

At weekly press conference

# Stallings discusses team's shape and season opener

By JOHN CURYLO  
Battalion Sports Editor

Injuries, Wichita State, and the development of the Texas Aggies were the main points discussed yesterday by Coach Gene Stallings.

"I'm pleased with the attitude the players have had up to this point," he said. "They're trying to be good. In practice, every phase of the game has looked good. I am worried about injuries, which have hurt our depth at quarterback, tackle, and center."

Physically, Lex James is ready to play after his thumb injury. Mark Green is doubtful, having

suffered a foot injury. Ralph Sacra still has water on the knee and may not play Saturday, but Butch Kamps did work out Monday. Dennis Carruth, a linebacker who has had leg troubles, practiced a little Monday, also. "Naturally, I'm concerned about getting more people hurt," Stallings said, "but we do need some full speed work on punt and pass protection. Our kickers haven't had a good rush yet, and our passers have to learn to throw under pressure. Working on this without contact is like telling a kid to go swimming without getting wet."

Indicating that Wichita will not be a pushover, he said that he looked for the Shockers to do a lot of passing, mixed with letting tailback Randy Jackson run as much as possible.

"I'm usually more concerned about A&M than our opponents," the coach explained. "I want to throw the football to help move the ball on the ground, but I don't want to have to pass just so we can run."

Elaborating more on the Aggies' workouts thus far, Stallings said that the effort to correct last year's mental errors and penalties has been excellent.

"The concentration is real good on avoiding penalties and fumbles," he said. "To say that we won't make any mistakes is foolish, but we'll try to keep them to a minimum."

The kicking game is ready, with Joey Herr and Mitch Robertson battling it out for the punting chores, and Pat McDermott trying to keep his job, although Roberto Payan has been strong. Mike Bellar returns as the kickoff man.

"Herr and Robertson are pretty close," Stallings said. "We'll use the full speed punt protection work to see who's better. Joey kicks the ball a little too far, which allows a longer run-back. Pat and Roberto are both good kickers. Pat's more accurate, but Roberto can kick further. Mike Bellar's been kicking off into the end zone, and that's what we want."

When weight was discussed, he said that all the players were keeping the weights they reported in at. He attributed this to the excellent condition they were in when they reported.

"Van Odom's regained all the weight he lost last summer," Stallings said. "Marc Black is in better shape than he's ever been in at A&M. Brad Dusek is down to 199, but I wouldn't mind him losing a few more pounds."

The only player who has had a significant loss is Roberto Payan. He came in at 218, and now he's 210."

With Sacra hurt, Ted Smith will start in his place. "Big Cliff" (Clifton) Thomas will back

him up. To add depth at guard, Robert Gerasimonwicz, a center, is working out on both sides. Lee Hitt is still the number two man at all four defensive backfield positions, and "Little Cliff" (Clifford) Thomas, a player Stallings says has come along well this fall, is playing behind Steve Burks at tailback.

Last year's 41-14 victory over Wichita State saw the Aggies use nearly every player with a number on his back. Asked if this would be an objective this year, Stallings hesitated to predict a repetition.

"I don't plan to go crazy and play everybody," he said, "but I'd like to use about 50 guys."

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## Auburn, Sullivan are strong again

AUBURN, Ala. (AP)—Auburn's touchdown team of quarterback Pat Sullivan and split end Terry Beasley is expected to provide a lot of scoring, but the Tigers running game this season may also produce its share of points to take some of the pressure off the passing game.

One of the reasons is James Owens, a 6-2, 212-pound junior from Birmingham.

Owens, Auburn's first black scholarship football player, is currently the man to beat for the starting fullback slot. He played in the defensive secondary last season after playing five positions on both offense and defense as a freshman.

In addition, Owens will be deep for kick returns. Last year he returned a punt against Florida for an 89-yard TD.

Joining Owens and Sullivan in the backfield at the running back positions are fullbacks Terry Page, Tommy Lowry and Harry Unger and tailbacks Terry Henley.

Henley, playing behind graduated Micky Zofko last season, averaged 6.6 yards on 40 carries and scored three TDs.

Defense is where the Tigers need work with the most needed at strong linebacker. Co-captain Tommy Yearout has shifted to the position from his spring starting right tackle spot.

The Tiger coaches figure their No. 1 problem on defense is to develop depth at strong linebacker. Two-year starter Bobby Strickland had graduated and his presence will be missed.

Tennessee, Alabama and Georgia all figure to be running teams this year and strong linebacker will be the key to stopping them.

Sophomore defensive back David Langer has earned a spot on the starting team and is considered the most punishing tackler on the team. His small 5-9, 168-pounds is deceptive to opponents. Last year he blocked three punts and returned one for a touchdown.

Nevertheless, the bread and butter play for the Tigers in 1971 will still be Sullivan to Beasley. One question about the effectiveness of the combination is the ability of other receivers to catch the football if Beasley is covered.

Zofko and fullback Wallace Clark will not be returning.

A portion of Sullivan's success in hitting Beasley last year was the choice of optional receivers. But tight end Ronnie Ross, wing-back Alvin Bressler, tailback

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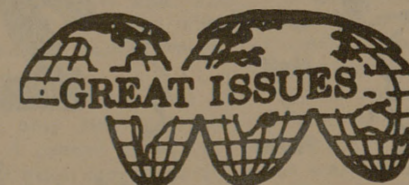
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