All it came crashing down when then-No. 25 Kansas State University rolled into Waco and obliterated the Bears 31-3 — in front of an impressive “blackout” crowd. Baylor then lost its first three games, including a 30-15 loss to the United States Air Force Academy in the Lockheed Martin Armed Forces Bowl.

While finishing the year on a four-game skid wasn’t the plan, it’s been a major motivational spark for the team throughout spring and fall camp.

“Everyone just has that chip on their shoulder,” senior tight end Dekaudry Deubney said. “I think last year you probably didn’t go by way we wanted, and it was tough. But we learned from it, and we definitely have something to prove this year, really to ourselves and to our fans and people watching. So I think just the extra motivation to get back to that championship, it’s just pushing us.”

Making the disappointment into something positive begins with the established team culture. Aranda has brought several new faces to the coaching staff, and he’s forced himself to embrace the transfer portal more than he was previously willing.

“A lot of talk of how this is the most fun camp they’ve ever had, and this guy is traveling; this guy has not gotten reps, and this other guy is not getting reps. This guy is traveling,” Aranda said. “All of that, we have to handle the right way, and it’s a way that really uses the player and honors them. I think if we do that, all of those things can make us stronger. I think if we don’t do that, I think we [will] create cracks.”

Redshirt sophomore wide receiver Josh Cameron said turning that culture into success on the field starts with the offense. Cameron said the goal on that side of the football has basically in unison running off the ball.

“I think if we don’t do that, I think we [will] create cracks.”