

THE BATTALION

Wednesday, September 1, 2004

Non-conference Clemson game tough

By Kyle Davoust
THE BATTALION

After games against the University of Utah and the University of Wyoming, the Texas A&M football team will finish out its tough non-conference schedule by facing the preseason No. 15 ranked Clemson Tigers.

The Tigers enter the 2004 season receiving national acclaim, but Tigers head coach Terry Bowden warns that preseason polls will mean little once the season starts.

"Preseason polls don't mean that much to me because it is so early in the season," Bowden told the Clemson media. "The polls this time of the year are for the fans, the media, etc. But, it is good to have Clemson's name in the rankings."





The Tigers started slow in 2003, but finished with a fury by winning their last four games, including an impressive Peach Bowl upset over the University of Tennessee.

The Tigers averaged 39 points during that stretch, as they used

a no-huddle spread offense that allowed quarterback Charlie Whitehurst to display his skills. Now entering his junior season, Whitehurst looks to carry his game to new heights after the impressive sophomore season in which he passed for 3,561 yards, with 21 touchdowns and 13 interceptions.

However, the Tigers look vulnerable up front, especially at the tackle spots, and will have to work hard to keep Whitehurst off his back. If nothing else, Clemson should give the Aggie defense a good look at what it can expect against some of the Big 12's more explosive pass offenses, namely Texas Tech and Oklahoma.

On defense, the Tigers could also face some problems up front, as they look to replace three starters from a year ago. While their line might be inexperienced, the men behind them aren't. The Tigers return two starters at linebacker and their entire secondary, which comprised the second-best pass defense in the Atlantic Coast Con-

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|  Texas A&M | vs. |  Clemson |
| GAME 3 | | |
| DATE: September 18 | | |
| TIME: 6 p.m. | | |
| SITE: Kyle Field, College Station, Texas | | |
| LAST MEETING: 24-0 (W) (1974) | | |
| KEY PLAYERS | | |
|  Duane Coleman |  Leroy Hill | |

GRAPHIC: GRACIE ARENAS • THE BATTALION

ference last season.

For the Aggies to win this one, they will need great play from their offensive and defensive lines to attack Clemson's weaknesses.

Big 12 opener brings formidable foe

By Jonathan Wall
THE BATTALION

The Kyle Field faithful will need to be in full force on Oct. 2, when the Aggies welcome the Kansas State Wildcats to Kyle Field. The two teams haven't met since 2001, when A&M went into Manhattan, Kan., and fell to the Wildcats 31-24.

This year, the Wildcat squad looks to build on last season's success that saw it upset perennial powerhouse Oklahoma in the Big 12 Championship 35-7 before losing to Ohio State in the

Fiesta Bowl 35-28. As always, this year's team is chock-full of talented players, including preseason Heisman Trophy candidate Darren Sproles and defensive lineman Jermain Berry, who led a defense that recorded the second-most sacks (51) in the nation last season.

The Wildcat offense is returning six starters from last season's team, but K-State is going to have a tough time repeating last season without two of its key cogs. Graduated quarterback Eli Roberson and his 7,917 total yards, (2,000 more than anyone in school history) are going to be greatly missed. For the first time since 2001, K-State head coach Bill Snyder will turn to a sophomore starter named Dylan Meier to lead the squad. Meier does not have Roberson's elusiveness, but he does seem to have the poise and arm to take K-State where it needs to go.

The running back position is the one spot that K-State won't have to worry about this season. All-American running back Darren Sproles returns for his senior year after leading the nation in rushing with 1,986 yards and finishing fifth in the Heisman Trophy voting. Even key offensive linemen from last season's squad shouldn't deter Sproles from having another incredible season as he looks to build on last year's performance and make a push for the Heisman Trophy.





The receiver position, like the quarterback position, is up

for grabs — due in large part to the gaping hole left by graduated senior James Terry. Terry set a school record last year with 1,232 receiving yards and also had as many touchdown catches as the rest of the entire receiving corps last season. The Wildcats will look to seniors Antoine Polite and Tony Madison to pick up the slack in Terry's absence.

The Wildcat defense is going to have bigger shoes to fill than the offense. The defense has four returning starters from last year's team; however, it's going to miss seven defensive starters who had a combined 184 starts.

Key returnees senior defensive lineman Jermaine Berry and senior defensive back Cedrick Williams will look to lead a defense that will be looking to prove that last season's impressive finish was no fluke.

The Aggie defense is going to have a tough time trying to contain running back Darren Sproles. The defensive line needs to get to Sproles early, in hopes that the Wildcats give up the run and put the ball in Meier's inexperienced hands. The Aggie offense should have the advantage in the matchup with the K-State defense and should try to exploit the inexperienced secondary by throwing some deep balls to A&M senior Terrence Murphy and the rest of the entire Aggie receiving corps in hopes that the long pass will open up the lanes for sophomore running back Courtney Lewis.

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|  Texas A&M | vs. |  Kansas State |
| GAME 4 | | |
| DATE: October 2 | | |
| TIME: TBA | | |
| SITE: Kyle Field, College Station, Texas | | |
| LAST MEETING: 31-24 (W) (2001) | | |
| KEY PLAYERS | | |
|  Darren Sproles |  Jermaine Berry | |

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