

SPORTS

THE BATTALION

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Football team still remembers Tech melee



TUESDAY TALKING
Points
Troy Miller

Holy flying goalposts! The Texas A&M football team is hosting the Texas Tech Red Raiders this Saturday at 1 p.m. at Kyle Field. With all the media guide fiascos and post game melees, Aggie fans might want to take cover when they see black and red around College Station this week.

Last year, Raider fans charged the field after a 12-0 upset of the Aggies in Lubbock, tore down a goalpost, marched it across the field and hurled it into a section of Aggie fans.

"I didn't appreciate (the goalpost)," said freshman safety Jaxson Appel. "I'm just glad that we don't have fans that do things like that."

In 2000, Raider fans visiting College Station spray-painted the double T on A&M campus build-

ings the night before the game. "First thing to come to my mind is their fans," said senior safety Terrance Kiel. "My first year we went up there they were throwing tortillas and spitting on us."

"They have some rude fans. Luckily we got them here this year. Our fans will let them have it when their offense is on the field."

Speaking of offense, Texas Tech has one of the best in the country. Head coach Mike Leach has turned the Red Raiders into an aerial circus by running a spread offense since he was hired in 2000.

Senior quarterback Kliff Kingsbury leads the Tech offense by gaining 326.2 yards per game and completing 30.2 passes per game.

The way the Aggie defense handles the aerial attack will be the key to this game and the Aggie schedule plays perfectly into their hands.

"No doubt it's to our advantage," said head coach R.C. Slocum about playing Louisiana Tech

before Texas Tech. "It's helpful to have a game in between (Virginia Tech and Texas Tech) that has a similar philosophy."

They are more similar than one might think when just looking at the two teams. Louisiana Tech quarterback Luke McCown is ranked No. 10 in total offense and fifth in completions per game. Kingsbury is fifth and first, respectively.

Before playing A&M, Louisiana Tech averaged 436.75 yards per game, 324.5 of those yards through the air. Texas Tech is No. 12 in the nation in total offense, averaging 456.60 yards per game, 349.2 yards passing.

Kingsbury's added intangibles is his toughness. The last time Tech traveled to College Station, Kingsbury was leveled repeatedly but continued to get up and play. After being sacked seven times, Kingsbury still completed 28 of 50 passes for 291 yards in a 33-15 Aggie win.

"I don't know if he has any weaknesses," Kiel said. "He takes a

lot of hits. I know he had a concussion or two (in 2000) and he came right back in the game."

The Aggie secondary was touted as one of the best in the nation before the season started.

Senior Sammy Davis will play despite injuring his calf in the Louisiana Tech game. Junior Sean Weston and sophomore Byron Jones will have to play tight on the line of scrimmage because Tech likes to throw plenty of short passes.

Fans know the Aggie defense can stuff the run, but now the question is if it can stop the pass. If it can, then this defense is truly something special, and one that can carry the load to a Big 12 Championship.

"It's a rivalry on the field," said senior linebacker Brian Gamble. "When we get on the field we play for blood."

"The tenacity in the rivalry is definitely elevated."

Hopefully this time the rivalry will stay on the field and away from the stands.



FILE PHOTO • THE BATTALION
Texas Tech fans raided the field and tore down a goalpost after the Red Raiders upset Texas A&M 12-0 in Lubbock last season.

Rockets starting camp, hope to leave injuries behind

HOUSTON (AP) — Yao Ming impressed his Houston Rockets teammates-to-be Monday, even if he was only in two dimensions.

A life-sized poster of the 7-foot-6 Chinese basketball star was on the wall in a practice gym as the team posed for pictures, chatted with reporters and prepared to begin training camp in Austin today.

Everyone was there except Yao, who isn't expected in camp until later in October after fulfilling his Chinese commitment to the Asian Games. The poster was impressive enough for some.

"Look at his legs. They're like tree trunks," coach Rudy Tomjanovich marveled, dismissing concerns the 296-

pound Yao might get pushed around by physical NBA centers looking to school the No. 1 overall draft pick.

While much of the talk centers on Yao, Tomjanovich says he's just glad to see several of his returning players back on their feet again. Houston, wracked by injuries up and down its roster last season, went 28-54.

Forward Maurice Taylor was lost to a right Achilles tendon injury before the season started, then Glen Rice was out after just 20 games with a partial tendon tear in his right knee.

On top of that, star point guard Steve Francis missed 25 games with left foot injury, a strained right shoulder and debilitating migraine headaches. Francis has

healed from his injuries and is successfully treating the headaches, and says he's ready to start earning his new six-year contract that could pay \$90 million.

"I just think it's time, it's time for us to be in the playoffs," said Francis, the No. 2 overall pick in the 1999 draft who never has tasted the postseason in three years as the Rockets rebuild.

Team owner Les Alexander is a little more bullish, often calling it "one of the great teams ever assembled" in the last few weeks. He reiterated his belief Monday.

"The intention (of hailing the team) was to send a message to the people of Houston and the nation," said Alexander, who lamented that the

impending arrival of Yao and the last season at Compaq Center haven't sparked season ticket sales.

"Players don't sell tickets, winning does," Alexander said.

However, the team hopes if Yao's addition doesn't sell more tickets it will at least help sell some Chinese beer.

On Monday, the Rockets announced the team's official import beer will be China's popular Yanjing Beer.

Yao isn't the team's only newcomer. The Rockets also are excited about Slovenian forward Bostjan Nachbar, another first-round pick, and also will give rookie guard Tito Maddox a shot to earn a job.

Tomjanovich noted that all three are

still college age — Yao and Nachbar would be seniors and Maddox would be a junior.

Mostly, the coach says he's anticipating being able to use the same lineups day in, day out, as long as the injury bug doesn't bite again.

"What I'm really excited about is that thing called continuity," he said.

The Rockets, back-to-back world champions in 1994 and 1995, haven't been to the playoffs since a first-round loss to the Lakers in 1999. Taylor says the owner's words are meaningless in October.

"I know Les is excited about the talent we have," Taylor said. "But we have to prove it."

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