

SPORTS

THE BATTALION

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Aggies look to McNeal and Riley for future Childhood competitors hope to win together

By Dallas Shipp
THE BATTALION

Last Saturday, Aggie fans across the state got to see what many hope is the future of A&M football. Freshman receiver L'Tydrick Riley took off his red shirt and joined freshman quarterback Reggie McNeal in the fourth quarter against Baylor. Riley caught his first collegiate touchdown from McNeal and said that he is looking forward to catching a lot more in the future.

That future has created a stir among fans in College Station.

What most of them do not know is that McNeal and Riley have been competing against each other in just about every sport since they were 7 years old.

"When they were young boys they used to play basketball against each other," said McNeal's father, Ricky McNeal. "Everyone wanted to see Reggie and L'Tydrick play against each other. They always wound up playing each other in the championship games."

When the time came to pick colleges, Riley committed to A&M and convinced Reggie to come along for the ride.

"I committed to A&M first," Riley said. "Then we played in a 7-on-7 tournament in Lufkin and he was getting ready to come to (A&M football) camp. I was trying to get him to come (to A&M) but he never was decided. I told him it's a good school and it's the place to be."

"(McNeal) came to camp the next week and he told me he was going to commit (to A&M)," he said.

"When they were going through the recruiting process, they stayed in contact with each other," Ricky McNeal said. "Then when L'Tydrick committed to A&M, Reggie said 'You know, I want to play with L'Tydrick' and the week after camp we drove to College Station to commit."

"We always wanted to play with each other because he was a good athlete and I was a good athlete," Reggie McNeal said. "We decided we would come (to A&M) and try to get something going together."

Not only did the two end up at A&M together, but when they arrived for freshman practice, they decided to be roommates, which made Riley's debut in Waco last weekend even more spectacular.

"We always joked around about it in our room," Riley said. "But I never thought it would happen so soon. We had been joking on the sidelines, hoping that we would blow them out so that we would get our chance (to get in the game). It was unreal."

McNeal, who had already lost his redshirt status in the opening game of the season said that he had told Riley to be ready.

"I told him that if he got in the game I would give him a chance to get (a touchdown)," McNeal said. "I knew he was going to jump up over the defender and catch it so I just threw it up and let him make the play. It was special."

Reggie's father said that it was a special moment for him in the stands.

Riley's mother, Synthia Riley, said it was incredible for him to catch his first collegiate touchdown from McNeal.

"I can't even explain how much it meant to him," Synthia Riley said. "I knew he was gonna catch it, because that's the way he is. If he gets a chance to do something, he does it. There was no doubt in my mind that he would catch the ball."

Both McNeal's father and Riley's



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Freshman wide receiver L'Tydrick Riley celebrates after his first collegiate touchdown.

mother said that McNeal and Riley have always been friendly competitors with each other. Now that competitiveness is on the same team and that is something that has many Aggie fans excited.

"After signing day Reggie said, 'You know daddy, with all the people A&M is bringing in like L'Tydrick (Riley) and Quenlin (Germany), we're going to win a national championship at A&M.'"

A&M volleyball team looks to rebound at home vs. Tech

Staff & Wire

Texas A&M (11-5, 3-4 Big 12) will attempt to even its Big 12 record and snap a two-match losing skid when the Aggies return home Wednesday to play host to Texas Tech tonight.

A&M has fallen into a tie with Colorado for sixth place in the Big 12 standings after dropping a five-game decision at Texas last Wednesday.

Texas Tech also has lost its last two outings, getting swept by both Baylor and Texas last week. The Red Raiders are one win behind A&M and tied with Baylor for eighth place in the Big 12 race.

The Aggies, who were idle over the weekend,

are riding a two-match losing slide for the second time this season after dropping a four-game match to No. 5 Nebraska on Oct. 6 before falling to Texas.

With the loss to the Longhorns, A&M saw its streak of 111 consecutive appearances in the Top 25 come to an end as the Aggies fell from No. 25 to No. 34 in the poll released on Monday. This is the first time A&M has not been ranked since 1995.

The Aggies are paced by Melissa Munsch, who leads the team in kills (3.66), aces (0.56), digs (3.25) and points (4.46) per game. The sophomore outside hitter has reached double figures in kills — including a career-high 25 kills at Colorado —

in 13 of 16 matches and also leads the team with nine double-double performances.

Junior middle blocker Tara Pulaski, who tied her career high with 20 kills while hitting at a .484 clip against Texas last week, took over the team lead with a .315 hitting percentage for the full season.

Pulaski leads the squad with 1.03 blocks per game and has reached double figures in blocks twice this season. Her 11 blocks at Missouri still ranks as the most by a Big 12 player in league competition this season.

Texas Tech (7-9, 2-5 Big 12), which upset No. 21 Missouri two weeks ago, is trying to snap a

two-match losing skid after getting swept by both Baylor and Texas last week.

With the back-to-back losses, the Red Raiders are now tied with the Bears for eighth place in the Big 12 standings.

Texas A&M is 17-7 in matches played at G. Rollie White Coliseum against Texas Tech. The Aggies hold a 9-3 mark against the Red Raiders since Big 12 play began in 1996. A&M has won the last two meetings. Tech's most recent victory over the Aggies was a five-game thriller in Lubbock on Nov. 18, 2000.

First serve is set for 7 p.m. at G. Rollie White Coliseum.

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