

SPORTS

THE BATTALION

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Page Design: Jordan Meserole

If they only had a heart

A&M football players should heed advice from elders

SIDE NOTES

COMING WEDNESDAY



After a good showing in the Golden Bear Invitational last weekend, No. 12 volleyball team A&M kicks off conference play against Iowa State.

In the early 1950s, Billy Pickard joined the A&M football team as a student trainer. Fifty years later, Pickard is still roaming the sidelines at every game.

BRIEFLY

After the first round of the Dick McGuire Classic, the A&M women's golf team is in seventh place out of 17 teams. Sophomore Ashley Knoll is tied for fourth place.

Former major leaguer Ken Caminiti is due back in a Houston courtroom because of an alleged positive drug test that would be a violation of his probation for cocaine possession.

ON THIS DATE

1923 — Jack Dempsey knocks out Luis Firpo in the second round for his last successful defense of the world heavyweight title at Madison Square Garden.

1986 — Chicago's Walter Payton rushes for 177 yards to reach the 15,000-yard plateau and scores his 100th career rushing touchdown.

1991 — A&M freshman Greg Hill sets a major college record with 212 yards rushing in his first game and scores twice as Texas A&M routs LSU 45-7.

1994 — The major league baseball season, already shut down by a month-long strike, is canceled along with the World Series in a vote by 26 of the 28 teams.

2003 — Jamal Lewis rushes for an NFL-record 295 yards on 30 carries in Baltimore's 33-13 victory over Cleveland.



JORDAN MESEROLE
SPORTS EDITOR

Rejoice! The Texas A&M football team has won a game. Hark the herald Twelfth man sings, glory be to the new Franchione.

Aggie fans across College Station and various parts of the country are ecstatic after the Aggies' 31-0 win against the University of Wyoming on Saturday. After being pummeled into the Utah dirt in a 41-21 season-opening loss to the University of Utah, A&M seems to have fixed the necessary problems.

But before Aggie fans expect the three wise men of ESPN (namely Lee Corso, Kirk Herbstreit and Chris Fowler) to come bearing thoughts of possible bowl game bids, they should remember that it was just Wyoming. The Cowboys are a team that most other teams with any semblance of athletic talent should be able to hold off. Given that holding Wyoming scoreless is commendable, it's still nothing to get excited about. This Aggie team is lacking one major thing to get it past the teams that have the tools to score: heart.

The Junction Boys certainly weren't fooled by Saturday's performance and know a lot about heart. For those who haven't heard the story by now (if you have, no permission note is needed to skip this paragraph), the Junction Boys are a group of 35 men who endured a tough training regimen under former coach Paul "Bear" Bryant in 1954. Bryant, upon gaining the reigns of the team, took 110 football players to Junction, Texas to prepare them for the upcoming season.

The players were required to practice in 100-plus degree weather on dusty, rocky playing fields, often with few water breaks. Bryant's philosophy was to find the players who were willing to play through any condition, break them down a little and rebuild them as true athletes. Of the 110 who made the trip to Junction, only 35 returned to Aggieland as members of the team.

"He (Bryant) was demanding, but he treated everybody fairly," said Don Watson, a member of the Junction Boys. "No matter if you were the first-team star-player or last-team punter, he treated everybody the same."

The scene in Junction was much different from today's training regimen. After hitting supremely pruned practice

fields, players retire to the air-conditioned locker rooms where they receive ice packs for any bruise they might have. After that, they can retire to the player's lounge to play some video games and have a chilled bottle of Gatorade.

Not to say that football isn't a grueling sport and ice packs or medicine aren't necessary (Advil is a constant must for me after intramural games), but as many of the Junction Boys pointed out, perhaps the players today are too pampered.

"I understand that rules have changed and technology advancement has helped the game," said Bill Schroeder, who experienced the trying times in Junction. "But most athletes today will never come close to understanding what true work and dedication toward something is like."

After his playing days under Bryant from 1952-1956, Watson went on to coach at Virginia Tech, Houston, Tulane, South Carolina and finally back to A&M. Watson has certainly seen his share of athletes in his time as a player and coach and said the A&M football team is having problems not because of ability, but because of its mind-set.

"I'm not even sure they're listening to their coaches sometimes," Watson said. "When you're on defense, your job is to make a tackle. Today's players make a tackle and celebrate. But it's silly because that's their job — to make tackles. Coach Bryant's rule was you complete your play, get up go back to the huddle and line up for the next play."

The Junction Boys aren't far from the truth, if not 100 percent correct. This A&M football team has no heart right now and is more focused on the great tackle they just made instead of beating the other team. All the players have heart somewhere deep inside of them — they haven't gotten to where they are solely on athletic ability.

A few exemplify the passion all game long, others just here and there, but this team has yet to work together as a true team since it defeated Oklahoma in 2002.

The team on Saturday beat Wyoming on pure ability, but the team will need the talent and heart to beat teams like Oklahoma and Texas in a few short months.

"Your heart and what you have inside is very important," Schroeder said. "No matter if some guy's bigger or a bit stronger than you, if you have true heart, you will be better on the field than him more often than not."

A&M is the bigger "guy" to most teams talent wise, but it seems to have been bullied a lot lately. Maybe the new Spirit Walk will help to energize the Aggies before games, maybe the realization that they CAN beat ranked teams will help them in games or maybe they'll finally realize they haven't been playing with all their hearts.

But until they take off the headphones and take note of what their elders are saying, this team won't beat many others.



Will Lloyd • THE BATTALION

Cowboys wondering what happened to defense

By Jamie Aron
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The linemen didn't pressure the quarterback. The secondary couldn't keep up with the receivers. The linebackers failed to do much of either.

Even after watching a replay in slow motion, Dallas Cowboys coach Bill Parcells said Monday he was "hard-pressed to find one guy who played up to his potential on defense" in a 35-17 loss to the Minnesota Vikings in the opener.

"It was all the way across the board," Parcells said. "Don't single out one guy because it was 11."

The offense made its share of mistakes, such as two lost fumbles and many penalties that kept the team from getting more than two touchdowns and a field goal out of 423 yards.

The special teams messed up too, with punter Mat McBriar losing his job as the holder when he failed to catch a perfect snap on another field goal try.

But it was the defense — the NFL's top-ranked defense last season — that let Parcells down the most.

"I don't know what it was," Parcells said, "but that wasn't the same group I've seen out there in the past."

Missing the leadership of injured safety Darren Woodson, desperately thin at cornerback and weakened on the line by the suspension of Leonardo Carson, Dallas did nothing to stop a Minnesota offense that certainly looks capable of keeping its No. 1 ranking from last season.

The Cowboys allowed five touchdowns, their most under Parcells.

They allowed 18 of 24 passes to be completed. There also were two pass interference penalties, both putting Vikings a few steps from the end zone. The only Dallas player credited with a "pass defended" was tackle

La'Roi Glover, whose job description rarely includes defending passes.

The Cowboys didn't cause any fumbles or make any interceptions. They did have two sacks, but neither cost Minnesota any yards.

Anything else? "Lack of emotion," Glover said. "No passion, no fire."

Parcells said he knew the Vikings would be tough to stop, but he expected more from his defense. What bothered him the most was the way they fell apart in the third

quarter, when the game was still within reach. The Cowboys scored just before halftime to get within four points, then the defense allowed a long, quick TD drive. Even after the offense answered to get back within four, the defense buckled again. That stretched the lead to 28-17 and gave Minnesota touchdowns on four straight possessions.

"No passion, no fire."

— La'Roi Glover
Cowboys' lineman on the defensive performance

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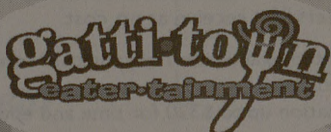
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