

Tradition key part of A&M home games

By ADAM KLINKER
Staff writer

Just try and resist it. Try to ward it off as a gimmick. Try to ignore it.

It's called the "Howdy" tradition and at Texas A&M, it's an Aggie's little way of saying hello to visitors in Aggieland, the consolidated atmosphere of A&M — the university that is College Station, Texas.

It will not matter that the often-despised Husker fans will be walking around as the presumed aristocrats of college football. It's guaranteed someone will single them all out for a quick "howdy."

Or maybe it's the 12th man that gets you. Maybe the infectious chants and cries of "Gig 'em Aggies!" could even stir the stoic Husker fan, not big on any tangible tradition — just the one involving winning.

College Station is not the hostile atmosphere of Colorado or Oklahoma. It's got more of the feel of a sleepy, southern Texas town where it really doesn't matter where your loyalties lie —

until the game starts. "The whole friendliness of the place is one thing we've got," said Lance Hill, the public relations officer in A&M's much-storied Corps of Cadets. "It's almost like a small town. We claim to be the friendliest campus in the nation."

Hill, a senior architecture and construction management major, said the militaristic traditions of A&M are deeply rooted in the past.

In the stands, it becomes evident that of all Aggie traditions, the yells are most treasured, along with the sacred 12th man heritage.

The custom of selecting one student to be in uniform and in on the opening kickoff started when then-Coach Jackie Sherrill held 12th man tryouts for the student body. Coach R.C. Slocum has continued the tradition.

The 12th man is also the crowd, in spirit, a major "player" for the Aggie football team. The crowd must remain standing for the duration of the game as a reminder to be on watch if needed in the game.

"You don't dare sit down during the game," said Curtis Franke, a senior bio-

medical science major and chairman of A&M's Traditions Council.

In addition, all A&M fans in attendance take up the role of the 12th man and join together as a collective voice shouting for the Aggies.

"We don't get involved with cheering," Hill said. "We yell."

In the place of cheerleaders, a group of five cadets is selected from the Corps of Cadets to lead fans in the traditional Aggie clamor that resounds through Kyle Field.

At midnight on the night before home games, a yell practice is assembled and nearly 20,000 Aggie fans march to Kyle Field to go over the chants and songs for Saturday's game.

Brandon Neff, a senior officer in the corps and one of the five yell leaders, said the midnight yell practice is probably the biggest event involving the game.

"It's so tradition-based," Neff said. "Everybody knows what to do and where to be on Friday nights. It's a lot different from any pep rally."

At game time, it's all business for the yell leaders.

"We're there to make sure the team knows the student body is behind them," said Neff, a senior political science major. "(The team) doesn't have to worry. We support them no matter how bad they're losing or how big they're winning."

New this year to the long line of Aggie tradition is Maroon-Out, the A&M equivalent to the NU Sea of Red at Memorial Stadium.

Tara Toliver, secretary for the Class of 2000 and a member of A&M's Class Council, said the new tradition gives root to Aggie pride in the crowd wearing the team colors at home games.

Toliver said Class Council has been promoting the program by selling maroon T-shirts to fans to promote wearing A&M colors to games.

She said that by the Nebraska game, the Class Council hopes to sell out the remainder of the shirts and see a massive maroon throng in Aggieland, A&M's faithful force of fans.

"It's the little things that unify A&M," Hill said. "I can't say there's any one thing that is set apart. It's all tradition."

Nguyen ready for Nebraska

NGUYEN from page 9

Winning this weekend will require a near-perfect game against the Huskers, the Aggie said.

While NU needed a last-second defensive stop to beat Oklahoma State, Nguyen said he expects a better performance from the Huskers.

"They didn't play as well as they wanted to, but they are still Nebraska and we expect to play Nebraska on Saturday," Nguyen said.

Statistically, the Aggies have a better defense than the Cowboys, who limited the Huskers to 73 rushing yards.

But Nguyen cautioned against expecting a similar performance from NU.

"They are just well-disciplined, and they wait for you to make mistakes," Nguyen said. "You can stop them for nine plays out of 10, but all of the sudden the big play is going to hurt you."

Missouri lineman commits to Huskers

From Staff Reports

Spencer Owen, a 6-foot-5, 235-pound defensive lineman, has given a verbal commitment to play for the Nebraska football team next season.

Owen is from Carrollton, Mo., and is the ninth player to give a commitment to the Cornhuskers this fall. Owen has 40 tackles and 14 quarterback sacks so far this season for Carrollton High School, which is in Missouri's second smallest class.

"I am happy to play for the Huskers," Owen said. "There's a lot of tradition there with that program."

Near loss to Oklahoma State keeps Nebraska focused

By DAVID WILSON
Senior staff writer

Even Nebraska Coach Frank Solich enjoys a good, back-and-forth college football battle now and then.

But when it comes to nail-biters, Solich would prefer that his team wasn't involved.

That wasn't the case Saturday, when the Cornhuskers stopped Oklahoma State inside the 1-yard-line as time

expired, preserving a 24-17 victory.

Though Solich can't guarantee that there won't be any more close games this season, he said last weekend's narrow victory will help Nebraska in the long run.

"There's some great football to be played yet," Solich said. "I would like to be able to tell you that was the only nail-biter we're going to have this season, but I think there's probably more to come."

"I've been pleased they've been able to respond, when called upon, to be 5-0"

When OSU kicker Tim Sydnies booted a 37-yard field goal in the second quarter Saturday, it marked the first time the Huskers had trailed this season.

NU's 7-point win was its closest margin of victory since November when the Huskers beat Colorado 27-24.

"It might be a little bit of a blessing that we were in a tight game, and we got out of there with a victory," senior full-back Joel Makovicka said. "I think it makes the team come closer together."

One reason for the team's success,

senior center Josh Heskew said, was that quarterbacks Bobby Newcombe and Eric Crouch, were "more aggressive" in the huddle.

"It was kind of a relief," Heskew said.

Newcombe said he knew all along he had the extra aggressiveness in him.

"I always try to hold it inside," Newcombe said. "I did get a little more vocal than I usually do. But at the same time, I try to keep the confidence level up."

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