

Texas A&M 0

A&M mourns 'inept' offense

By SAMUEL MCKEWN
Senior editor

Meet Texas A&M quarterback Randy McCown, master of the understatement.

"We didn't execute very well on offense," McCown said, at nearly a whisper pitch, after the Aggies' 37-0 loss to Nebraska on Saturday. "I thought we were in the game, but, uh, we did nothing to slow them down."

A&M was shut out for the first time in 11 years. It had exactly 2 yards rushing. It punted eight times, turned the ball over five times, suffered eight sacks and generally got beat up by a Blackshirt defense that was coming off its worst showing of the season.

Poor execution? It went a little beyond that. And whatever Texas A&M's offensive game plan was — well, it didn't work.

"We were very inept on offense," Aggies Coach R.C. Slocum said. "We couldn't run the ball, and when we tried to throw it, we couldn't protect the quarterback long enough for him to get the ball off."

During his 10-minute post-game interview, Slocum kept returning to his team's lack of ability in the offensive line, as McCown scrambled around most of the game in vain. Many of his players offered little to no explanation at all.

"What can you say?" said offensive guard Chris Valletta.

Scoring summary

Team	Qtr.	Scoring play	Score by quarters				Total
			Nebraska	Texas A&M	0	6	
NU	2	J. Brown 20yd field goal			3	0	
NU	2	J. Brown 31yd field goal			6	0	
NU	3	J. Brown 36yd field goal			9	0	
NU	3	D. Alexander 6yd run (J. Brown kick)			16	0	
NU	3	E. Crouch 2yd run (J. Brown kick)			23	0	
NU	4	C. Buckhalter 2yd run (J. Brown kick)			30	0	
NU	4	D. Dlednick 3yd run (J. Brown kick)			37	0	

"I never thought anybody could do this to us," McCown said.

"We'll have to look at the tape. I'll have to look at the tape," replied kicker Terence Kitchens.

It was Kitchens who blew A&M's few chances at scoring. The Aggies recovered a Bobby Newcombe fumble at the NU 20-yard line on the first play of the game. But Kitchens, who has a penchant for low-trajectory kicks, had his 30-yard field goal try blocked.

In the second quarter, the Blackshirts blocked another Kitchens field goal, marking the seventh time this season that A&M had an attempt swatted down. Had the Aggies attempted another field goal, Slocum said, it would have been punter Shane Lechler kicking it.

"I have to get the ball up higher. I've struggled with it all season," Kitchens said. "It's very disappointing."

Those were the only two scoring chances Texas A&M had in the whole

game. Both coaches and players traced the offensive futility back to one thing: no running game.

Earlier in the week, Slocum insisted his team had to run the ball to win.

It's safe to say 2 yards wasn't what he had in mind. The Aggies' revolving door of running backs and porous offensive line hampered any chance A&M had to establish a credible ground game.

That left McCown to win the game on his own. A few times in 1999, he had succeeded in rescuing his team, but Saturday marked his poorest showing this season and possibly of his career. The senior completed only 11 of 30 for 116 yards and had four interceptions, which led to 17 NU points. He ran for his life on nearly every play.

"They were bringing so many guys, there was nothing we could ever do to slow them down," McCown

Please see **AGGIES** on 12

Gameday Notebook

The only times the Aggies had the ball in Nebraska territory in the first half were ended by Kyle Vanden Bosch-blocked field goals. His first block of a Terence Kitchens attempt came after Nebraska had turned the ball over to start the game. He got both hands on the kick.

The second block came at the 9:28 mark of the second quarter. This time Kitchens' kick hit him in the helmet.

"I don't know if I jumped that high, or if it was a low kick, but I am guessing it was a low kick," said the 6-foot-4, 270-pound Vanden Bosch with a smile.

The 37-0 shutout was Nebraska's first since the California game in which NU won 45-0. But you have to go back to Aug. 28, 1994, to find the last time the Huskers shut out a ranked opponent. They blanked No. 24 West Virginia 31-0 in the Kickoff Classic.

Meanwhile, it is the first time A&M has been shut out since a 27-0 loss to LSU in 1988.

Nebraska won for the 94th-straight time when totaling more than 300 yards rushing. The 335 yards against A&M were the most the Aggies had given up to a team on the ground this season.

Quarterback Eric Crouch and I-back Dan Alexander were the biggest ground gainers for the Huskers. Crouch rushed 15 times for a career-high 137 yards, including a career-best 62-yard run in the third quarter.

Alexander, meanwhile, had 135 yards on 20 carries and one touchdown. It was the fourth time he had gone over 100 yards in his career. He was 1 yard short of his career best.

Crouch and Alexander combined to give the Huskers two 100-yard rushers in a game for the second time this season. Alexander (135) and Correll Buckhalter (127) went over the century mark against Iowa State. It was the 39th time two NU backs had rushed for more than 100 yards since 1973.

Senior defensive tackle Steve Warren had a career-best three sacks for minus-23 yards. Against A&M, Nebraska had a season-best eight sacks for 64 yards lost. The previous best was 5 against California, Southern Mississippi and Kansas.

Freshman place kicker Josh Brown made a career-high three field goals Saturday. After missing a 21-yard attempt with 6:13 remaining in the first quarter, Brown hit his next three: a 20-yarder with 5:29 in the second quarter, a 31-yarder with :46 remaining in the first half and a 36-yarder with 8:06 in the third quarter to give NU a 9-0 lead. The four attempts are also a career best. Brown is now 9 of 14 on the season.

Gameday notebook compiled by Darren Ivy

