

SPORTS

THE BATTALION

Page 7 • Monday, December 1, 2003

Horns run over Aggies

Tough season ends with another big loss

By Blake Kimzey
THE BATTALION

The first year of the Dennis Franchione era at Texas A&M came to a close Friday when the University of Texas rode junior running back Cedric Benson all the way to a 46-15 victory.

The Aggies couldn't match the intensity of the finely tuned Longhorn ground attack. Though the atmosphere was electric, as 84,094 fans were on hand in a standing room-only crowd, A&M didn't have the personnel to overcome two costly third quarter turnovers and a relentless Longhorn offense.

It took just three plays and 46 seconds for the Longhorns to score. The Aggie secondary was burned deep on a 60-yard touchdown pass to sophomore tight end David Thomas as the bleeding began for an out-matched Aggie defense.

In its second possession, after forcing a second Aggie punt, Texas manufactured a 95-yard touchdown drive, which resulted in a 21-yard Benson touchdown run, putting Texas up 14-0.

The game came down to an inspired performance by Benson, who relentlessly pounded the ball down the gut of the A&M line.

"Cedric was in a zone, he was feeling good and the offensive line did a great job," said Texas offensive coordinator Greg Davis. "He ran extremely hard, he broke some tackles, got extra yardage and I thought he played by far his best game."

Benson carried the ball 35 times for 283 yards as the other Texas backs and receivers did little more than block and taunt. Benson ran the length of the field almost three times for four touchdowns, and that was with Aggie defenders trying to tackle him.

Longhorn offensive coordinator Greg Davis called only eight passing plays during the game, leaving Roy Williams, one of the top receivers in the country, with little action. Williams only caught two passes for 13 yards.

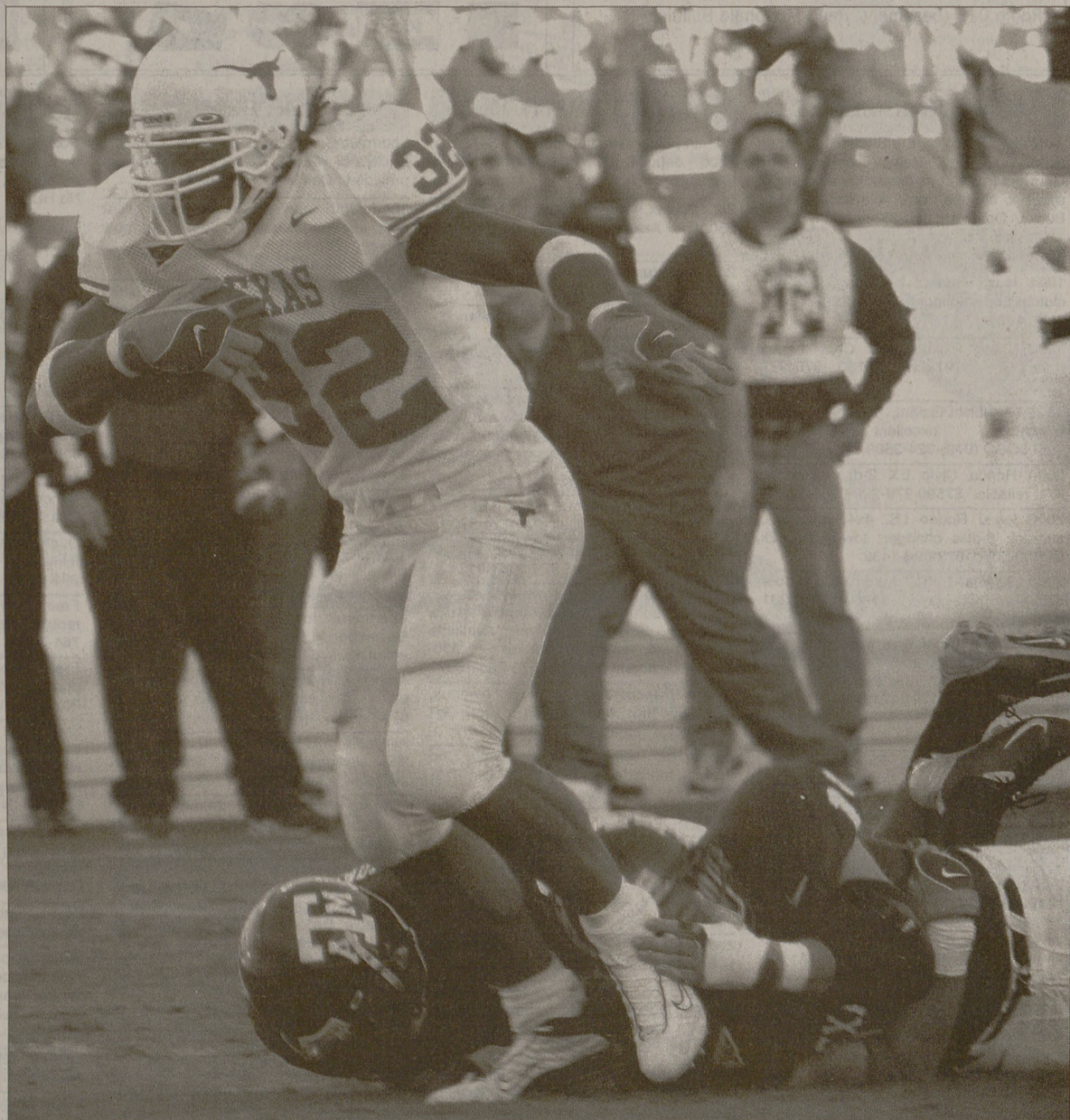
Franchione surprised everybody when junior Dustin Long started the game at quarterback instead of sophomore Reggie McNeal.

"We went into the game saying we would play both (Long and McNeal)," Franchione said. "We tried to utilize the skills that both of them have. We thought that was our best chance, and the guys responded to it very well."

After halftime, the Aggies were given a gift just seconds into the third quarter.

On the opening kickoff of the second half, sophomore Selvin Young fumbled the kickoff and A&M capitalized by recovering the ball on the Longhorn 22-yard line. Three plays later, freshman running back Courtney Lewis took a Long handoff into the end zone on a 15-yard touchdown scamper.

Lewis rushed for 84 yards on 17 carries, giving him 1,024 yards on the season. Lewis became A&M's first 1,000-yard rusher since Dante Hall gained 1,024 yards



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University of Texas running back Cedric Benson powers past two A&M defenders en route to his 283 yard rushing performance. Benson scored four rushing touchdowns as the Longhorns posted a 46-15 win over Texas A&M, UT's fourth-straight win over the Aggies.

in 1998.

After coming from behind to pull within five points, A&M muffed a punt and threw red zone interceptions on consecutive possessions to give the Longhorns breathing room.

"We got it to 20-15 and had it down there and turned the ball over," Franchione said. "We felt good up to that point and felt like we had a script going that might put us in position to get an upset. Our three turnovers hurt us today. We also had three takeaways, but to beat a top-10 team, we can't have those kinds of mistakes we had in the third quarter with the fumbled punt and those kinds

of things."

For the first time since 1982, the Aggies (4-8, 2-8 Big 12) ended the season with a losing record, putting an end to a school-record of 20 seasons with a .500 or better record.

However, departing senior lineman Alan Reuber sees bright things in the future for the Aggies under Franchione.

"There is a bright future at Texas A&M," Reuber said. "These young guys will get things turned around. They have a lot of fight in them. They know what this feels like and they never want to have it again."

A&M's quarterback situation still not solved

Coming into the 2003 season, new Texas A&M head coach Dennis Franchione had a slew of questions concerning his new ball club. At the top of the list was who to start at quarterback: junior Dustin Long or sophomore Reggie McNeal.

Now, after an entire season, Franchione is back to square one after he started Long in the Aggies' 46-15 loss to Texas.

Over the course of the game, Long and McNeal split the snaps leading to the what is now becoming an age-old question: Who is going to take the lead of this team, Long or McNeal?

"Dustin had such a good second half against Missouri, and Reggie had gotten dinged a little bit," Franchione



TROY MILLER

said. "We felt like that is what we ought to do and that was our best chance."

So, basically, the job is still up for grabs."

McNeal was given every chance to take the job, but he never was able to fully grasp the starting position. After leading the Aggies to a 30-26 win over No. 1 Oklahoma in 2002 as a true freshman,

many expectations were piled onto the 18-year-old's shoulders.

It seems like the weight of those expectations has been too much to handle while trying to grow into the college game. Maybe he was too good too quick against the Sooners in 2002. Maybe too many had anointed him as the savior of A&M football before he was really ready for the responsibility.

And, maybe Franchione heard those expectations and bought into the propaganda too. Long, who broke all kinds of A&M passing records in 2002, was riding the pine by the end of September as McNeal took over the starting job on a permanent basis.

The quick relegation to second string for Long led to speculation that he might transfer next year to a small Division I-AA school to finish out his playing career on the field rather than the bench.

Since then, Long has said publicly that he will stay at A&M. Coincidentally, that statement came the same week that Long would start against the Longhorns.

And, with Long starting the last game of the season and still holding

See Question on page 9

AP TOP 25

	Record	Pvs
1. OU (65)	12-0	1
2. USC	10-1	2
3. LSU	11-1	3
4. Michigan	10-2	4
5. Georgia	10-2	5
6. Texas	10-2	6
7. Tennessee	10-2	7
8. OhioSt.	10-2	8
9. Florida State	10-2	9
10. Miami	10-2	10
11. Purdue	9-3	12
12. Iowa	9-3	13
13. Kansas St.	10-3	14
14. Miami (Ohio)	11-1	15
15. Wash. State	9-3	16
16. Florida	8-4	11
17. Mississippi	9-3	17
18. Boise State	11-1	18
19. TCU	11-1	19
20. Bowling Grn	10-2	22
21. West Virginia	8-4	24
22. Okla. State	9-3	23
23. Nebraska	9-3	25
24. Maryland	9-3	—
25. Minnesota	9-3	—

(First place votes in parentheses)

ESPN COACHES POLL

	Record	Pvs
1. OU (63)	12-0	1
2. USC	10-1	2
3. LSU	11-1	3
4. Michigan	10-2	4
5. Georgia	10-2	5
6. Texas	10-2	6
7. Ohio State	10-2	7
8. Tennessee	10-2	8
9. Florida State	10-2	9
10. Miami	10-2	10
11. Iowa	9-3	12
12. Purdue	9-3	13
13. Kansas St.	10-3	15
14. Wash. State	9-3	14
15. Miami (Ohio)	11-1	16
16. Florida	8-4	11
17. Boise State	11-1	18
18. Mississippi	9-3	19
19. TCU	11-1	17
20. Minnesota	9-3	22
21. Nebraska	9-3	23
22. Okla. State	9-3	24
23. Bowling Grn	10-2	25
24. West Virginia	8-4	—
25. Maryland	9-3	—

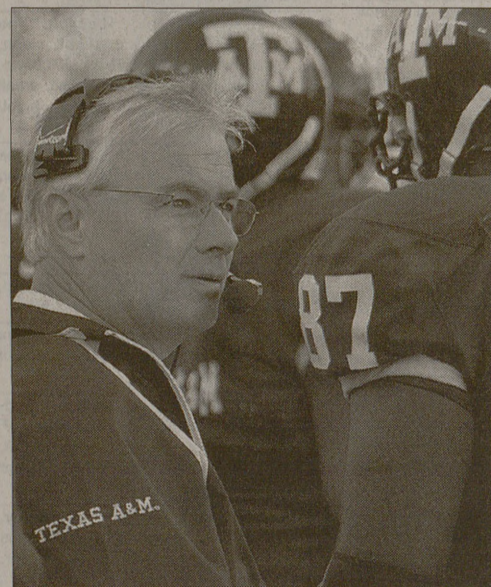
(As voted on by 63 Division I-A coaches)

BIG 12 STANDINGS

	conf	all
SOUTH		
OU	8-0	12-0
Texas	7-1	10-2
OSU	5-3	9-3
Texas Tech	4-4	7-5
Texas A&M	2-6	4-8
Baylor	1-7	3-9
NORTH		
Kansas State	6-2	10-3
Nebraska	5-3	9-3
Missouri	4-4	8-4
Kansas	3-5	6-6
Colorado	3-5	5-7
Iowa State	0-8	2-10

OTHER SCORES

Big 12
Missouri 45, Iowa St. 7
Nebraska 31, Colorado 22
Others
TCU 20, SMU 13
Fresno St. 23, UTEP 20
Hawaii 37, Alabama 29
Florida St. 38, Florida 34
Georgia 34, Georgia Tech 17
Maryland 41, Wake Forest 28
Notre Dame 57, Stanford 7
Tennessee 20, Kentucky 7
Virginia 35, Virginia Tech 21



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For the second straight offseason, Texas A&M football coach Dennis Franchione has a decision to make regarding who will start at quarterback for the Aggies.

Slocum, Wright help Aggies to win

By Troy Miller
THE BATTALION

Despite a troop of Texas A&M basketball players wearing soft casts on their feet at the end of the bench, the short-handed Aggies took care of Prairie View A&M, 88-79, on Saturday.

Texas A&M (3-0) used senior center Andy Slocum's sixth career double-double to lead the Aggies past the Panthers (0-3) despite having senior guard Kevin Turner and freshmen Acie Law and Marlon Pompey confined to the bench with injured ankles.

"Everybody wants a boot, maybe that's the fashion now," said A&M coach Melvin Watkins with a laugh. "We've got to get rid of that fashion statement. It's day-to-day. Acie's still pretty tender, and we hope we can get Kevin back for Tennessee."

Slocum provided the Aggies with 21 points and 16 rebounds, a career high in rebounds for the 7-foot center, despite going one-on-one with the Panthers 6-foot-11 327-pound center Roderick Riley. Riley contributed a double-double to

the Panthers' effort with 15 points and 11 rebounds, but two early fouls forced him to the bench for the majority of the first half, leaving Slocum to dominate the paint.

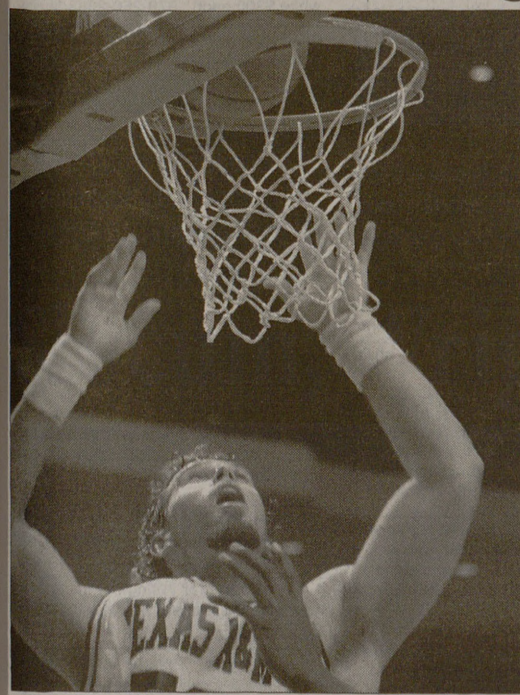
"That was the biggest guy I've probably played against ever," Slocum said. "I know everybody in the Big 12 has big guys, and we've got to get ready to go against them."

A season ago, the Panthers were able to take the Aggies to double overtime at the "Baby Dome" in Prairie View before A&M pulled out an 83-78 victory. The Panthers had revenge on their minds as they stormed out of the locker room to take a 13-8 lead 5:29 into the game.

Then the Aggies came alive as sophomore forward Luis Clemente hit two baseline fadeaway jumpers and sophomore Antoine Wright scored eight points, six of them from 3-point range, in a four-minute span to put the Aggies on top for good.

Wright broke out of a slump that had seen him hit just 34.6 percent of his shots and only one three-pointer in the

See Slocum on page 9



JOSHUA HOBSON • THE BATTALION

Texas A&M center Andy Slocum lays in two of his 21 points during the Aggies' 88-79 win over Prairie View A&M.

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Aggies rally from 20 down to win

The Texas A&M women's basketball team rallied from a 20-point halftime deficit to beat Seton Hall, 54-52, in the consolation championship of the Junkanoo Jam women's basketball tournament Saturday in the Bahamas.

Trailing 39-19 at halftime, the Aggies (2-2) took advantage of a 19-5 run over the first seven minutes of the second half to pull within six points, 44-38. A&M used stellar shooting and an intimidating full court press to outscore Seton Hall (2-2) 35-13 in the deciding half.

"That may have been the biggest comeback I've ever been a part of in my 31 years of coaching," said A&M coach Gary Blair. "I'm so proud of my team and my coaching staff. We took it to them in the second. We made plays and they shot 19 percent."

Aggie volleyball earns host site for NCAA tournament

The Texas A&M volleyball team will host the first and second rounds of the NCAA Women's Volleyball Championship tournament, the NCAA announced Sunday.

Arizona, Wisconsin and Nicholls State will travel to College Station to play in the first round on Friday.

The No. 24 Aggies (21-9, 13-7 Big 12) finished third in the Big 12 Conference this season and ended the season with a three game sweep over the Iowa State Cyclones at G. Rollie White Coliseum on Saturday night.

The Big 12 was one of four conferences that placed six teams in the field of 64. Nebraska, Missouri, Kansas, Kansas State and Colorado also made the tournament.

The tournament finals will be Dec. 18 and 20 in Dallas.