SPORTS EXTRA



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EYES OF TEXAS ON KYLE FIELD

Fans from both schools ready for McNeal vs. Young

> By Michael Crow THE BATTALION

It is late November in College Station, evidenced by orange and yellow leaves scattered across the lawns and streets of the Texas A&M campus. This Friday, the most vibrant color will be the burnt orange of the University of Texas visiting Aggieland in what has become one of the most anticipated rivalry games of the college football season. While this year's meeting might appear to lack the significance of seasons past, neither of the teams seems convinced.

"I watched this rivalry when I was a kid on TV," said A&M coach Dennis Franchione. "I always remember the intenseness of the rivalry . and the pride the two teams played with. This is what you coach for and what you play for."

Texas coach Mack Brown agreed Friday's game would be important, regardless of the two

"I think the rivalry will be just as big because it's about history; it's not just about this season," he said. "They will pull out all the stops and we need to as well. I think it will be a great game." While the Aggies (4-7, 2-5 Big 12) will large-

ly be playing for pride, a win for No. 6 Texas (9-2, 6-1) would most likely mean a spot in a major bowl game, capping off a strong 2003 campaign. Leading the way for the Longhorns is quar-

terback Vincent Young. Along with A&M's quarterback, sophomore Reggie McNeal, Young was one of the counry's most sought-after recruits two years ago. The two have drawn further comparisons on the playing field, particularly in terms of their

> "The two offenses are similar, and the plays you see look a lot alike," Brown said. "When you look at these two guys, it's been amazing to we what they've done and the roles they play. When Reggie and Vince are in the game, you see hings you can compare.

> Young has had more opportunities to run the football and has taken full advantage. The redshirt freshman is UT's second-leading rusher, with 858 yards and 10 touchdowns on the ground.

> Texas running back Cedrick Benson has picked up 994 rushing yards and 16 scores, helpng boost the 'Horns to a hearty 227.2 rushing yards per game.

> With one of the most balanced offenses in the ountry, Texas gets things done in the air as well. Senior wide receiver Roy Williams has compiled 969 receiving yards and eight touchdowns and is, not surprisingly, a candidate for the Biletnikoff award, given to the nation's top

> Defensively, it is junior linebacker Derrick Johnson who has garnered the most attention for Texas. Johnson is a tough presence in the middle of the field, boasting a team-leading 108 tackles, including 16 for negative yardage

Senior cornerback Nathan Vasher has been a leader in the defensive backfield, with five inter-

Brown said he has described Friday's meeting as an elimination game, a must-win to gain a BCS bowl bid.

"These guys have done a tremendous job turning the season around since the loss to Oklahoma," he said. "They have put themselves back in the mix, and now it's time to win again." Friday's kickoff is scheduled for 2:30 p.m. at

Kyle Field.



University of Texas quarterback Vincent Young tries to slip past a Nebraska defender during UT's 31-7 win in early November. Young and A&M quarterback Reggie McNeal will lead their teams into Friday's game.

43-17, Texas. The Longhorns have more than enough weapons to exploit A&M's defense, and unfortunately, I'll graduate without seeing the Aggies beat the Longhorns.

- True Brown, sports editor

54-20, Texas. My head says it ain't gonna be pretty, but the gold on my right hand hopes the Ags have a shot.

- Dallas Shipp, sports editor

37-20, A&M. Just kidding, 34-17 Texas. - Troy Miller, sportswriter

42-10, Texas. 0-4 for Class of 2004.

- Jeff Allen, sportswriter 48-16, Texas. Texas should finish season

strong and get the BCS bid they are wanting. - Michael Crow, sportswriter

41-27, Texas. Vincent Young and Cedric Benson won't have a problem running around on a maligned Aggie defense.

- Pete Burks, sportswriter

45-17, Texas. Will defensive coordinator Carl Torbush be the scapegoat for this season's defense?

- Kyle Davoust, sportswriter

45-21, Texas. Vincent Young will win the battle of the youthful, athletic quarterbacks. - Blake Kimzey, sportswriter

28-24, Texas. Aggies put up a good fight but can't overcome Texas.

- Elizabeth Webb, managing editor

48-10, Texas. I'll be rooting for the Aggies, but let's face it: it's just not in the stars. - Sarah Szuminski, news editor

30-27, A&M. Kyle Field is always a wild card for ranked teams. Just ask

Oklahoma - Robert M. Gates, A&M president

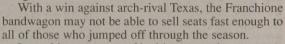
35-31, A&M. It's been a long season, but the Class of 2004 will see the 12th Man magic one more time.

Matt Josefy, student body president

Win would leave Aggies with better taste in their mouths

t goes without saying that Texas A&M coach Dennis Franchione Land the Aggies would just as soon forget about this season. After all the pomp and circumstance that surrounded his arrival in Aggieland last year, some fans have begun to doubt his ability to turn around the

But by 6 p.m. Friday that could change with a win over the Longhorns.



DALLAS SHIPP

It would put a stamp of legitimacy on the preseason hype of Coach Fran.

It would give sophomore quarterback Reggie McNeal one more chance this year to show he can lead the team, and that his performance against Oklahoma last year was not a fluke.

It would show the team that Franchione's system just might work.

It would silence many Sunday morning critics — at least for a while.

'It always gives you a little momentum going into the offseason and recruiting and those kinds of directions," Franchione said. "It lets you finish with a good taste in your mouth. It would be beating a top-10 team and another victory at Kyle Field."

But it's going to take more effort than the Aggies have given so far this season.

In their previous three matchups against top-25 teams (Nebraska, Oklahoma State and Oklahoma), the Aggies have been outscored by a combined score of 163-22, including a 77-0 whipping, courtesy of the

If the Aggies are going to stand a chance against the highly favored Longhorns, McNeal has to step up and be a leader on offense.

After leaving the game against Missouri at halftime, junior Dustin Long ignited the offense, putting doubts in the minds of many that McNeal truly is

"the real deal." Friday is his chance to either put it to rest or fire up the Internet chat rooms, begging Long, who is rumored to be transferring to Sam Houston State after the sea-

son, to stay at A&M. Other than the quarterback situation, the Aggies have nothing to lose Friday. And that should scare

coach Mack Brown and the Longhorns. After assuring their first losing season in two decades against Missouri, the Aggies don't have to worry about becoming bowl eligible. They don't have to worry about finishing the season with a .500 record.

And for that, they should thank the Tigers. Now it's about one game.

There is no practice next week. There is no bowl game to get ready for. This is it.

The Aggies have nothing to lose, while the

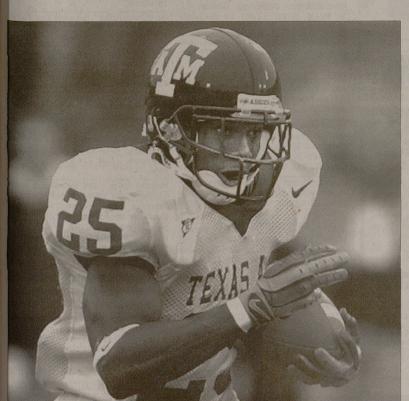
Longhorns are teetering on the edge of a BCS bowl game birth. And, lucky for the Aggies, they do have at least two

things going for them. Unfortunately, neither of them are that tangible for the 11 guys on the field. But in a season filled with disappointments, it's okay to have a little fun this week.

First, the Student Bonfire, which at the time is the closest thing A&M has to the Aggie Bonfire, fell after midnight, meaning the Ags are supposed to win.

Second, the Aggies have never lost a Maroon Out game in the five-year history of the "tradition," including the most improbable upset of all against No. 1 Oklahoma last year.

For the Aggies' sake, they had better believe in superstitions. It's about all they have going for them.



JOHN C. LIVAS . THE BATTALION

exas A&M running back Courtney Lewis runs against the Missouri Tigers on Nov. 15. lewis will square off with high school friend Vincent Young during Friday's A&M-UT game.

Friends Young, Lewis to square off for first time

By Troy Miller THE BATTALION

When the University of Texas pays a visit to Kyle Field to take on Texas A&M on Friday, two players will line up on opposite sidelines for the first time after playing four years together in the same backfield.

Texas redshirt freshman quarterback Vincent Young and A&M redshirt freshman running back Courtney Lewis not only shared the same backfield at Houston Madison High School, they became best friends.

"We always do things together," Lewis said. "We talk at least twice a week every week. I see how things are going on his end, and he sees how things

are going on my end.' Now the two will go head-to-head in not only a ballgame, but in the race for Big 12 Freshman of the Year. Lewis, with 940 rushing yards and 11 touchdowns, is on pace to become the first 1,000-yard back at A&M since Dante Hall in 1998. Young has rushed for 858 yards and 10 touchdowns while passing for 1,043 yards and five touchdowns had advanced in school history. after replacing senior Chance Mock as the Longhorn starting quarterback.

"(Big 12 Freshman of the Year) means a lot to both of us," Lewis said. "Our coach in high school and our families are very proud of us. We both want to be the best. Being the best is something Young

and Lewis are used to. In 2001, the Madison duo was one of the best in Texas, if not the nation, combining for more than 5,800 yards of total offense. Young was heralded as being one of the top prospects in the country while Lewis sailed under the radar in the shadow of

That was just fine by Young and Lewis, who resemble the Texas football version of the odd couple.

"Vincent is more outgoing, while Courtney is quiet," said Madison football coach Ray Seals. "You'd be around (Lewis) and not know he was there. Vincent would speak up more."

During their 2001 senior campaign at Madison, the duo led the Marlins all the way to the Texas 5A Division II State Semifinals, the furthest a Madison team

Young was courted by national powers such as Miami before settling in Austin, while Lewis committed to the Aggies because they were the only team close to home that wanted him as a running back.

The two friends had dreamed of playing college football together, but Texas did not recruit Lewis as a running back, and A&M already had another highlypraised quarterback commit in Lufkin's Reggie McNeal.

'(Young) first wanted to go to Miami, then Texas," Lewis said. "A&M wanted me to be a running back so I chose A&M. I thought it was better for my situation. We both wanted to stay close to home to our families."

With the two living 106 miles apart, compared to five minutes at home in Houston, they still keep tabs on each other's progress. During the Aggies game with Utah, Young called Lewis' mother, who was in the stands at Kyle Field, to get an update. The following week, Lewis drove to Austin to see

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