us."

Last season, Tech defeated A&M 21-19 at Jones SBC Stadium in Lubbock. This year, the Aggies have a different plan in mind.

"Last year, we weren't enthusi-

astic like they were," said linebacker Jason Glenn. "We just took it as another game. But when they come down here Saturday, we're just gonna play all out, hit hard and let them know it's going to be a long game."

The game will start at 11:30 a.m. at Kyle Field and will be televised on Fox Sports Net.

The Aggies' home winning streak is 21 consecutive games, and the Red Raiders last defeated the Aggies at Kyle Field in 1996.

"There's no way we're going to lose on Kyle Field to Texas Tech this

year," Glenn said. "It happened once before, but we're going to make sure that it doesn't happen again."

Offensive lineman Chris Valletta said the atmosphere of Kyle Field has a lot to do with the game.

"It's such an imposing stadium," he said. "Teams come in and they see nothing but maroon. They hear the fans screaming every time their team's on offense. It's a tough place to play. Our crowd is a huge factor."

Fullback Ja'Mar Toombs said the location of the game is not a factor for him.

"I don't care where we play

them," he said. "I just don't want to lose to them anymore."

The Red Raiders enter their first road game of the season with a 4-0 record. A&M's record stands at 2-1.

The Aggies hold the all-time series lead over Tech, 32-25-1, but the Red Raiders have won four of the last five meetings.

"This was the perfect week to have an open week," Valletta said. "We used the week to get most of our players healthy."

One of those players is senior defensive back Michael Jameson, who has been out with a high an-

kle sprain.

"I'm not 100 percent yet, but I'm getting better," he said. "Hopefully by Saturday I'll be close."

Toombs said he enjoyed the open week, but it was difficult to maintain enthusiasm without a game last Saturday.

"You're used to playing every week and you have to hold your emotions down for that whole extra week," Toombs said. "But we won't have any problems getting motivated for this game."

Texas Tech's best game

Texas Tech always gets left out. Texas A&M versus Texas. Somehow that always gets all the attention on the Texas football scene. National television, top-recruits, Thanksgiving weekend, one of the country's oldest rivalries, school pranks. Yet Texas Tech somehow gets overlooked among Texas' gridiron tradition.

Maybe that is why it seems to save its best game for its orange and maroon neighbors.

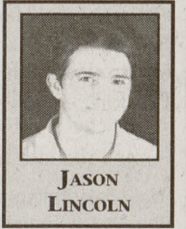
But any days of overlooking the Raiders must be over. How can it be possible to overlook a team that has won four of the last five meetings? How can the last team to beat the Aggies at Kyle Field be overlooked? It cannot. Not anymore.

Last season Texas Tech dropped a game to North Texas. Its next game was a 21-19 upset of the No. 5 Aggies.

"It's been a little frustrating for me that we've played this team every year, and it seems like one of those ho-hum kind of games," said A&M coach R.C. Slocum. "I think it is high time we recognize they get fired up for games and they play to win. We need to have that same kind of resolve when we go out there."

Texas Tech is consistently considered one of the lesser teams in the conference, and Texas and A&M are considered to be among the best. Yet, the Aggies, during Slocum's career, have fared worse against the Raiders than to the Longhorns, losing five games.

But it's not just about football in Lubbock. It is about revenge for all the attention the big schools in the east receive.



JASON LINCOLN

Twin backs offer twice the punch Whitaker, Weber give A&M a running game for any defense

By BLAINE DIONNE
The Battalion

One traveled 1,475 miles to attend Texas A&M. The other, only 140. One is considered the power man at 6 feet, 228 pounds. The other most people think of as the finesse guy at 5 foot 10 inches, 197 pounds.

On paper, A&M tailbacks Joe Weber and Richard Whitaker do not seem to have much in common. They are in constant competition at practice and in games because they are fighting for the same job: starting tailback for the Aggies. They approach the games with two different styles. However, both have been successful, creating a platoon situation this season.

One might think the situation would create animosity between the two, but the opposite is true.

"Me and Joe have been close since we got here," Whitaker said. "Like, when we have off-weekends, I take Joe home with me because, of course, he can't go home to California. So it's kind of like a brother relationship."

Weber said friendship only calms the competitive atmosphere.

"[Our relationship] is a big help," Weber said. "You can't

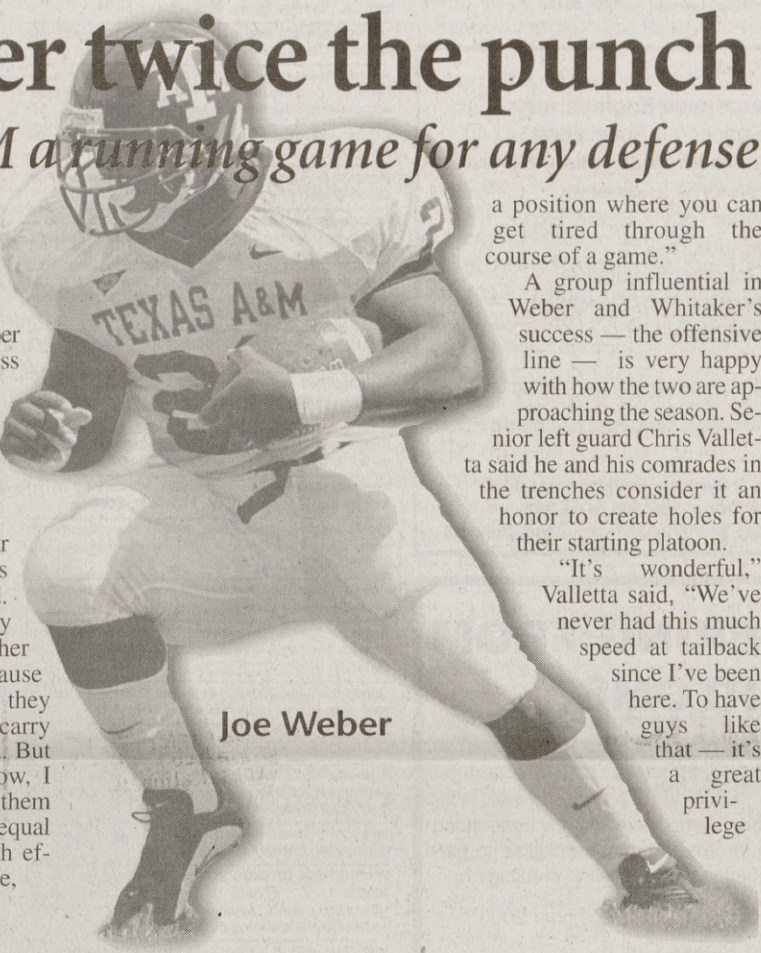
get mad at someone that is in there doing things that you think you could be doing, if you're close."

First-year running backs coach Pete Hoener said Weber and Whitaker's selflessness makes his job easier. He said he can rely on both of them to handle themselves in any game situation, and that both are eager to do whatever it takes to help the team.

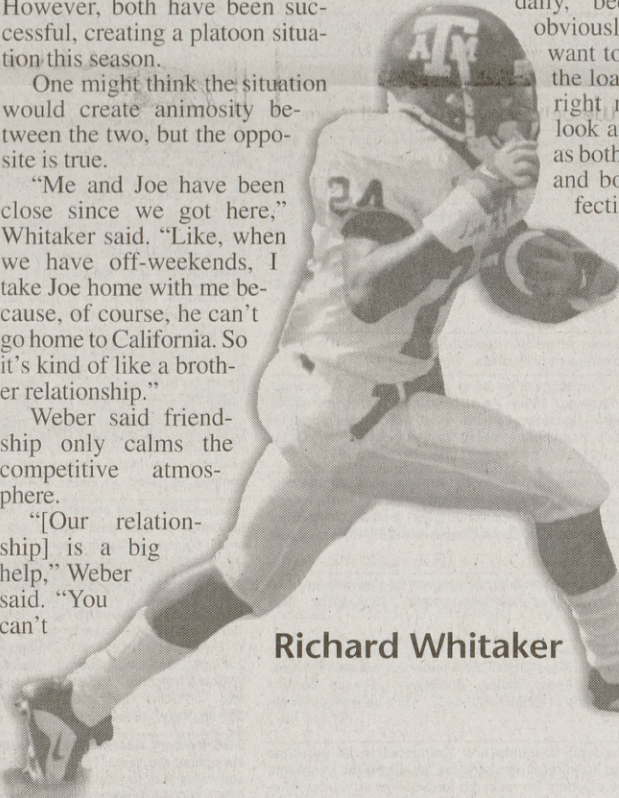
"They're real close; our whole running back group is close," Hoener said.

"Richard and Joe know they are competing with each other

daily, because obviously they want to carry the load. But right now, I look at them as both equal and both effective,



Joe Weber



Richard Whitaker

and that's how we're using them."

While one could emerge through time as the more dominant player, receiving more playing time, the tandem is, for the time being, taking everything in stride.

"I think it helps a lot," Farris said. "They're both great backs, and they both bring a little something different to the table. Richard's more of a speed guy who can break it any minute, and Joe can too, but he's more of a guy who's gonna run you over."

"I think it's a great combination. It's so much better than having just one guy because it's

a position where you can get tired through the course of a game."

A group influential in Weber and Whitaker's success — the offensive line — is very happy with how the two are approaching the season. Senior left guard Chris Valletta said he and his comrades in the trenches consider it an honor to create holes for their starting platoon.

"It's wonderful," Valletta said. "We've never had this much speed at tailback since I've been here. To have guys like that — it's a great privilege."

to block for guys like that."

Valletta added that the relationship between the two positions adds to the performance.

"The offensive line and the running backs, we're very tight," Valletta said. "They are always patting us on the back and saying, 'great job, O-line.' They know we don't get the recognition they do, but they make sure that they give us all they can."

Two football players who come from such different backgrounds and run the ball in such different fashions have joined to form one of the most potent and cohesive running back units in A&M history.

Sydney 2000

Highlights:

No repeat: Norway beat the U.S. women's soccer team in overtime. It was the Americans' first loss in a tournament final this year.

Double trouble: U.S. tennis players Venus and Serena Williams topped the Dutch doubles tennis team to give the U.S. another tennis gold medal.

Schedule:

TV Schedule: Friday, September 29, 2000

NBC:

• 10 a.m. to Noon — Track, Diving, Rhythmic Gymnastics
• 7 p.m. to Midnight — Basketball, Track, Wrestling, Water Sports

• 12:41 to 2:11 a.m. — Basketball

MSNBC:

• 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. — Basketball, Soccer, Water Polo, Canoe/Kayak, Wrestling

Medal Watch:

	Gold	Silver	Bronze	Total
USA	32	18	26	76
CHN	26	15	15	56
RUS	19	18	21	58
AUS	15	22	14	51
FRA	12	13	8	33

Eye on A&M

Stacy Sykora: The U.S. Volleyball team lost in five sets to Russia in the women's volleyball semifinal. The U.S. team's libero Stacey Sykora, a former Texas A&M All-American, had 12 digs.

The U.S. will now play Brazil for the Bronze medal.

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