

Ags confident, unawed about upcoming season

By JOHN CURYLO
Battalion Sports Writer

Southwest Conference Press Day at Kyle Field Saturday found the 1970 Aggies complimentary of each other, optimistic about the upcoming season and unawed by the ratings of the teams they will face in the next month.

The area of question seems to be the capability of the sophomores to compete with foes like LSU, Ohio State and Michigan. The doubt, however, was almost non-existent among the juniors and seniors on the squad as they talked with reporters making the annual tour of SWC schools.

"It didn't seem that we (the current seniors) fit in very well as sophomores," said Jim Parker, the only senior in the offensive line, "but there isn't any problem with this group. Maybe it is more us (the seniors) fitting in with them than them fitting in with us."

"I'm not worried about the sophomores," added Marc Black, a junior fullback. "Lex James (sophomore quarterback) has a lot of confidence, and Brad Dusek (sophomore running back) is an excellent football player. It's great to be on a team with them."

On defense, confidence was expressed about the youthful line by linebacker Steve Luebbehusen and guard Van Odom, both juniors.

"That young front four is really 'gung-ho', and that's what we need," Luebbehusen said. "It's not like last year. We'll miss those guys, but this year's sophomores are fine football players."

"After one or two games, they'll have all the experience they need," Odom said. "Desire's the most important thing, just like Coach Stallings says. After four games, we'll be ready for conference."

James and Dusek are the key to sophomore success this year, and the upperclassmen on the team know it.

"If you can believe in the quarterback on third down, you can believe in the team, because on third down, it's all quarterback," noted junior Andy Philley, an offensive tackle. "You bet I believe in Lex James. The kid's got confidence written all over him."

"Brad's not real shifty, but he's a bull," according to Ed Ebrum, a junior cornerback. "He punishes cornerbacks on the sweeps. It makes me wish I was playing safety."

"Brad's a hard runner," Odom said in agreement. "He has a second effort, and a third. He's always trying to get out. He'll

spin off for that extra yard every time."

Dave Elmendorf, who will see action both ways this fall, drew a lot of attention from the visiting press. The fact that he turned down a baseball contract in excess of \$50,000 to play football this year was a question asked frequently about the senior safety who is listed as the team's best player both offensively and defensively by Coach Stallings.

"I just felt like I owed it to myself to play my senior season of football and then see what happens," Elmendorf said. "We don't know how good we are," he added. "This is a better team than last year because of more talent and depth."

The schedule these players face is formidable, but the reaction to such competition is favorable, considering the talent and reputation of the opposition.

"I'm looking forward to playing those guys," James said. "It'll help us more than hurt us. It's advantageous to the team to play people like Ohio State. I consider it an honor to play them. They're one of the greatest teams ever."

"I like the idea of playing Ohio State with two games under our belts," Black said. "They'll be cocky, expecting to run over us, and I hope we can surprise them."

"Last year, Texas was fantastic," he added, "but things change from year to year. If they didn't we wouldn't have seasons. I'd like for us to be the ones to knock them off."

"The only thing that'll discourage us against this schedule is injuries," Elmendorf said. "I got an example of that my sophomore year."

Elmendorf and Dusek are both sons of former A&M students. Dusek's father played football on the same team as Barney Welch, now assistant coach for the Aggies. Were they influenced by their fathers' background to come to A&M?

"Dad didn't pressure me, but he's an Aggie, and he loves A&M," Elmendorf said. "I knew all the songs early. I came here a lot before I was recruited."

"At first I was open-minded about where to go to college," Dusek said, "but I narrowed it down to A&M. Dad was great

about it. He wanted me to go where I'd get the best education."

Ebrum and James picked A&M without it being in their respective families, but they are just as firm in their convictions.

"Ever since I was a little boy, I wanted to be an Aggie," Ebrum said. "I was recruited by a couple of other schools, but A&M was the only place for me. I like the way Coach Stallings conducts his workouts."

"I don't know where I'd have gone if I hadn't come here," James said. "I wanted to major in engineering and play football for Coach Stallings."

This year, A&M plays eleven games. The addition is Wichita State. The game is the season opener for the Aggies, and it will be played at home this Saturday.

"I like opening at home," Black said. "Last year we played three out of ten here, but this year, it'll be five out of 11. That's a good advantage."

"Any time we play away, it's rough," Ebrum said. "I'd rather play at home, because the fans at home are really great. It's better to look up and see everybody standing and hear all the Aggies yelling for you than to be playing elsewhere."

The AstroTurf, a recent addition to Kyle Field, drew comments from Black and Ebrum. The surface has been installed on the practice field and in the weight training room.

"The AstroTurf is great to have here," Ebrum said. "It's good to play on. Everybody's real pleased with it."

"Under perfect conditions, I'd rather play on a natural surface," Black commented. "However, should conditions be less than perfect, I'd favor the AstroTurf. I feel that in the long run, the AstroTurf will be better."

Nine sophomores will start for the Aggies this year, four on offense and five on defense. The hopes of the Aggies to field a winner are based on their performances. Their attitude was reported by James.

"We try to think that we have the ability to make the transition from high school football to college," he said, "and I feel that our schedule will be an advantage to us when we get into conference."



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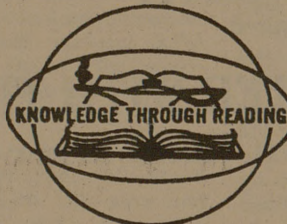
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