

SPORTS

THE BATTALION

Page 5 • Monday, November 3, 2003

Reggie Returns

McNeal has a career day at Kyle Field in win over Jayhawks

By Blake Kimzey
THE BATTALION

By kickoff Saturday at Kyle Field, it didn't appear the Aggies would be getting much fan support. For as much as the Twelfth Man is touted at Texas A&M, the fans decidedly left the football team to fend for itself in a 45-33 victory over the Kansas Jayhawks.

In a season of bandwagon mantras, topsy-turvy fan support and faithless rhetoric floating about the demise of A&M football, the Aggies inched closer to .500 in front of almost 14,000 empty seats.

This weekend, however, was much more positive than the lack of support would lead the average sports fan to believe. A&M used a balanced offensive attack to claim a much-needed home victory.

"We needed to win here at home and to start this stretch in November," said A&M coach Dennis Franchione. "This was good for the players, emotionally and mentally. It was good for the fans and coaches, too. We all needed it."

It was a victory to be savored indeed, as it brought A&M up to 4-5 on the season with the twilight of its Big 12 schedule on the horizon.

This year, A&M has been consistently using a balanced offensive game plan, and followed suit on Saturday by distributing the ball on the ground for 253 yards and through the air for 294 yards.

Sophomore quarterback Reggie McNeal glided to 71 rushing yards, and combined with his passing numbers, had a career day with 303 total yards.

For just the second time this year the Aggies scored on their opening drive, which set an optimistic tone for the rest of the game. A&M kept Kansas guessing by spreading the ball around while steadily racking up 547 yards of total offense.

The Aggie running backs did their jobs by using a successful battery combination of finesse and power as freshman Courtney Lewis and junior Derek Farmer wore down the Kansas front line.

"Courtney Lewis had a big day, getting 120 yards," Franchione said. "And Derek Farmer had a big day. While he didn't get a lot of yards, he had some hard-nosed runs for us."

The Aggies also managed to stay on the positive side of the turnover battle.

The A&M defense came out in the third quarter determined to finally put a Franchione halftime speech into practice. Junior Byron Jones forced a fumble just 15 seconds into the second half as sophomore free safety Jaxson Appel scooped it up for a 5-yard touchdown scamper.

Appel was as surprised as anybody when he found himself in the end zone, putting A&M up by seven.

All week in practice the A&M coaching staff had been preaching the virtues of forced turnovers.

The fumble, which danced out of Kansas wide receiver Deric Mills' hands twice, turned out to be the story of the sec-



JOSHUA HOBSON • THE BATTALION

Texas A&M sophomore quarterback Reggie McNeal escapes from the grasp of a Kansas linebacker during the Aggies' third-quarter touchdown drive. McNeal finished the game with 303 total yards.

ond half and the hinge on which the game swung in A&M's direction.

"We hadn't had any key turnovers in a while and the coaches are preaching turnovers all the time," said sophomore linebacker Archie McDaniel. "We had set a goal of causing some turnovers, and we did."

A&M stopped Kansas in its next two possessions, while the Aggie offense rattled off a field goal and two touchdowns in its first three possessions of the third quarter.

The succinct collaboration of the Aggie offense and defense was enough to put the game out of reach.

Despite the 12-point loss, however, the Jayhawks are looking at Saturday's contest as a coming out party for true freshman quarterback Adam Barmann.

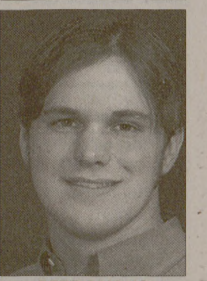
Barmann managed to make judicious decisions under pressure and looked like a savvy veteran as he threw for 294 yards and four touchdowns in his unveiling.

Kansas head coach Mark Mangino took the red shirt off Barmann out of desperation, something he didn't want to do in an environment as imposing as Kyle Field. Because injuries have depleted the depth at quarterback, Mangino was relegated to giving Barmann the starting nod.

"Not only did he play well, but he managed the huddle," Mangino said. "He checked at the line of scrimmage as often as (injured starter) Bill (Whittemore)

Aggies enjoy second half success for first time this year

Old football wisdom teaches that it is the first drive of the second half that usually determines the outcome of the game. For the Aggies, this proverb could not be more true.



PETE BURKS

In the weeks preceding the Kansas game, Texas A&M football coach Dennis Franchione had been stressing the importance of setting the tone for the second half with a solid drive in the first series after halftime.

Unfortunately for the Aggies, for most of the season they have been unable to produce such drives. Often sleepwalking through the third quarter, the lack of a momentum swing in A&M's favor has been a factor in its 4-5 record.

In the first half, A&M and Kansas looked evenly matched as the half ended with the score tied at 14. The Aggie offense was able to create some successful drives behind the legs of redshirt freshman running back Courtney Lewis and the arm of sophomore quarterback Reggie McNeal.

Yet the Aggies were not able to pull away as Kansas, led by freshman quarterback Adam Barmann, used a combination of quarterback draws and screen passes to milk the clock and put the ball in the end zone.

In essence, it was like the Aggie defense was being bled at the point of a sewing needle as Kansas executed a game plan of ball possession through short gains, effectively keeping the A&M offense off the field.

In other words, the Aggie defense needed to create turnovers to give the offense the opportunity to pull away. Indeed, a Kansas turnover could not have come at a better time as Kansas wide receiver Derrick Mills fumbled during the first play of the third quarter on a reverse, which was promptly scooped up and run into the end zone by sophomore free safety Jaxson Appel.

"You can watch any game played on Saturday and the team with the least amount of turnovers wins," Appel said. "We really worked on creating turnovers this week in practice and it worked for us. (On the fumble,) I was getting ready to congratulate somebody on knocking the ball out and it was sitting right down at my feet, so I just picked it up and ran."

The turnover proved to be huge as the Aggies then scored 17 consecutive points to pull ahead of the Jayhawks for good.



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A&M senior wide receiver Tim Van Zant celebrates after his fourth quarter touchdown.

does, and was correct in just about every check he made today. To think this was his first start, in College Station, Texas, in one of the best and hostile venues in college football, to go and perform like that

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AP TOP 25

	Record	Pvs
1. OU (65)	9-0	1
2. USC	8-1	3
3. Florida St.	8-1	5
4. LSU	8-1	7
5. Virginia Tech	7-1	10
6. Miami	7-1	2
7. Ohio St.	8-1	8
8. Michigan	8-2	11
9. Georgia	7-2	4
10. Iowa	7-2	13
11. Texas	7-2	16
12. Wash. St.	7-2	6
13. TCU	8-0	15
14. Michigan St.	7-2	9
15. Bowl. Green	7-1	17
16. Purdue	7-2	18
17. Florida	6-3	23
18. Tennessee	6-2	19
19. Nebraska	7-2	12
20. Mississippi	7-2	20
21. OSU	7-2	14
22. Missouri	6-2	21
23. N. Illinois	8-1	21
24. Minnesota	8-2	24
25. Pittsburgh	6-2	25

(First place votes in parentheses)

ESPN COACHES POLL

	Record	Pvs
1. OU (63)	9-0	1
2. USC	8-1	3
3. Florida State	8-1	5
4. LSU	8-1	8
5. Virginia Tech	7-1	11
6. Ohio St.	8-1	7
7. Miami	7-1	2
8. Michigan	8-2	12
9. Georgia	7-2	4
10. Iowa	7-2	14
11. Texas	7-2	16
12. TCU	8-0	13
13. Wash St.	7-2	6
14. Purdue	7-2	17
15. Michigan St.	7-2	10
16. Nebraska	7-2	9
17. Tennessee	6-2	18
18. Minnesota	8-2	19
19. Florida	6-3	21
20. Bowl. Green	7-1	20
21. Pittsburgh	6-2	23
22. OSU	7-2	15
23. N. Illinois	8-1	22
24. Mississippi	7-2	—
25. Louisville	7-1	25

(As voted on by 63 Division I-A coaches.)

BIG 12 STANDINGS

	conf	all
SOUTH		
OU	5-0	9-0
Texas	4-1	7-2
OSU	3-2	7-2
Texas Tech	3-2	6-3
Texas A&M	2-3	4-5
Baylor	1-4	3-6
NORTH		
Nebraska	3-2	7-2
Kansas State	3-2	7-3
Missouri	2-2	6-2
Kansas	2-3	5-4
Colorado	1-4	3-6
Iowa State	0-4	2-6

OTHER SCORES

Big 12
Texas 31, Nebraska 7
Oklahoma 52, OSU 9
Texas Tech 26, Colorado 21
Kansas State 38, Baylor 10

Others
Michigan 27, Michigan St. 20
Florida 16, Georgia 13
Virginia Tech 31, Miami 7
Arkansas 71, Kentucky 63

Soccer team drops thriller to Longhorns in 2OT

By Troy Miller
THE BATTALION

AUSTIN — In 11 years of soccer, the Texas A&M soccer team had never lost to its arch rival Texas. All that changed Friday night at Myers Stadium in Austin as the Longhorns pulled out a thrilling 2-1 victory in double overtime.

Drama was at the forefront, as it took two late goals for No. 21 Texas to upset the No. 6 Aggies, culminating in a penalty kick in the last minute of double overtime buried by Texas freshman midfielder Nikki Thaden to seal the match for the Longhorns (12-7, 7-3 Big 12).

"I was very nervous (before the penalty kick)," Thaden said. "Once the ball hit the back of the net I turned around to give my teammates hugs, but there they were all jumping on me."

The penalty was awarded

on an arguable hand ball call committed in the penalty box as the Longhorns were attacking the Aggie net in the final minute of play, sending the A&M bench into a frenzy.

"The first goal was an unlucky deflection that (Spisak) had covered one way and it deflected the other way, and she still almost grabbed it," said A&M coach G. Guerrieri. "And then it's unlucky that we get a penalty kick given against us in overtime so the referee can go home."

The Longhorns were happy just to get positioned to win after beginning the match without a score for the first 89 minutes. With A&M (12-4-2, 5-3-2) holding a 1-0 lead throughout the second half, Texas continued to be thwarted by the Aggie defense and sophomore goalkeeper Kati Jo Spisak.

However, with just 37 seconds left in the match, Texas

senior midfielder Kati McBain drilled a shot from 25 yards that eventually found the back of the Aggie net. The shot deflected off traffic inside the 18-yard box and past Spisak to tie the match at one.

"I just took a chance and it went in," McBain said. "A&M has been a hard opponent every single year I've been here, and we came and showed that we can play at that level."

The match began with the Longhorns immediately putting pressure on the Aggie defense. The Aggies faced eight shots from the Longhorns, including a shot from Longhorn junior forward Kelly McDonald that hit the bottom of the crossbar and bounced out away from the Aggie goal in the 33rd minute.

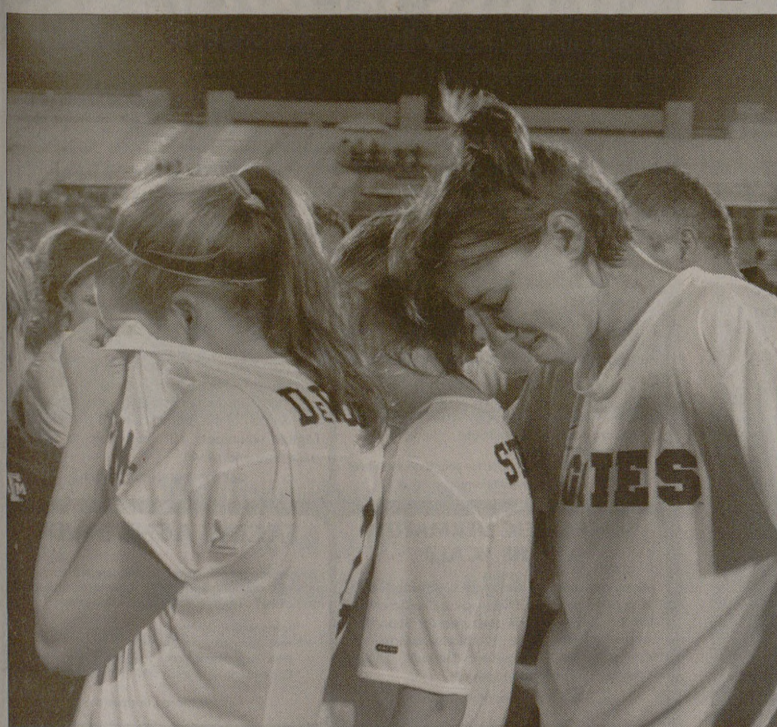
With the score tied 0-0, the Aggies put more pressure on the Longhorns in the second

half that eventually paid off in the 66th minute. Sophomore midfielder Carrie Berend streaked down the right side of the 18-yard box and sent a cross into the middle that found the back of the Longhorn net to give the Aggies a 1-0 lead.

"This is one of the games that (Berend) had talked about making a difference," Guerrieri said. "She was nails today, absolute nails. She was challenged physically all the time by them, and I thought she did a phenomenal job."

After the equalizer from McBain, both teams stepped up in an overtime that saw plenty of chances for both sides. In the fifth minute of overtime, Texas junior forward Kelly Wilson made a beautiful spinning move at the top of the 18-yard box, giving her a clear shot on goal that resulted in Spisak's finest

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JP BEATO III • THE BATTALION

Members of the Aggie soccer team display their emotions after a heartbreaking double-overtime loss to the University of Texas in Austin Friday night. It was the first time the Longhorns have beaten the Aggies in the series' history. A&M was 14-0 against Texas.