

SPORTS

THE BATTALION

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Aggies prepare for challenging second half

TUESDAY TALKING Points — Dallas Shipp



With six games down and six to go, the Texas A&M football team still has life and a chance of making the Big 12 Championship game in Houston in December, however small that chance might be.

After a slow start offensively, the Aggies have looked much better in their last three games, averaging 39.6 points per game since Kevin Sumlin took over the play-calling duties from Dino Babers.

Sophomore Dustin Long has secured his role as starting quarterback, reaching the 1000-yard mark in six games, the fastest in A&M history. "Dustin has done a fantastic job," said junior wide receiver Jamaar Taylor. "He has become a field general out there."

On the defensive side of the ball, with the exception of its horrendous performance against Texas Tech, the Wrecking Crew has looked like its usual dominating squad.

The Aggies' defense holds the No. 3 rushing defense in the nation and No. 12 overall defense, even with the statistical nightmare against Tech.

The Wrecking Crew leads the Big 12 and is ranked No. 3 in the nation in interceptions with 14. Sophomore Byron Jones has led the way with four, while redshirt freshman Jaxson Appel has contributed three.

"We're making progress as a team," said A&M

head coach R.C. Slocum. "We're moving in the direction I wanted us to be."

Both sides of the ball have shown that they can perform, it's just a matter of putting it together against top-ranked teams such as OU and Texas.

With six crucial games remaining, the Aggies find themselves in a position that would seem favorable to most teams—win out and go to the Big 12 Championship game.

If only it were that simple. This week's game looks like a no-brainer on paper. The Aggies are coming off a 41-0 shutout against Baylor. Kansas' offense is dead last in the Big 12 and No. 93 nationally, which should be a cakewalk for the Wrecking Crew.

Meanwhile the Aggie offense, which has climbed from No. 106 in the nation to No. 69, should put up numbers that will make the Baylor romp look like a close matchup. The KU defense is ranked last in the Big 12 and No. 107 nationally.

The Aggies will then return home to take on a Nebraska team that is not the team it has been in the past. Only three schools in the nation are worse at passing the ball than Nebraska, which is ranked No. 114 in passing offense, which does not bode well for its chances against the Wrecking Crew.

The Cornhuskers are ranked No. 4 in the nation in rushing, but the Wrecking Crew showed what it can do to teams that run the ball by shutting down Virginia Tech.

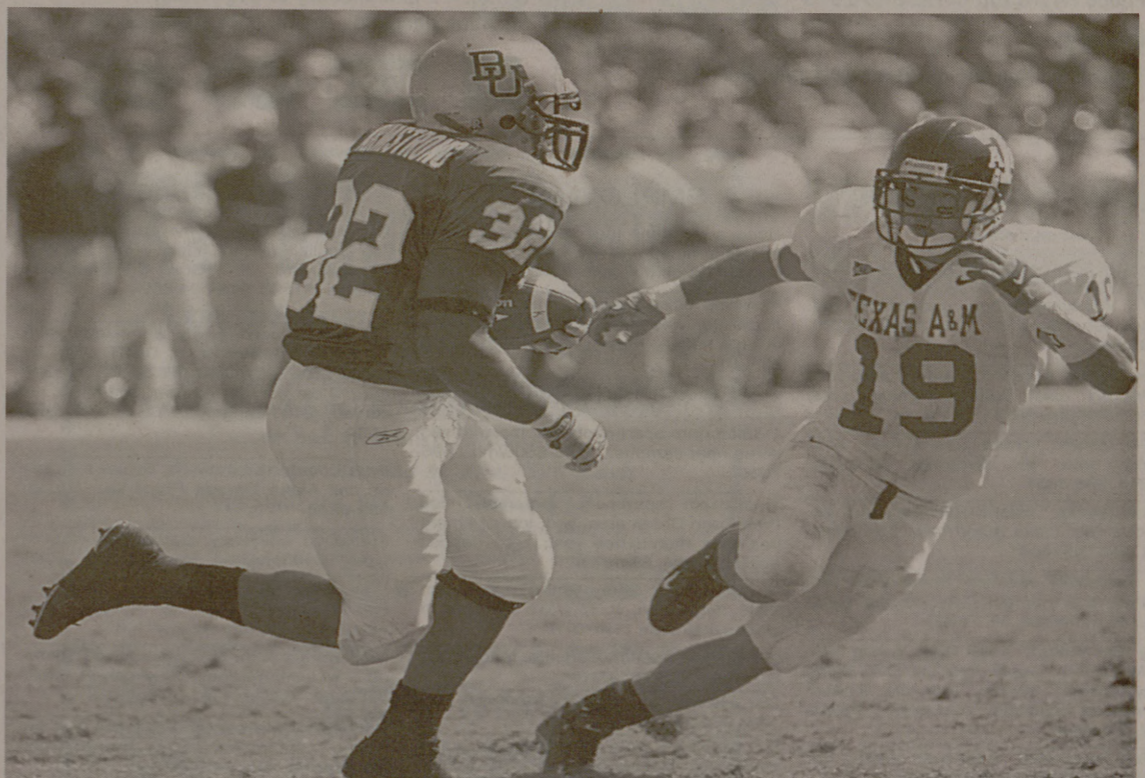
Nebraska's infamous "Black Shirt Defense" is non-existent this year, allowing 341.3 yards per game, good enough for sixth in the Big 12 and No. 42 nationally. No reason the Aggies shouldn't win this night game at Kyle Field.

The Aggies will then take to the road to challenge Oklahoma State. This game may be the scariest game of the year on the Aggies remaining schedule. Situated between two big home games against Nebraska and Oklahoma, it has danger written all over it. The Aggies say that they take it one week at a time.

The Cowboys came within a two-point conversion of knocking off Texas in Austin and were inches away from beating the Aggies on their last trip to Stillwater.

Without a doubt the biggest home game left for the Aggies will be the matchup with No. 2 Oklahoma. All 87,000 in attendance remember OU's last trip to College Station when the Sooners escaped with a 34-31 come-from-behind win over the Aggies.

This year's edition of Sooner football is equally impressive. The Sooners have the No. 11 defense in the nation and have put together an offense that does just enough week after week to take advan-



A&M redshirt freshman defensive back Jaxson Appel pursues Baylor junior tailback Rashad Armstrong on Saturday. Appel leads the Wrecking Crew in total tackles and is second on the team in interceptions with three.

tage of strong defensive performances. With their win over the Longhorns last weekend, the Sooners are now the front runner to win the Big 12 South.

To have any shot at being in Houston on Dec. 7, the Aggies must win this game.

This year's game is the Maroon Out game for A&M. The Aggies are a perfect 4-0 in Maroon Out games.

The Aggies will then close out their home schedule against Missouri which should be another easy home win for A&M. The Tigers are secured in their usual spot in the middle of the Big 12.

The Thanksgiving battle with Texas could decide the winner of the Big 12. The Aggies should at least have their name in the hat, and despite what many critics think, may have a better chance than Texas.

After falling to OU for the third straight year, the fans in Austin are getting restless with head coach Mack Brown. Their remaining schedule may

be the toughest between them, A&M and OU.

The Longhorns travel to Kansas State this week to play a hot Wildcat team, followed by a home game against Seneca Wallace and No. 9 Iowa State. The following week Texas travels to Nebraska, which hasn't lost at home in 26 games.

Texas cannot afford to lose another game this season and will have to hope for someone to beat OU.

Despite the shortcomings early in the season, the Aggies still have a chance, but they will have to play lights out against some of the top defenses in the country.

A&M has lost its last three meetings with OU and has dropped its last three of four games against UT.

For the Aggies to end up at Reliant Stadium in Houston this year, and not for the www.whateversponsorhoustoncanfind.com bowl, they will have to find a way to beat the Sooners and Longhorns.

Remaining 2002 FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

Oct 19	@ Kansas
Oct 26	Nebraska
Nov 2	@ Oklahoma State
Nov 9	Oklahoma
Nov 16	Missouri
Nov 29	@ Texas

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- Fencing's Heavy Metal Tournament, Oct. 18-19 on Rec Center Courts all day long.
- Men's Volleyball Classic, Oct. 19 on Rec Center and Read Courts all day long.
- Men's lacrosse Alumni games Oct. 19 at Penberthy from 9am-2pm.
- Women's lacrosse Alumni games Oct. 19 at Penberthy from 2-4pm.
- Sailing will be on Lake Bryan Oct. 19 all day.

FITNESS & CLASSES-PICK YOUR SPOT

- MASSAGE THERAPY AT THE REC CENTER—Spend an hour in total relaxation with a Rec Center Massage Therapist. Massages are performed by licensed therapists at unbeatable prices, \$35 for Rec Members and \$45 for non-Members. Gift certificates are available. Sign up at Member Services to make your appointment today.
- Healthy Living Lecture: MEN'S HEALTH ISSUES—Wednesday, Oct. 9 at 5:30 p.m. in room 281 of the Rec Center. Learn the facts on nutrition for men, including supplements, men's diseases like testicular and prostate cancer, plus contraception and men's sexual health. This lecture is a must for both sexes. Don't miss it.

IM EXCITEMENT ON CAMPUS

Intramural participants please remember that registration ends at 6:00 p.m. Please visit the Member Services Desk to sign up for your favorite Intramural sport.

Registration CLOSES TUESDAY for the following IM sports:

- Table Tennis FREE
- Track Meet FREE
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Program	Registration	Event Date
Lead Climbing Clinic	Sept. 2-Oct. 21	Oct. 22
Backpacking Trip	Sept. 2-Oct. 22	Oct. 26-27
Rock Climbing 101	Sept. 2-Oct. 23	Oct. 27
Rock Climbing Day Trip	Sept. 2-Oct. 29	Nov. 2
Horseback/Hiking Day Trip	Sept. 2-Nov. 5	Nov. 9
Rock Climbing 201	Sept. 2-Nov. 6	Nov. 10
Backpacking Trip	Sept. 2-Nov. 12	Nov. 16-17

Bouldering Competition Nov. 4-Dec. 7 Dec. 7
One-day bouldering competition for local fanatics. Don't miss out on the fun!

- Rec Center Rock Wall—Now is the time to renew your Rock Wall pass. Classes are held at 3:00 p.m. and at 7:00 p.m. Monday-Thursday and at 3:00 p.m. on Friday for only \$5.

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STUDENT REC CENTER ETC.

- Rec Sports Medics—Medics needed to work the Department's facilities. Apply in room 158 or call 862-4145 for information.
- WALK OF CHAMPIONS—Agiess get your discounted Walk of Champions brick for \$100 before you leave Aggieldand.

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