

# SPORTS

THE BATTALION

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## No. 8 Hokies overcome A&M in second half

### Ags fall to VT, 35-19

By Dallas Shipp  
THE BATTALION

BLACKSBURG, Va. — The only thing scaring Virginia Tech heading into Thursday afternoon was Hurricane Isabel, but Texas A&M gave the Hokies another frightful thought as the fourth quarter began Thursday night. But by night's end, both scares proved to have a lot of bark but not much bite.

Isabel faded fast and the Hokies held on in the fourth quarter for a 35-19 win over the Aggies.

"I was proud of our guys," A&M Coach Dennis Franchione said. "We're not going to take any moral victories out of this but we need to keep abreast of the positives and there are a lot of them that we can rally around."

The Hokies (3-0) jumped out in front early with a 7-0 lead but the No. 20 Aggies dominated the first half in every category but the scoreboard. A&M (2-1) out-rushed the Hokies 112-71 and out-passed them 104-38, holding the ball for 19:59.

The Aggies pulled within two before the half on a 12-play, 98-yard drive. It was the longest drive since 1999 when the Aggies drove 99 yards on two

plays against Tulsa.

Heading into the locker room at halftime the Aggies looked primed and ready to make a run at the upset.

But the second half was a different story.

Virginia Tech coach Frank Beamer told reporters after the game he wasn't concerned about his team coming out on top.

"I told them we're a team that gets better as the game goes along and tonight was going to be a test for us," he said.

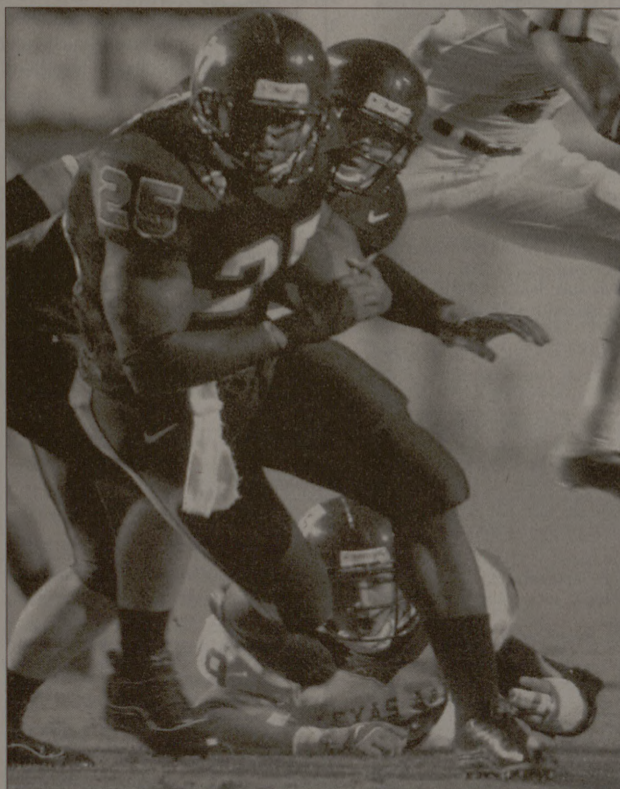
The Aggies had -10 yards rushing after halftime and threw for just 66 yards, thanks in large part to a blitzing scheme the Hokies used in the second half.

"They threw more blitzes at us and were just trying to keep pressure on us," McNeal said. "They had a good scheme."

Even with the blitzes and the mistakes by the Aggies, they had a breath of life as the fourth quarter began.

On the second play of the quarter, the Aggies scored on a 15-yard touchdown pass from McNeal to senior wide out Tim Van Zant, to get within 2, 21-19.

But it wasn't enough as the Hokies scored touchdowns on each of their next two possessions. Junior running back Kevin Jones finished with three touchdowns.



Virginia Tech's Kevin Jones darts through a line of A&M defenders.

McNeal finished the game with 133 yards and a touchdown through the air and led the team with 47 yards on the ground. But it wasn't his numbers that garnered praise from Franchione.

"I thought Reggie McNeal grew out there tonight in a lot

of ways," Franchione said. "We all think of Reggie as somewhat more experience than he probably is. If you went back and looked at Randall last year and watch him play this year I think that's exactly where we want (Reggie) to be."

### Jones' 188 rushing yards solidify VA Tech victory

By True Brown  
THE BATTALION

BLACKSBURG, Va. — Hurricane Isabel was no problem for the Texas A&M football team. Virginia Tech running back Kevin Jones was.

Jones, led by an unflinching offensive line, powered his way to a career-high 188 yards and three touchdowns Thursday night to help the No. 8 Hokies to a 35-19 win over the No. 20 Aggies.

A&M's undermanned defense allowed Jones to tally 6.3 yards per carry, including 130 yards in the second half.

"They lit a fire under his butt at halftime," A&M defensive back Jaxon Appel said.

"(A&M's defense) was really getting tired," Jones said. "We were hammering them. Our offensive line was all over them."

Jones, who took a back seat last season to running back Lee Suggs, gave Virginia Tech coach Frank Beamer exactly what he wanted.

"A real plus for us is that the offense wasn't a one-dimensional thing," Beamer said. "When you get Kevin hot, you need to keep running him. He can make a lot of people miss."

A&M closed Virginia Tech's lead

to two points twice, and both times the Hokies' offense responded with touchdown drives.

Leading 14-12 to start the third quarter, the Hokie offense needed just six plays to produce a 76-yard touchdown drive. Jones rushed four times on the drive for 43 yards, the last two of which came on a touchdown run.

"(That drive) was important," Randall said. "We talked about that when we went into the locker room that we needed to score. When we came out, we ran the ball successfully. So we decided to keep running the ball and maybe throw a pass in here or there. We moved the ball well."

After the Aggies closed Virginia Tech's lead to 21-19 early in the fourth quarter, Jones continued to provide a spark for the Hokies.

Jones led the Hokies to a team total of 273 rushing yards, while A&M had just 102 (including -10 in the second half). Jones did not have a negative carry all night.

"Jones is a good tailback," said A&M coach Dennis Franchione. "Their offensive line did a good job. We got out of position and got sideways and missed a tackle or two, and lost a little leverage."

## Soccer team heads into tourney emphasizing defense

By Troy Miller  
THE BATTALION

Texas A&M's soccer team has a goal it wants to keep for the entire season: don't let anyone score more than once per game. To keep that goal would guarantee a favorable result in every game it plays and a solid season.

So far this year the No. 4 Aggies (4-1) have been up to the challenge, losing just once to No. 1 North Carolina, 1-0 in overtime.

"I think when you lose a game to a team that you weren't favored to beat, it's not as difficult a situation," said A&M coach G. Guerrieri. "If you lose to a team you're supposed to beat I think the reaction will be completely different."

Usually a loss to the women's soccer version of the New York Yankees is acceptable, especially after taking them into overtime, but not for the Aggies. The team is trying to develop a powerhouse of its own.

"I think we just try to stress the posi-

tives," said senior midfielder Kristen Strutz. "We did take (North Carolina) into overtime, but we can't be satisfied with that. I just think we keep trying to reinforce the good things that came out of that game."

So far, the Aggies have posted blank slates in two of their games, while allowing only one goal in the other three. In their 2-1 overtime win over South Carolina, the Guerrieri's Aggies were able to come back after being down a goal. Allowing no more than one goal a game will keep the Aggies in striking distance in every match.

"It's one thing to say that we want to be more competitive," Guerrieri said. "Well, that can't be measured. The players are very good about identifying ways to achieve those goals."

The schedule doesn't get any easier as A&M (4-1) travels to Dallas to take part in the Mi Cocina College Soccer Cup on Southern Methodist University's campus and face Oregon and Colorado College.

Oregon (5-0) is off to the best start

in school history after allowing just four goals in its first five games. The Ducks are also in the PAC-10 conference, which is one of the toughest conferences in all of soccer.

Colorado College (3-1-1) is also off to a great start, giving up just five goals this season.

"(Oregon) has won all their games and they're pretty organized," Guerrieri said. "Getting a chance to play them before our conference is something that we're really looking forward to."

With this being the last weekend before the Aggies head into Big 12 conference play, two wins would regain the momentum A&M had before losing to the Tar Heels.

"It was a loss (to North Carolina), but we're going to learn a lot from it," said junior forward Emma Smith. "We know that when it comes down to it we have the heart."

The Aggies will first take on Oregon Friday night at 5 p.m. before meeting Colorado College at 2:30 p.m. on Sunday at SMU's Westcott Field in Dallas.



Junior Emily DeWoody and the A&M defense have allowed only one goal in the Aggies' first five games this season. The Aggies will face the University of Oregon this Friday.

## Aggies get up and running

By Kyle Davoust  
THE BATTALION

It's Monday morning at 6 a.m. The sun is just creeping over the horizon. Most college students still have a few hours before they hit the snooze button for the first time.

But this is not the case for Jonathan Lewis, Jamie Geissler and the rest of Texas A&M's men and women's cross country teams. They have decided to beat the Texas heat by dedicating their mornings — even Saturdays and Sundays — to training for the upcoming season.

In a given week, members of the cross country team run anywhere from 60 to 100 miles each.

"The training is real intense," said Geissler, a freshman who recently finished first in the women's three-mile race at the Aggie Alumni Challenge. "I'm used to running this much, but the intensity is so much greater than it was in high school."

This intense training will start paying off Saturday when the Aggies host the 2003 Texas A&M Invitational.

"We should win the meet on Saturday," said senior Jonathan Lewis. "Last year we ran our B squad. Our A squad is competing this year, so we should definitely win."

The men's team, which received an at-large bid to the NCAA Championships last season, returns six of its seven members. Coach Dave Hartman is optimistic about his team's chances.

"We have three potential All-Americans in Jonathan Lewis, Andrew Cook and Tommy Bonn, who should help us achieve our goal of a

top 15 finish," Hartman said.

Hartman said this year could see the strongest men's cross country team A&M has ever fielded. With talented runners such as Lewis and Cook, Hartman has good reason to feel this way. They were the Aggies' top two runners in every race last fall, and shared Big 12 Male Runner of the Week honors after impressive performances at The University of Washington's Sundodger Invitational.

"Our depth and experience should help us compete against some of the stronger Big XII teams such as Colorado and Texas," Lewis said. "We might not have the front runners that a team like Colorado has, but we are very strong throughout."

While the men's team boasts an experienced squad, the women's team will count on its freshmen, particularly early in the season.

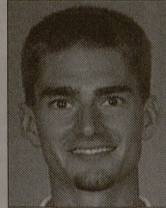
Geissler shrugs off what some might conceive as early pressure.

"I really don't think about it," Geissler said. "I'm just an inexperienced freshman, so I'll just go out and I'll run my race."

Fellow freshman Katie Hummel added, "I seem to always race better under pressure, so it really doesn't bother me."

Despite the health concerns, Hartman still feels good about his women's team.

"We might take some punches early in the year," he said. "But I feel that if we can just work on getting healthy, then we'll have a real chance to finish strong."



LEWIS

## Braves clinch 12th straight title

By Paul Newberry  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

ATLANTA — Once again, the Atlanta Braves didn't get a chance to celebrate together.

The Braves clinched their 12th straight division championship Thursday, winning the NL East when the Philadelphia Phillies rallied for a 5-4 victory over the Florida Marlins.

The players had hoped for a chance to win the division on the field after beating Montreal, 14-4, on Wednesday. But the Braves had an off day, and second-place Florida was mathematically eliminated from the division race with its loss to the Phillies.

"It's always great to be able to celebrate together," 19-game winner Russ Ortiz said in a telephone interview from his home. "I wouldn't say it's disappointing, but this isn't how you would want to do it if you had a choice."

Ortiz learned of the division championship by checking the Internet. Last year, the Braves won the East in similar fashion, clinching on an off day after missing a chance to win it on the field.

The Marlins hold a half-game lead over Philadelphia in the wild-card race. Florida opens a four-game series in Atlanta on Friday.

"I know the guys, because it happened this way last year, wanted to get an opportunity to celebrate," said Ortiz, who's in his first season with the Braves. "It's important to share that part of the game with each other."

But that's a minor complaint after the Braves extended their record for consecutive first-place finishes. The streak that began in 1991 when Atlanta won the NL West and capped a worst-to-first season by reaching the World Series for the first time since 1958.

No other team in professional sports has won more than nine straight division titles.

Ortiz said manager Bobby Cox "deserves a ton of credit. He's the big reason why guys love to play here and why his teams keep winning."

The Braves moved to the NL East in 1994 and trailed the Montreal Expos by six games when the strike stopped the season in August.

In 1995, Atlanta won the division by 21 games over the New York Mets, then beat the Cleveland Indians in the World Series.

That's the only Series title during the run. The Braves lost to the wild-card to the San Francisco Giants in the first round of the playoffs last season.

This year, the Braves seemed primed to falter after losing a pair of 18-game winners: Tom Glavine signed with the Mets and Kevin Millwood was traded to Philadelphia in a cost-cutting move.

When Montreal swept a three-game series at Turner Field to open the season, some fans grumbled. But the Braves quickly recovered — they have been above .500 since April 20 and have been all alone atop the division standings since May 2.

While the pitching slumped without Glavine and Millwood, the offense more than picked up the slack. The Braves have 226 homers — an Atlanta record — and four players with at least 100 RBIs.

"We understood after some games were under our belt that we may have to win differently this year," Ortiz said. "That was it. We just accepted it and won anyway."

The Braves still have some issues to address in the final nine games of the regular season.

They hold a one-game lead over San Francisco for best record in the league, which could determine home-field advantage in the NL championship series. Also, the Braves are anxious for the return of closer John Smoltz, on the disabled list with a sore elbow.