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# SPORTS

THE BATTALION

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## Emmitt won't recognize 'Boys

By Jamie Aron  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

IRVING — When Emmitt Smith returns to Texas Stadium on Sunday, he'll recognize the surroundings, former teammates and other friends in the Dallas Cowboys organization.

Beyond the obvious, though, Smith might not recognize these Dallas Cowboys.

Now defined by a coach instead of a player — specifically, him — the Cowboys seem to have cleaned up the "trash" that Smith felt surrounded by last season and have embraced a new attitude that is already paying off.

Smith was right when he said that things around Valley Ranch were a mess last season, he just erred by referring to himself as a "diamond surrounded by trash."

What he failed to say — or, worse, see — was that he was part of the problem.

From the start, the 2002 season was all about Smith and his pursuit of Walter Payton's career rushing record. The team's marketing campaign was built around it. There was even a digital yardage tracker on a billboard outside the stadium.

As Smith got closer, attention mounted. So did the pressure on coaches to make sure he got enough carries. Coaches couldn't help but be cognizant of the record chase, even if their only concern was getting the damn thing out of the way.

As for other players, they got sick of it pretty fast. Although they said all the right things then — well, everyone except Troy Hambrick, who was trying to take Smith's job — they felt swallowed by it.

"I think sometimes it felt as though the season was based on him getting his rushing record rather than us having a successful winning percentage," defensive end Ebenezer Ekuban said. "It was a distraction."

And now?  
"We have better things to focus on as a team," Ekuban said, "and that's winning games."

To be fair, Smith was all about winning games, too. It's just that he believed the best way to do so was by giving him 30 carries, which he usually turned into 100-plus yards. Thus, a perfect win-win situation.

If the Cowboys found another way to win, Smith was cool with it. But if they tried another way and failed, well, No. 22 didn't like it. And he didn't mind letting people know it, especially coach Dave Campo.

It's worth noting that on the memorable afternoon when the record fell, Dallas lost a very winnable game. And remember that before the finale, which Campo realized was his last game, too, Campo almost proudly said his priority was getting Smith over 1,000 yards. He fell 25 short, gaining only 13 on 18 carries.

Jerry Jones had a good read on it all. That's why he didn't invite Smith to be part of the Bill Parcells era.

## Ags looking for revenge at UT

By Jeff Allen  
THE BATTALION

Playing on the road is never easy, especially in the Big 12 Conference. The Aggies have gotten a taste of that already this year.

The Texas A&M volleyball team made its annual trip to Nebraska Coliseum earlier in the season, a venue that is arguably the most difficult to win in all of college volleyball, getting its feet soaked in the first conference match. The Aggies, however, came out not much worse for the wear. They dropped the match, but took the No. 7 Huskers down to the wire, forcing a fifth game on the road in Lincoln for the first time since 1982.

The road doesn't get much smoother today for the No. 22 Aggie squad as it takes the court at Gregory Gymnasium in Austin to face the University of Texas.

"It is very easy to get up for this one," said A&M coach Laurie Corbelli. "Everyone on the court will have been out there from last year."

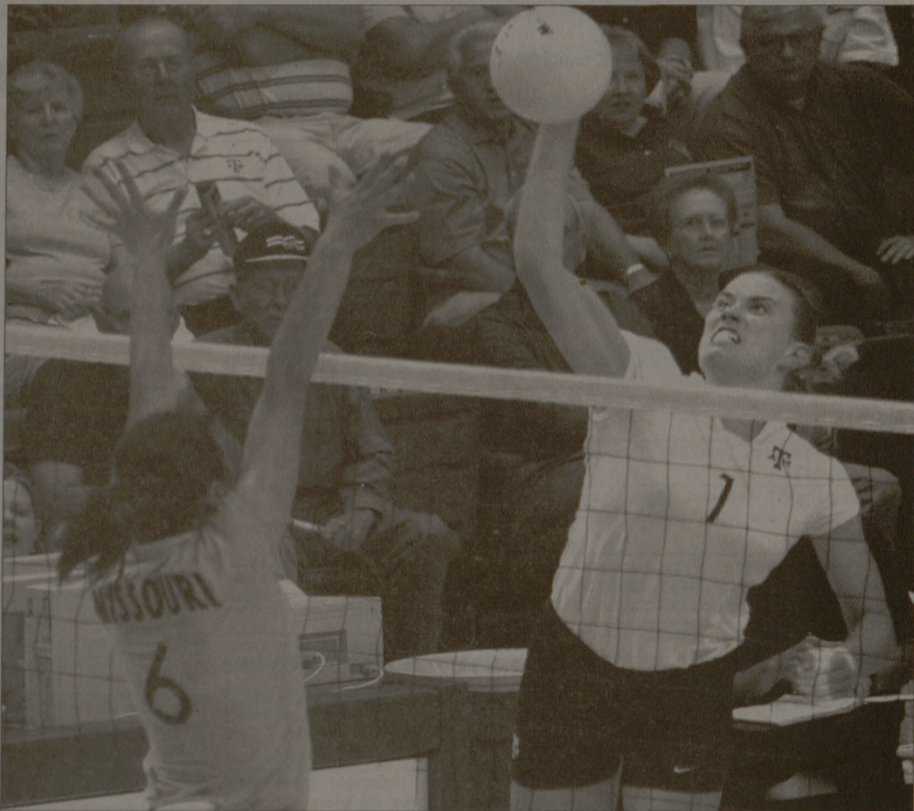
Corbelli is remembering the last time the Longhorns (7-5, 2-1 Big 12) and the Aggies (10-3, 2-1) squared off on the hardwood at Gregory Gymnasium, a place where the Aggies have won just five times in 31 tries. Much as this season, the Aggies took a Top 25 national ranking into Austin last season, but at the time they were riding a six-match winning streak over the Longhorns, including a couple of wins at Gregory. In front of more than 3,000, fans the Aggies watched an 11-9 lead in the fifth game turn into a 15-11 loss.

"We gave (the win) away last year and have been waiting an entire year to get back out there and give it a try," Corbelli said.

The Aggies are trying to avoid the same fate this year. They are taking their highest national ranking of the season into Austin to face a Longhorn team that has sputtered a bit to begin the season, especially against Top 25 teams.

The Longhorns have had to overcome some key injuries, including the loss of sophomore outside hitter Dariam Acevedo, who is gone for the entire 2003 season due to an ACL injury suffered in the Longhorns' loss to Nebraska.

Acevedo had been chosen as the Big 12



JP BEATO III • THE BATTALION

Texas A&M's Carol Price hits past Missouri's Shen Danru during the Aggies' win at G. Rollie White Coliseum last weekend. The Aggies will try to avenge last season's loss in Austin tonight at 7 p.m.

Preseason Newcomer of the Year.

"It has taken some real team trust and we have dealt with it," said Texas coach Jerritt Elliott. "But it has been a positive experience."

The Longhorns made some strides last week, defeating Oklahoma for the 24th consecutive time. They followed that with a 3-0 win over Houston, a team the Aggies defeated earlier this season.

The Longhorns success has been due in large part to the work of junior All-American Mira Topic and middle blocker Brandy Magee, who is part of a freshmen class that Volleyball Magazine ranked second in the nation, all young faces the Aggies have never seen before.

"We'll prepare with the scouting reports

and videos, and will be up for it," said A&M senior outside hitter Beth Skypala.

The Aggies are coming off a solid win over Missouri in which five of the six starters posted double figures in kills, a trend the Aggies have been building on lately. The game was generally received by Corbelli and the team as one of the cleanest it has put together so far this season, and the squad is hoping to build off that tonight in Austin.

"If we play with the consistency we did (against Missouri), if we carry that over into every match, things will fall into place," said junior outside hitter Melissa Munsch. "Texas is a tough team, but I think we are ready for them. I don't care where we play, every game is tough. You just have to focus on the game, you have to play your heart out."

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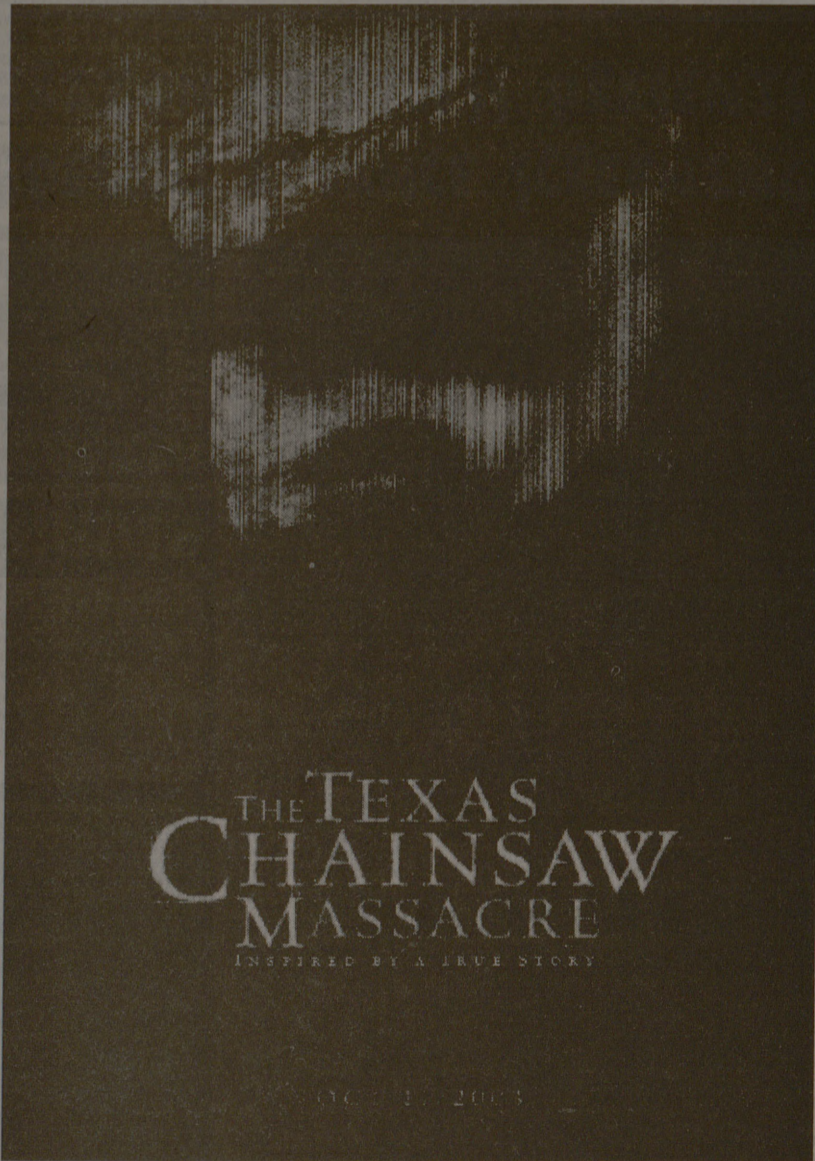
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