

Stallings Says Eleven Aggie Sophs Could Start Against Tigers Saturday

By Richard Campbell
Battalion Sports Editor

Coach Gene Stallings, with thoughts of LSU Tigers dancing in his head, told his first weekly press conference Tuesday that 11 of his 22 starters in Baton Rouge Saturday night would be sophomores.

"Several of our sophomores have looked good this past week," he said, "and in general we feel all they need is some game experience."

If all that these sophomores need is game experience, then that's exactly what they'll get when they invade the Tigers' lair for the tenth consecutive year, still seeking a victory. 1956 was the last time that the Aggies beat the Tigers in Baton Rouge and that was when Stallings was a player himself for the Maroon and White.

When it comes to game experience it is doubtful that there are many other rivals A&M will play which will give these promising sophomores a chance to 'grow up.' Every year there is a full house of 68,000 noisy fans in Tiger Stadium and most of them are yelling for the Bengals, so anyone who plays there for the first time comes away with a lesson of some sort.

In lauding his younger players, Stallings mentioned Steve Burks of Dumas as a 'good, tough ball carrier'. Burks will get the starting nod at tailback for the Aggies replacing the injured Larry Stagent, who is recovering from a pulled hamstring and is not expected to suit up.

Other sophs receiving praise were defensive left tackle Van Odom, of whom Stallings said, "He is a good one, he has size and his goal line play has been good." Others mentioned were strong guard Leonard Forey, strong tackle Andy Philley, and defensive back Edwin Ebrum.

Charley McClendon's Tigers have won six of their last seven bowl games and lead the Southeastern schools in attendance every year even though they have not won or shared in an SEC title since 1961. That may sound frustrating and it is, but the 1969 Bengal team will be like all the others of the past decade or so—a potential SEC champ, capable of ranking in the Top Ten of the nation, and certainly, a likely bowl team.

"Louisiana State has nine seniors on offense back, and from

the last film we have of them in the Peach Bowl, they showed a lot of offense," Stallings said. "They even outpassed Florida State."

Mike Hillman, a senior quarterback who throws left-handed, leads the talented Tiger offense which averages 222 pounds across the line.

The Bengals also feel that this year's defensive unit could be their best since the early sixties. Coach McClendon returns 17 defensive lettermen and will start only one sophomore, so experience will reign.

Some of the Aggie changes made after this week's practice have involved other sophomores as well as some of the upperclassmen. Robin Davis has taken over the weak tackle slot ahead of Allan Hanson, a junior letterman, while backup man Randy Maddox has moved to weak guard behind junior Jim Parker. Billy Joe Polasek, a sophomore speedster, has moved even with senior letterman Jimmy Adams at the weak end spot and may start Saturday night.

Mitch Robertson, the Aggies' hopeful as a punter will be lost for a month after bursting a blood vessel in his leg Monday. Quarterback Jimmy Sheffield, Mike Caswell, Joey Herr, and Barney Harris could all handle the punting chores if needed but Stallings probably will give the nod to Sheffield.



WARNS OF TIGERS
Head Football Coach Gene Stallings spoke to members of the press about the LSU Tigers and his own team Tuesday afternoon in the Letterman's Lounge. (Photo by Mike Wright)

Former Aggie Coach Dies

KERRVILLE, Tex. (AP) — William N. "Bill James, 71, former Southwest Conference football coach, died here late Monday.

He coached at Texas Christian University at Fort Worth in 1924 and at the University of Texas from 1925-34. He also coached at Texas A&M from 1935-48 and at Trinity University from 1949-52. He retired in 1952.

A native of Tarrant County, he graduated from Center College in Danville, Ky., where he was a football star.

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