

AGGIELIFE

THE BATTALION

Page 3 • Wednesday, November 19, 2003

GRIDIRON GRUDGES

By Jimmy Hisson
THE BATTALION

For an entire week, James Carrasco, a junior marketing major, and Chad Stoerner, a sophomore business administration major, had to forward their mail to the shaded doorway of the Kyle Field Zone alongside the ticket box office. They have been there a week and can't leave yet.

"Most people try to remind us that the office isn't open yet," said Stoerner, "but we just laugh."

What would inspire a mentally healthy individual to forgo the extravagant luxuries of his college dorm room and embrace a 4x6 foot slab of concrete as home for eight consecutive nights? A stroll through the Bryan College Station area the day after Thanksgiving will reveal only a single word already forming on the foaming lips of a number of anxious fans: football.

Although Carrasco and Stoerner's actions may seem eccentric and even comical to a passerby, the football tickets for the Texas A&M vs. University of Texas game they were rewarded with Monday morning are nothing to laugh at. The two will be enjoying the 110th meeting of the rival teams from first deck seats likely to make any diehard fan jealous.

Any good rivalry incorporates a sense of history, balanced performance between both teams and emotional fans as essential ingredients. A&M and the UT share these qualities, allowing them to be two of the oldest and most popular college rivals to date.

A meeting between two rival teams is one in a series of annual gatherings. It can't be the first and certainly isn't likely to be the last. The teams have faced each other on the football field 109 times since the inception of the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas in 1876, and there are few college rivalries in existence today that outdate the Aggie-Longhorn football feud.

While the national interest in the Harvard and Yale rivalry has declined over time, the bitter feelings remaining between the two universities' alumni has remained

strong for more than 151 years. The Harvard-Yale regatta is the oldest collegiate athletic competition in the United States.

An ideal rivalry encompasses a sense of athletic balance between the teams involved. Domination of one team consistently over another can ultimately kill a rivalry or at least the interest in it.

The recent success of the University of Oklahoma and Texas football programs has brought a large amount of attention on the two teams' matchup, and a significant portion of some fickle Longhorn fans have shifted their sites to the Sooners.

"Sometimes I forget we play A&M," said Lesley Caldwell, a University of Texas student and avid Longhorn football fan.

USA Today conducts an annual poll that measures the scope of interest football fans have in college rivalries. The matchup between A&M and Texas has been a consistent favorite throughout the years and while this year's polls aren't closed yet, the A&M-UT rivalry is likely to receive a top 10 ranking.

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— LaRue Rodriguez
junior technology
management major

"I guess it kind of goes like that," said Trent Owens, a recent A&M graduate. "When OU is doing good, Texas will say, 'Yeah OU is our rival', but when A&M is winning, they'll say 'Who is OU?' They just worry about whatever team they think they are going to lose to."

A true rivalry can survive poor records and miserable streaks because of one key element: hatred. Well OK, not hatred, but certainly strong emotional feelings between the two teams. Aggies practice verbalizing their feelings towards UT year-round, and the rocky relationship between the two schools persists.

Other schools have found ways to channel their feelings, as well. Auburn fans made a fad out of adorning their sedans with bumper stickers referencing Alabama's special teams errors.

Prior to "The Big Game" each year, Ohio State fans can aim their hatred at blue Michigan "Ms" placed strategically over urinals in and around Buckeye territory.

This display of Wolverine disapproval, though effective, is small in comparison to the expressions the midshipmen of the

Naval Academy and the cadets of West Point exchange with one another.

A violent riot after a Navy win in 1893 put the rivalry on hold for six years.

To tens of thousands of American military personnel stationed around the globe, the annual Army-Navy football game is the only competition that matters.

As rivals, the intolerance the two schools share for one another can be a possible source of confrontation. Jenny Short, an A&M veterinary sciences graduate student, is adjusting to the ways of Aggieland after receiving her undergraduate degree from UT.

"The A&M fans seem to get into everything a little more than UT fans do. We'll do a Hex right before the game, but not much else. Sometimes you guys can be a little intimidating," said Short. "As long as everything is all in good fun I don't mind, but I do try to leave the Longhorn window stickers off my car, just in case."

While the A&M-UT matchup incorporates many aspects of any great rivalry, it certainly doesn't help that the two schools are separated by roughly only 100 miles. The short distance between the two schools makes the rivalry more real in the lives of many Aggies.

For some, the school rivalry has become a family affair.

"A Longhorn writes my tuition checks," said Ben Lasseter, a senior horticulture and political science major. "I've tried to convert my dad, and he likes the Aggies, but when A&M plays UT, one of us is going to be trying to avoid the other's phone call."

Despite heightened emotions at many times, especially after a bitter loss, most agree that school rivalries enhance entertainment.

"I love the rivalry. I love to hate burnt orange. We don't have to hate the people themselves, we just have to beat them," said LaRue Rodriguez, a junior technology management major.

It is in the spirit of fun that most Aggies find themselves getting excited about the rival matchup.

"Buying into the rivalry hype and investing in anticipation are just ways of enhancing the game for yourself," said Alex VanRooyen, a senior industrial distribution major.

VanRooyen plans to enhance his game by forming the phrase "Gig 'Em" with a group of bare chests including his own. He will be the 'E.'

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