



January 1, 1994

# Notre Dame 24, Texas A&M 21

Attendance - 69,855

The term Deja Vu certainly didn't apply to this game. Even though Notre Dame and Texas A&M found themselves on familiar ground, the 1994 Mobil Cotton Bowl Classic had nothing in common with the one that took place one year before. In the 1993 Classic, Notre Dame jumped on the unbeaten Aggies for an easy 28-3 victory. Now, 365 days later, the matchup was the same, but the style of play was all together different.

Not since the days of Notre Dame and Texas in the early 1970s had the Mobil Cotton Bowl Classic featured a repeat matchup. At 10-1-0, Notre Dame continued to maintain aspirations of winning its ninth national championship. A season-ending upset at the hands of Boston College had knocked the Irish from the top of the polls, but with a strong showing in Dallas the fourth-ranked Irish were hopeful of regaining No. 1.

Texas A&M also carried an impressive 10-1-0 record into the Classic and was ranked seventh in the final Associated Press poll of the regular season. An early season loss at Oklahoma derailed the Aggies' dreams of a national title. However, the Aggies were now on a roll with a nine-game winning streak, including a third straight Southwest Conference championship. It was a record-setting season for the Aggies. Texas A&M became the first SWC team ever to post three consecutive perfect seasons in conference play with a 22-0 mark.

Sunny skies and 62 degrees greeted both teams at kickoff. Weather conditions were perfect. Texas A&M won the toss, deferred the option, and Notre Dame elected to receive. The Aggies were looking for their defense to establish control early, and when the first Irish possession began inside the 10-yard line, the A&M strategy appeared sound. But, it didn't take long for Notre Dame's methodical ground attack to spring to life.

Irish running back Lee Becton ripped through the A&M defense for 11 yards on the first play of the game and Notre Dame's 79-yard scoring drive was underway. All but one of the 13 plays in the Irish drive came on the ground. Quarterback Kevin McDougal's slashing 19-yard option run around right end pushed Notre Dame to a quick 7-0 lead.

Texas A&M answered right back on its first possession. On the Aggies' third play from scrimmage, quarterback Corey Pullig connected with Rodney Thomas for 21 yards to set the tone for the A&M attack. Running back Greg Hill finished the 10-play, 79-yard drive with an eight-yard burst over the right side to tie the score at 7-7.

Pullig soon had the Aggies back into scoring position. The sophomore quarterback completed five passes in a 14-play drive that ended with a 15-yard strike to fullback Detron Smith midway through the second quarter. By halftime, the Aggies were leading 14-7 and an upset seemed to be brewing.

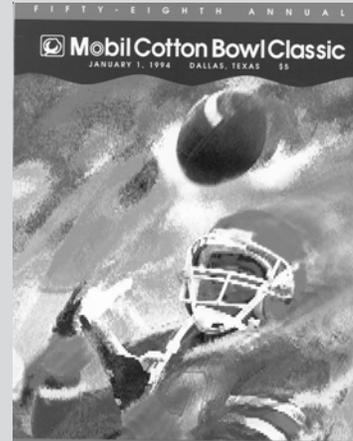
Notre Dame stormed back on its first possession of the second half with Becton pounding away at the Aggie defense to set up fullback Ray Zellars' two-yard scoring run. The Aggies responded with another long drive. This time A&M marched 72 yards for Thomas' touchdown run to regain the lead, 21-14. Notre Dame answered quickly. Becton broke loose for 15 yards on first down and McDougal scrambled for 10. McDougal then hit Zellars with a pass for 18 yards and a first down at the A&M 13. Three plays later, freshman fullback Marc Edwards barreled over from the two for the tying touchdown.

The tug-of-war continued into the fourth quarter. A Notre Dame punt pinned the Aggies on their 10-yard line after linebacker Pete Bercich intercepted Pullig near midfield. The Irish defense limited A&M to three plays and a loss of two yards. The Aggies were forced to punt and Notre Dame's Michael Miller was poised to make the biggest play of the day. The clock was down to 3:55 when Miller fielded the kick for the Irish. Moving to his left, Miller raced down the A&M sideline for 38 yards before linebacker Junior White forced him out of bounds at the Texas A&M 22-yard line.

Becton ripped for eight yards on first down to the A&M 14, but watched as the Aggie "Wrecking Crew" snuffed the next two plays for no gain. The most important factor of all at this point in the game was the clock, and it was ticking. The Irish were facing fourth down and Holtz turned to Kevin Pendergast, his senior placekicker, for the game-winner. Pendergast calmly trotted onto the field, measured the needed distance, and boomed a 31-yard field goal just inside the uprights. With just 2:22 to play, Notre Dame was back in front, 24-21.

Texas A&M still had life, yet launched its final bid for victory with precious little time. The clock was down to 1:10 when Pullig hit tight end Greg Schorp with a pass over the middle for 32 yards at the Notre Dame 48. For a fleeting moment, the Aggies seemed to have regained momentum. But, the determination of the Irish defense finally took over. Defensive tackle Jim Flannigan broke through to sack Pullig for an 11-yard loss on second down. Then came an incomplete pass, and coach R. C. Slocum was forced to reach into his bag of tricks for one last play of desperation. Pullig's fourth down pass was right on target at the Irish 45. Receiver Tony Harrison made the catch, wheeled to his right and lateraled to Leeland McElroy, A&M's heralded freshman running back who was running at full throttle with an open field in front of him. But, Harrison's toss was high. The football sailed over McElroy's head and bounced aimlessly on the ground. Notre Dame's Renaldo Wynn quickly jumped on the loose ball and suddenly the Aggies' scoring threat was over. Just 24 seconds remained and the Irish had survived.

## GAME SUMMARY



TEXAS A&M vs. NOTRE DAME

Notre Dame	7	0	14	3	-	24
Texas A&M	7	7	7	0	-	21

### First Quarter:

Notre Dame-Kevin McDougal 19 run (Kevin Pendergast kick), 8:01, 91 yards in 13 plays following opening kickoff  
 Texas A&M-Greg Hill 8 run (Terry Venetoulis kick), 3:56, 79 yards in 10 plays following kickoff

### Second Quarter:

Texas A&M-Detron Smith 15 pass from Corey Pullig (Venetoulis kick), 2:56, 77 yards in 14 plays following punt

### Third Quarter:

Notre Dame-Ray Zellars 2 run (Pendergast kick), 10:21, 51 yards in 8 plays following punt  
 Texas A&M-Rodney Thomas 1 run (Venetoulis kick), 6:50, 72 yards in 10 plays following kickoff  
 Notre Dame-Marc Edwards 2 run (Pendergast kick), 3:48, 65 yards in 7 plays following kickoff

### Fourth Quarter:

Notre Dame-Pendergast 31 FG, 2:22, 8 yards in 4 plays following punt

### OUTSTANDING PLAYERS

Lee Becton, Notre Dame  
 Antonio Shorter, Texas A&M

### COACHES

Lou Holtz, Notre Dame  
 R.C. Slocum, Texas A&M

### WEATHER

Sunny skies, 62 degrees

## GAME STATISTICS

TEAM STATS	ND	A&M	RUSHING
First Downs	19	20	<b>Notre Dame</b> - Becton 26-138, Zellars 9-25, Miller 2-20, McDougal 9-13, Edwards 3-6, Burris 1-4, Kinder 1-0.
Rushing	13	11	<b>Texas A&amp;M</b> - McElroy 4-45, Hill 16-38, Thomas 9-33, Groce 1-2, Pullig 7-(-15).
Passing	5	9	<b>PASSING</b>
Penalty	1	0	<b>Notre Dame</b> - McDougal 7-15-0, 105 yards.
Rushes-Net Yards	51-206	37-103	<b>Texas A&amp;M</b> - Pullig 17-31-1, 238 yards.
Net Yards Passing	105	238	<b>RECEIVING</b>
Passes	7-15-0	17-31-1	<b>Notre Dame</b> - Dawson 2-41, Mayes 2-27, Zellars 1-18, McBride 1-16, Becton 1-3.
Total Plays	66	68	<b>Texas A&amp;M</b> - Schorp 3-53, Tony Harrison 3-52, Groce 4-45, Brian Mitchell 2-29, Smith 2-24, Thomas 1-21, Hill 1-7, McElroy 1-7.
Total Net Yards	311	341	
Fumbles-Lost	1-0	4-2	
Penalties-Yards	5-34	3-15	
Punts-Average	7-38.0	4-37.3	

### INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

#### PUNTING

**Notre Dame** - Jarrell 7-38.0.  
**Texas A&M** - Bennett 4-37.3.