

SPORTS

THE BATTALION

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Fran brings August cold front to Texas

Thermometer shows drop in temperature while Fran toughens Aggies up



DALLAS SHIPP

How can the temperature be 105 on Wednesday and dip into the low 40s on Thursday in mid-August? Just ask Coach Fran.

Texas A&M head football coach Dennis Franchione can do just about anything right now. He can even lower the temperature 60 degrees in August.

Franchione was upset on the first day of practice because a thermometer at a local business near the Aggies' practice facility allowed players to see the blazing hot temperature of 105 — something he did not want on their minds.

The next day — following a phone call to the business — the thermometer suddenly showed a reading of 43 degrees...Celsius.

Franchione mentioned the incident in his weekly "Fridays with Fran" column on the A&M Athletic Department's Web site.

"We need to know who is tough enough to focus on the task instead of the heat," Franchione said. "We need to develop as many players as possible as fast as possible to have the depth to help with the heat."

Franchione is trying desperately to build a sense of mental toughness in a team that blew two home games late in the fourth quarter a season ago.

A&M led Texas Tech 35-17 heading into the fourth quarter, but then ran out of gas in the 48-47 loss. The Aggies were outscored 24-6 in the fourth quarter against the Red Raiders that day. At Kyle Field.

When Nebraska limped into town during one of its worst starts in school history, the Aggies again led after three quarters, 31-21. However, Nebraska put up 17 in the fourth to win the game, 38-31.

That's not going to happen anymore. Not if it's up to Franchione.

Franchione's practices are so intense, they are actually designed to make game day a "day off" from practice.

Franchione works the team harder and longer than former coach R. C. Slocum ever thought about doing. The players can't even unsnap their chin straps on their helmets between reps. That would waste time.

In addition to the mental toughness Franchione is trying to build, the strength-training program that was installed just more than nine months ago has produced dramatic results in the strength of the team.

That added muscle mass is what Franchione and his staff believes will reduce the amount of injuries that have plagued the Aggies in recent years.

These two factors alone could have been the edge they needed last year when the Aggies lost four games by a touchdown or less.

Although this season's schedule is among the toughest in the country, Franchione will produce.

The expectations may be higher than reality, but in time Franchione will rebuild the A&M football program, which will become a dominant force in the Big 12 year in and year out.

While everyone wants to win now, this season may be a warm up to what could be an inferno in 2004, regardless of which temperature scale is used.



A&M head football coach Dennis Franchione kicked off his first fall practice last week at the A&M practice fields near Kyle Field. Franchione's practices have been fast-paced in an effort to build the mental toughness of the Aggie football team.

RANDAL FORD • THE BATTALION

Parcells ends shocking week with tough exhibition loss

Shockey plans to keep mouth shut Parcells fired up for practice after 13-0 loss

By Tom Canavan
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

ALBANY, N.Y. — On matters other than football, Jeremy Shockey plans on keeping his mouth shut for the foreseeable future.

With his coach and a team spokesman monitoring his every word, the outspoken New York Giants tight end apologized on Saturday for making reported comments about Dallas Cowboys coach Bill Parcells, insisting his words were in jest.



SHOCKEY

"I apologize for everything I said that offended people," Shockey said. "I'm really, at the time, it was a laughing matter for me and I was just having fun with it."

Shockey is quoted as calling Parcells a "homo" in an upcoming story in New York magazine. He also criticized the former Giants' coach for retiring a couple of times, then returning to coaching.

"Let's see how much Parcells wins this year," Shockey said in the article. "I'll make him pay when we play them. The homo."

Giants spokesman Pat Hanlon said Friday that Shockey believes the writer mistook a lighthearted conversation he was having with a friend as being serious, and incorrectly attributed the word "homo" to Shockey rather than the friend.

Shockey said Saturday he takes responsibility for his part in the conversation.

A seemingly indifferent Shockey never mentioned Parcells directly in his latest apology for yet another poor choice of words. In September, he made inflammatory remarks about gays on the Howard Stern's radio show.

Shockey, who set team records for receptions by a rookie and a tight end in a Pro Bowl rookie season, reluctantly accepted responsibility for the current situation, saying it was his fault for letting the reporter "get the best of me."

He vowed to avoid any future controversy. "I am going to be as plain as possible," Shockey said. "You'll probably never hear me say an outrageous thing ever again. I'll probably never talk to you again."

New York magazine spokeswoman Serena Torrey said Friday the magazine stands by the story and the reporting by writer Chris Smith.

Smith has worked for the magazine for 15 years. His interview with Shockey, conducted last month, was taped, Torrey said.

Fassel didn't think Shockey would shut down completely with the media, but he was confident the second-year player would tone things down. The coach also said he did not think the latest controversy would affect the way Shockey plays football.

The two had a 30-minute meeting on Saturday in which Fassel did most of the talking and Shockey agreed to limit what he says and does off the field.

By Bob Baum
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

TEMPE, Ariz. — Bill Parcells will have no shortage of ammunition when his Dallas Cowboys return to practice this week.

He found virtually nothing encouraging in Saturday night's 13-0 loss to the Arizona Cardinals.

Parcells wants to win, even in the preseason, where his career record is 40-17. His Dallas debut showed how far he has to go to restore the Cowboys to their accustomed glory.

"We didn't really do much of anything," he said. "We had way too many long yardage situations, we were getting penalized or sacked, we dropped balls, we couldn't get near their quarterback. Just pretty much everything was poor."

Parcells wouldn't use the heat as an excuse, even though it was 110 degrees at kickoff and still 107 at half-time. While his team was flat and ineffective, the Cardinals came out aggressive, especially on defense.

"This is going to be a nasty football team," coach Dave McGinnis promised. "It's going to be a nasty football team within the boundaries of the rules that we have. We've got speed on this defense and now we've got to get production out of it, and I liked what I saw today."

Arizona made a big deal out of Emmitt Smith's debut for the Cardinals against his old Dallas teammates, introducing him last amid great fanfare.

Smith played just 41 seconds before calling it a night. He had no gain on Arizona's first play, then

caught a pass from new Cardinals' quarterback Jeff Blake and dodged three tacklers en route to an 11-yard gain and a first down.

"It's kind of hard to have a big night when you only play three plays," Smith said, adding that it was the first time he'd played this early in the preseason.

Parcells, meanwhile, said he had been too patient with some players he declined to identify.

"We played a lot of people tonight for lengthy periods of time, some guys we really wanted to see," Parcells said. "I just think I have to get back to work and simplify things and quit kidding myself about a couple of these guys."

Neither Chad Hutchinson nor Quincy Carter did anything move ahead in the battle for starting quarterback. Parcells had hoped to name a starter after this Friday night's game at home against Houston, but indicated it could take longer after what he saw Saturday.

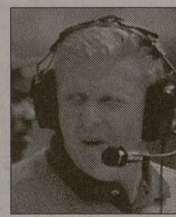
"I might need more than one (extra game)," he said. "I don't think it would be fair to decide. They didn't get much help."

Hutchinson started and completed 5-of-10 for 43 yards. He fumbled the ball away the only time he was sacked. Carter played most of the second and third quarters, completing 8-of-13 for 81 yards. He was intercepted once and sacked once. On Friday night, Carter will get the start.

"I'm just continuing to do the best I can and grow as a quarterback," Hutchinson said.

Dallas managed just 199 yards, 49 on the ground. Troy Hambrick had minus-1 yard in four carries.

"We should have performed better. There's no excuse for that, but it's a work in progress," Hambrick said. "It's preseason. We've still got a lot of work to do."



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