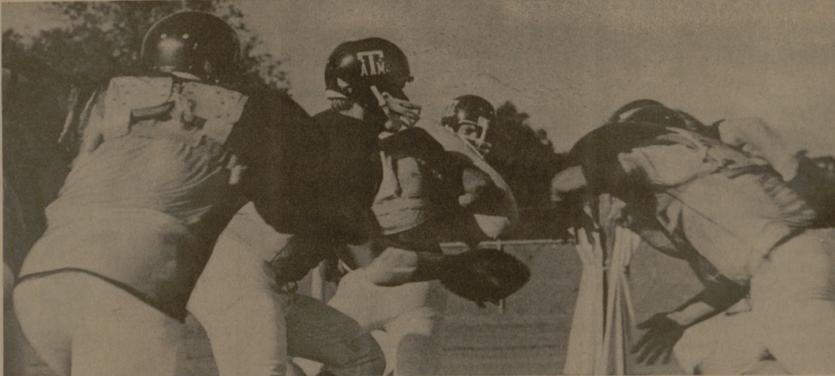


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THE AGGIE OFFENSE gets ready for Saturday night's season opener against Wichita State as sophomore quarterback Tim Trimmier leads the team through a drill. Lex James and Mark Green have been injured, but they should be ready for the 7:30 p. m. game in Kyle Field. (Photo by Mike Rice)

Aggie Doug Neill: father and fullback

Texas A&M's Doug Neill could be a likely candidate for "Family Plan" tickets — half price for adults and \$1.00 for children for the season opener against Wichita State. With a wife and two kids, going to a football game could be mighty expensive.

But tickets are not a problem for Neill, since he is the No. 1 fullback for the 1971 Aggies. A tough 6-1, 198-pounder, Neill led the Aggies in rushing last year with 430 yards on 107 carries for a 4.0 average.

This year's figures could go

much higher with Neill running behind a much improved offensive line. "I really hadn't noticed how much the line had improved until I looked at the film of the Wichita State game last year. This year's line is at least twice as good."

According to Neill, it's not unusual for a back not to keep up with the offensive line. There are just too many other things to think about. "When I'm in the backfield, I have to concentrate on the snap count and whether or not we shift. Then I concentrate on the path I am going to follow, rather than the line. And I particularly have to concentrate on holding the ball tight. I used to wave the ball around a lot when I ran, and the coaches have had a hard time breaking me of that habit. But I think I have that problem licked now."

And that's not all. A change in quarterbacks makes a difference. Each quarterback handles differently, and I have to know whether they sprint out deep or shallow to determine my blocking angle on the defensive line. It's not actually that complicated in action. "Experience makes it a lot easier," Neill says. "Everything comes more naturally now."

Combining a family life with football has its advantages and disadvantages, Neill says. "Being able to go home and see the kids helps me relax. And it's nice to have a wife to console you." Does Mrs. Neill (Terry) try any coaching? "I don't tell her how to sew, and she doesn't tell me how to play football," Doug says. "But she's a real football fanatic."

Neill's children are Lex, Doug, 2, and Tessa, six months. "Little Doug is a big fan," Neill says. "He always wants to play when I get home."

West to have close races

By BOB MYERS
 AP Sports Writer

So-called sleepers abound in the Pacific-8 Conference and the same holds true in the other two major loops in the Far West, the Western Athletic Conference and the Pacific Coast Athletic Association.

Postseason classics for the targets in each group — The Rose Bowl New Year's Day for the Pac-8, the new Fiesta Bowl at Sun Devil Stadium at Tempe, Ariz., Dec. 27 for the WAC champion, and the relatively new Pasadena Bowl for the winners in the PCAA.

The run for the roses at Pasadena in the nation's oldest postseason attraction is pretty wide open. Upsets on given Saturdays will not be surprising.

In the Pac-8, most speculation centers on Coach Jerry Frei's Oregon Ducks, John McKay's Trojans of Southern California, UCLA and its new coach, Pepper Rodgers, and Dee Adros of Oregon State.

Possible and probable troublemakers? Quarterback Sonny Sixkiller of the Washington Huskies, for one. Tailback Bernard Jackson of Washington State for another, as well as defensive tackle Sherman White of California and linebacker Jeff Siemon of Stanford.

Coach John Ralston's Stanford Indians were the toast of both coasts in 1970 in a season capped by their complete mastery over heavily favored Ohio State

in the Rose Bowl, 27-17.

Gone, of course, is the key player of the attack, Heisman Trophy winner Jim Plunkett, along with the bevy of companion stars. But the war cries from Palo Alto are hardly muted. Stanford feels it has as much right to chant "Rose Bowl" as anyone else in the league. To back up the claim, they point out that Ralston can start a letterman at every offensive and defensive position.

At Oregon, Frei has eight starters back on offense and nine on defense. He has two capable quarterbacks, Dan Fouts being the foremost, and tailback Bobby Moore may be the best combination runner-receiver in the Pac-8, if not the nation.

Southern California has been the Rose Bowl as Pac-8 champion five times since John McKay, now in his 12th year at Trojanville. McKay admits he is the optimistic type and firmly believes this could well be his sixth Rose Bowl year.

Quarterback Jimmy Jones, now a senior, ran and passed the team to its third and fourth consecutive trips to Pasadena so he

knows the road. He'll have extra help this fall from Mike Rae, a junior.

Forty-five lettermen are back at Oregon State and the Beavers are confident they'll have a much, much better record than their 6-5-1 last year, poorest ever for Andros. Quarterback Steve Endicott figures to be healthy again. Dave Schilling is a power-running fullback and Jeff Kolberg is one of the better split ends around.

UCLA has problems comparable to Stanford. Lost by graduation was quarterback Dennis Dummit, who broke every Bruin passing record during his two-year stay at Westwood. Replacement Mike Flores has an awfully large pair of shoes to fill.

The Washington Huskies under Jim Owens rebounded from a dismal 1969 season to a 6-4 mark last year, thanks in a large part to Sonny Sixkiller and his slingshot arm. Sixkiller blossomed into the nation's leading passer and one of his chief receivers, Jim Krieg, is back. Owens' problems, however, may be replacing a fine offensive line.

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