

SPORTS

THE BATTALION

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Texas A&M soccer loses to UCLA

By Jonathan Wall
THE BATTALION

Sunday afternoon's match against 12th ranked UCLA was one the Aggies would probably like to have back. In a game dominated by defense, the Aggies couldn't match the lone goal scored by UCLA's Iris Mora, falling 1-0.

"We had three balls off the line and missed two open goals," Guerrieri said. "You don't deserve to win if you don't finish those balls."

The Aggies left a lot of offensive chances on the field in a game where they outshot the Bruins, 12-8.

A&M made an offensive push during the final three minutes of the game, yet the team couldn't figure out Bruins goalkeeper Valerie Henderson, who seemed to be in perfect position every time the ball was in the UCLA zone.

The game was played well by both squads, but it left Guerrieri with mixed feelings on a game he felt the team had a chance to win.

"We schedule tough games like this because we want to play teams that are going to make us better," Guerrieri said. "It's just hard to lose games we feel we should've won."

A&M defense returns to form, quiets critics

By Kyle Davoust
THE BATTALION

A buzz started around campus last week. The Aggies had shut out an opponent not named Baylor for the first time since 1998. "This is huge," cried the most fervent of fans.

"It was only Wyoming," responded the pessimists — the ones who were most recently fooled by last year's performance against the lowly Bears.

But now, after Saturday's defensive domination of Clemson, the buzz has reached a feverish pitch. This was not Wyoming. This was not even Baylor or Kansas. In winning the game 27-6, the Aggie defense had stifled the Clemson Tigers, one of the nation's top offenses.

"I'm pretty sure Clemson hung 500 yards on the last two teams they played," said A&M coach Dennis Franchione. "We held them to 250 and got four turnovers. You've got to give (the defense) some respect. They're playing more like we (as coaches) thought they would play."

The Aggies didn't just stop a top offense; they stopped a spread offense. This is significant because the spread offense has killed the Aggies for the last two years. Texas Tech and Oklahoma set all sorts of records on the Aggies last year using this same type of system.

Just two weeks ago, Utah racked up 41 points by spreading out the Aggies. That's what makes Saturday's performance even more remarkable.

"(The Utah game) is still in my mind, but we feel like that team was not us, and we came out tonight to show everybody that we are a better team," said senior cornerback Byron Jones. "The team you saw against Utah — that wasn't us. It was fresh on our mind, but we came out to prove a

point that this is a better football team."

The key difference this time was simple: The Aggies pressured the quarterback. Instead of giving Clemson junior quarterback Charlie Whitehurst a chance to survey the field, the Aggies mixed blitzes with solid defensive line plays to keep the quarterback on his back. The pressure worked, as Whitehurst threw three interceptions, fumbled in A&M territory and was held to less than 200 yards passing for the first time in eight games.

"They definitely blitzed us," a dismayed Whitehurst said. "I think I had four turnovers by myself, and they didn't have any. That was definitely huge."

The turnover disparity was large, as the Aggies turned Clemson's four turnovers into 14 points. An opportunistic defense makes an offense's job a lot easier.

Perhaps the best sign of what is to come was the play of the Aggie newcomers. For the second week in a row, redshirt freshmen made huge contributions.

Freshmen Jason Jack, Chris Harrington and Joseph Bryant were keys in the defensive line rotation that kept constant pressure on Whitehurst. Harrington displayed the speed of the young group in the third quarter when he rushed around



Sophomore A&M linebacker Justin Warren (left) and senior defensive back Byron Jones sack Clemson quarterback Charlie Whitehurst during the second quarter of Saturday's game. A&M defeated Clemson 27-6.

the Clemson line nearly untouched to plow Whitehurst into the turf for his second collegiate sack.

However, the newcomer with the biggest impact was freshman cornerback Erik Mayes. Getting extended playing time because of Clemson's spread offense, Mayes impressed with 10 tackles and an interception to end the Tiger's last drive. He even came up big on a blitz, combining with

Jack for an all-freshmen sack.

The questions of optimism are already starting to pour in from the fans. Are they for real? Do they deserve to be called the Wrecking Crew?

"That's depending on coach," said senior cornerback Jontè Buhl. "We've been working hard, and we're really happy with our success today and last week, so hopefully we'll get the name back."

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