

Appear tough as ever

# Linebackers key to Ag defense

By PAUL McGRATH  
Battalion Staff Writer

Last season, the Texas Aggie defense was the most formidable base in the land, as reluctant to surrender yards as a woman is about filing her age.

Defensive Co-ordinator Melvin Robertson masterminded the A&M defense eleven that led the nation in total defense and defense against the run, allowing 183.8 and 80.3 yards per game for both categories.

Robertson's 4-3 alignment has met with great success, so successful in fact that many schools (such as Notre Dame) have studied and copied his defense.

The key and vital positions of the defense are the linebackers. In structure-wise, the 4-3 is set up to use three linebackers and four de-

fensive linemen trying to cover all the down offensive linemen," Robertson said. "You have to have great linebackers, and because of the way it's set up, they have a better chance of making tackles in the 4-3 than in other defensive alignments."

Texas A&M seems to have developed a habit of coming up with great linebackers. Names like Jack Pardee and Bill Hobbs come to mind, and in recent years, the likes of John Paul McCrumbley and Garth Ten Napel. And of course, the unforgettable and incomparable Ed Simonini.

Again, Robertson has combined three unknowns to create a winning formula. Manning the battlements are Robert Jackson, 6-2, 228 lbs.; Grady Wilkerson, 6-2, 225 lbs.; Jesse Hunnicutt, 6-0, 210 lbs. and Kevin Monk, 6-0, 218 lbs. Jackson

and Wilkerson split duties at middle linebacker last season. Hunnicutt and Monk, the only non-senior of the four, will play the outside spots. Adding depth are juniors Gary Tate and Jimmy Kocurek.

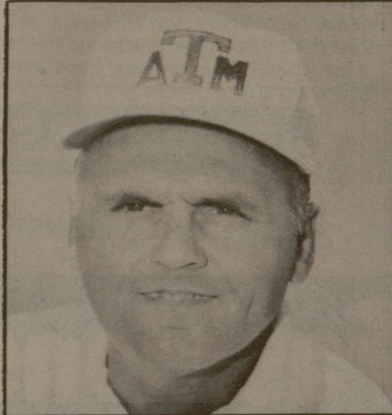
Depth is one area that Robertson has expressed concern. A talented freshman crop which includes first team possibilities such as Dick Frazee (6-2, 220 lbs., Houston Westchester), Frank Lemons (6-2, 215 lbs., Pampa), James Zachary (6-2, 224 lbs.) and Kyle Golson (6-4, 225 lbs., Beaumont French) are expected to fill the ranks.

"They've got to give us depth, you betcha," Robertson said. "Some of them have better credentials than Ed (Simonini) and that bunch. We'll try to play 'em early."

The Gibraltar of the defense, the man to be relied upon in the crucial moments has to be Jackson. He is the epitome of the linebacker credo: mobile, agile and hostile. Robertson purrs when he calls Jackson "the first natural middle linebacker we've ever had. He's just flat natural talent with size."

"Usually we have to take a guy and make him into a middle linebacker," Robertson continued. "But Jackson's got size, speed and quickness. And he's got great feet, great range, and a natural instinct for playing off blockers and getting to the ball."

Jackson, a Henderson County Junior College transfer, certainly has the speed, being timed at 4.6 in the 40. He was in on 91 tackles last season, 42 unassisted. The Rice Owls and Texas Longhorns well remember his number 55, which also form his personalized license plates.



Coach Melvin Robertson  
Texas A&M  
Defensive Co-ordinator

Jackson was tabbed with 21 tackles against the Owls, but it was the Texas game that brought him national fame. Time and again, Jackson hurled back the Horns explosive running back Earl Campbell, one of the few men ever to do so singlehandedly.

With the aid of all-America defensive tackle prospects Edgar Fields and Jimmy Dean to shield away blockers, Jackson should again be able to roam freely from sideline to sideline, setting sights on anything that moves.

"Linebackers have to have their heads in the game all of the time, and

know where the ball is," Jackson said. "You've also got to have some of that killer instinct."

Despite the losses of big name talent such as Simonini, Ten Napel, Pat Thomas and Jackie Williams, Jackson feels the defensive unit will be as stingy as ever.

"I think we'll be the number one defense again. Everyone thinks we'll be bad because we lost a lot of guys off the defense," he said. "Most of the seniors on the squad should fill the leadership role. But, I'll have a big leadership role myself."

Wilkerson, who has recently recovered from knee surgery, is another steady performer, one not to be taken lightly. His four quarterback sacks amongst 80 assisted and unassisted tackles was tops amongst the linebacking crew last year.

Hunnicutt saw limited action and was accredited with being involved in 16 tackles.

All in all, the A&M linebackers appear solid and very capable of handling any situation. Aggie opposition this fall will find that Robertson and Company will have quite a bicentennial welcome waiting for them.

## Smelser leaves Eagles

Offensive guard Dennis Smelser, formerly of the Texas A&M Aggies, has left the training camp of the Philadelphia Eagles.

Eagles Coach Dick Vermeil called Smelser "the best offensive prospect I had in camp" after Smelser left camp last Thursday with two other Aggie players.

Vermeil, who is just beginning his coaching career after leaving UCLA, said Smelser was having national problems concerning his pregnant wife in Texas.

"I'd like him to come back because he has an awful lot of talent. But there are a lot of people walking around with talent," Vermeil said.

Yet another former Aggie griddler is finding some measure of success in the pro ranks.

Glenn Bujnoch, a third round choice of the Cincinnati Bengals, has been given a starting assignment at offensive guard by Coach Bill Johnson.

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Another Charlie Milstead seems to be rising from the ranks.

Charles Milstead, Jr., son of the Aggie field general playing during the late fifties, is a sophomore quarterback at Houston Lee High School.

Another former Aggie griddler, Ed Roaches, has made a good impression on the coaching staff of Tampa Bay Buccaneers, one of the National Football League's two expansion teams.

At 5-6 1/4, 165-pounds, Roaches is the smallest of the 86 recruits in the expansion camp, but has not diminished his confidence in the least. "They say that dynamite comes in all packages, and everytime I talk out onto that field, I'm ready to explode," he said.

Although a wide receiver and kick return specialist, Roaches said he would play anywhere for Coach John McKay. "I'd play guard if they asked me to."

"Obviously, I know I can't run like these people, so I just run around them. They can't hit what we can't catch," he said.

"I thought I was too small to play football, I wouldn't even have come of Houston here. But I felt they drafted me because they thought I could be a playmaker," Roaches said.

Assistant coach Dennis Fryzel is optimistic about Roaches, complimenting his quickness and good hands. "I've liked what I've seen of him so far," he said.

This year's edition of Dave Campbell's Texas Football is out and will hit the newsstands within the next few days.

The scribes have picked the Texas Longhorns to end up Royal-ly this season, perhaps even with a national title. Arkansas is picked a narrow second over the Texas Aggies.

Also with Cotton possibilities are the Baylor Bears and the Texas Tech Red Raiders, says the annual grid in the Lone Star State. First team member Houston is cited as a dark horse.

The magazine has picked Texas A&M's Edgar Fields, Robertson and Lester Hayes for King's crown, the very select of Southwest conference gridgers.

The trio are also in the running for American status. All three are finishing up their careers at A&M.

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