## Ags look to regroup against Jayhawks

The option is

there to play

the game as a

quarterback by

committee.

Kansas hopes to pick up big win without offensive leader at QB

> By Michael Crow THE BATTALION

2:30

ABC

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6:00

This season, the Big 12 has seen its share of surprises. Notably among them has been the sudden emergence of the Kansas football program.

Just a year ago, the Jayhawks finished 2-10 overall without a conference win. Already this season, Kansas has five wins, including two impressive conference victories against Missouri and

Baylor, and the Jayhawks came within a field goal of another Big 12 upset when they fell to Colorado, 50-47.

Still, the last week has provided obstacles that could blur KU coach Mark Mangino's optimistic vision for this year. On Saturday, Kansas was blasted by instate rival Kansas State, 42-6. What's worse, the Jayhawks lost starting quarterback and the Big 12's Offensive Newcomer of 2002, Bill

Whittemore, to injury. Whittemore had passed for 1,921 yards this season, and his 413 yards on the ground made him the team's secondleading rusher.

'When you have a guy who has put up the kind of numbers he has and shown the kind of leadership he has, (the loss) has an impact," Mangino said. "How much of an impact it has will depend on how much we let it have. We have a lot of kids on the team but he is an important guy.'

The Jayhawks trailed only 7-3 when Whittemore went down in the first quarter. He was replaced by junior John Nielsen, who finished the game 8-of-12 for 33 yards.

Nielsen, sophomore Brian Luke and freshman Adam Barmann will likely share the quarterback spot this weekend on the road against Texas A&M (3-5, 1-3).

"We are working on it and we aren't exactly sure how we are going to do it," Mangino said. "We have a plan for this week's practice and how we are going to handle it. We will prepare all three of those kids in some way, shape or form. The option is there to play the game as a quarterback by committee.

The Jayhawks (5-3, 2-2) can still rely on a strong running game led by Clark

Green. The sophomore running back has 681 yards and is averaging 4.8 yards per carry this season, and his workload should increase Whittemore's absence.

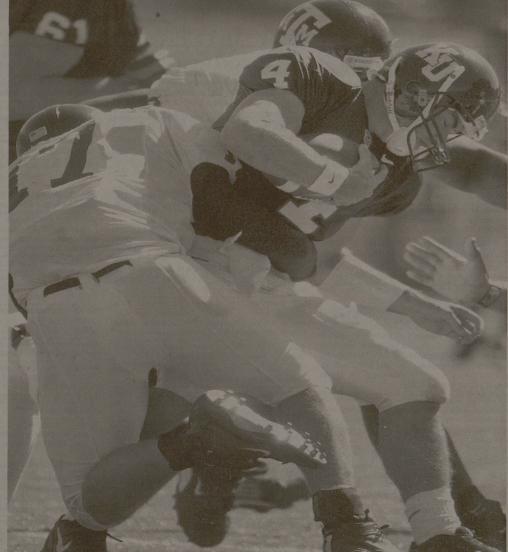
Sharing the burden will be the Kansas defense, which was embarrassed by KSU - Mark Mangino last week. The unit Kansas football coach allowed 257 rushing yards, a statistic sure to catch the eye of

A&M running backs Courtney Lewis and Derek Farmer.

Still, on the whole, Mangino said he feels his defense has been making improvements in recent weeks. Sophomore linebackers Gabriel Toomey and Nick Reid are first and second on the team, respectively, in tackles, while an injury-plagued KU secondary has managed to hold opponents to only 209.9 passing yards per game.

"We are really making some gains," Mangino said. "Our linebackers are coming along quite well, and I'm very pleased overall with the defense. They are making the types of strides we hoped for, and that's a very positive sign for us.'

The Aggies should look to their running game early and often this week as



Kansas junior quarterback **Bill Whittemore** goes down in the Aggies' win over the Jayhawks last year in Lawrence, Kan. **Whittemore** was the 2002 Big 12 Offensive Newcomer of the Year last year and was the Jayhawks' offensive leader again this year before being injured.

Big 12 victory.

"They have hung in there, they stayed the course, kept doing what they are doing," said A&M coach Dennis

they continue to seek an elusive second Franchione. "They got some success early in the season, and this is where they have gotten themselves to."

Saturday's kickoff is scheduled for 12:30 p.m. at Kyle Field.

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