

SPORTS

THE BATTALION

Page 5 • Friday, November 15, 2002

The season that could have been ...



ALISSA HOLLIMON • THE BATTALION

Freshman quarterback **Reggie McNeal** escapes the Oklahoma defense on Saturday in the Aggies' 30-26 victory. **McNeal** will start at QB against Missouri.

TALKING Points

Dallas Shipp



Coming into the 2002 season, the Aggie football team was ranked No. 23 in the nation and had aspirations of winning the Big 12 South title and the Big 12 Conference Championship.

Instead, the Aggies are heading into their final home game of the season with a 6-4 record.

However, three of those losses could have easily gone the other way had three plays turned out for the Aggies instead of their counterparts.

The Aggies took a 24-point lead into the fourth quarter against Texas Tech. After the Raiders rallied with 21 points, the Aggies missed an extra point in the closing minutes of the game that would have given the Aggies a four-point lead.

Instead, the Red Raiders tied the game with a last second field goal, sending the game into overtime following their 24-point fourth quarter comeback. The Aggies would miss another extra point in overtime, giving the Raiders a 48-47 victory at Kyle Field.

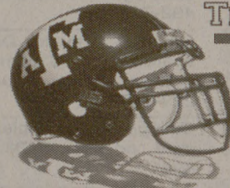
While there is no guarantee the Aggies would have won the game, it would have

forced the Raiders to score a touchdown instead of a field goal to win the game.

Fast forward to the Aggies home game against Nebraska. After losing another fourth quarter lead to the Huskers, the Aggies had another chance in the closing minutes to win the game.

With just more than a minute left in the game, the Aggies drove down to the Nebraska 10-yard line. But, on first down, sophomore quarterback Dustin Long threw an interception in the back of the end zone on a pass that was intended to be thrown away.

If the Aggies scored on that drive, it is likely they would have held on and won the game.



TEXAS A&M vs. MISSOURI
1 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 16

The next week, A&M traveled to Stillwater, Okla. This time it was not a second half collapse by the Wrecking Crew. The Aggies couldn't get anything going in the first half on offense or defense, allowing the Cowboys to score 28 points and take a 28-14 lead into halftime.

In the second half, the Aggies rallied to

within five points with just under two minutes remaining in the game. After converting on fourth down, Long threw a deep pass into the end zone to senior wide receiver Bethel Johnson that would have given the Aggies the lead. Instead the Oklahoma State secondary made an outstanding defensive play, forcing the ball out of Johnson's arms for the interception.

Had the Aggies converted those three plays, they would be sitting in the national spotlight with a 9-1 record and looking for a BCS bowl game.

The "What ifs?" received a boost this past weekend when the Aggies were led by freshman quarterback Reggie McNeal against the No. 1 Oklahoma Sooners.

However, the Aggies will have to forget about that this weekend when the Missouri Tigers come into Kyle Field.

The Tigers have had similar close calls with Nebraska and Iowa State and need two more wins to become bowl eligible themselves.

The big news in College Station this week was that McNeal will get his first career start against Missouri which should make for some added excitement for the final home game of 2002 at Kyle Field.

"I think based on (McNeal's) performance Saturday, he deserves a chance to start," said head coach R.C. Slocum. "I intend to keep playing Dustin (Long) some and just reverse the roles."

Volleyball team attempting to earn sixth straight win

By True Brown
THE BATTALION

The wins keep piling up for the Texas A&M volleyball team.

With Wednesday's road victory against Kansas, A&M extended its unbeaten streak to five matches and equaled its longest winning streak of the season.

Prior to the streak, the Aggies had not won more than one match in a row

since their Oct. 2 match against Oklahoma.

"We've got a different feeling around us, around the team," said head coach Laurie Corbelli. "Every person's determination is so much more visible. We've got a team that's really together and has their goal in sight."

For now, A&M's goal is to beat No. 20 Kansas State, a team that handed the Aggies a 3-0 spanking in Manhattan,

Kan., last month. A&M and K-State will square off Sunday at 3 p.m. in G. Rollie White Coliseum.

The Wildcats have never won in College Station and A&M's team has done a total about-face since playing KSU on the road.

"They are a good, good team," Corbelli said. "They rarely make an unforced error. (The loss) may come back to be a benefit. We've had some

time to reflect on how out of it we were, and K-State knows we are a much better team than we were up there. We sure know we are."

The most important aspect of Sunday's match may be where it is.

The overall record between the two teams is 7-7, but neither school has ever won at the other's home gym. A&M owns a 6-0 record against KSU in G. Rollie, and also has a win at a

neutral site.

The home court advantage is not something A&M is taking lightly.

"They're in our house," said senior middle blocker A.D. Achilefu. "Whenever we're at home, we have the attitude that the other team is in our house and they aren't welcome here. It doesn't matter how many games it takes, as long as we win and hold our ground in our gym."

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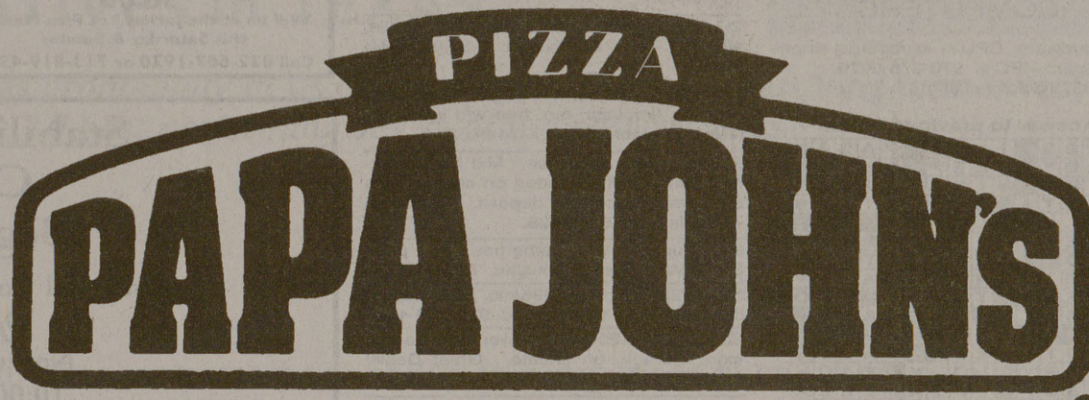
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