

A&M keeps title hopes alive with 18-13 win over Rice

By JOHN CURYLO
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Refusing to be beaten, the Texas Aggies, behind twice in the game, evened their season record at 5-5 by downing the Rice Owls 18-13 in Houston Saturday.

A 14 yard run by Mark Green in the second quarter and a seven yard pass from Joe Mac King to Mitch Robertson in the fourth period were the touchdown plays. Field goals of 27 and 28 yards in each of these quarters by Pat McDermott tied and broke the school career record of 13 held by Charles Riggs.

King completed eight of 18 passes for 128 yards, three of them going to tight end Homer May for 52 yards. Green ran for 90 yards on 31 carries, and Steve Burks got 40 in six tries, 32 of them on one play.

For Rice, Stahle Vincent ran 25 times for 92 yards, and Bruce Gadd completed 15 of 26 passes for 191 yards and one touchdown.

He threw two interceptions. Gary Butler was his leading receiver, catching five for 101 yards. Bob Brown hauled in eight Gadd aerials for 73 yards.

Rice's Mark Williams tried a field goal of 53 yards in the first period, but it was short. Williams' attempt was the result of a fourth and eight situation after Rice had moved from their own 23 to the A&M 36. Vincent had run 11 yards for one first down, and Gadd had hit Butler for 24 for another. On third and five, a screen pass to Butler was stopped for a three yard loss by Max Bird, setting up the kick.

Williams got another chance with three minutes gone in the second quarter. In five minutes of playing time, the Owls had gone from their 38 to the Aggie 10. Four first downs had been made on the ground, and the A&M defense stiffened. With first and 10 at the 14, Cliff Crabtree was stopped after a two yard gain. Vincent got only two, being tackled by David Hoot. Hoot knocked down a pass in the end zone for Butler, and Williams kicked the 27 yard field goal.

After a Robertson punt of 39 yards to the Rice 10, Steve Luebbehusen intercepted a Gadd pass,

returning it 12 yards to within 12 of a touchdown. Green got two yards in as many tries, and King overthrew Billy Joe Polasek, so McDermott toed one from the 17 to tie the score.

Mike Bellar kicked off to Preston Anderson, who returned it 13 yards, but Charles Billingsley jarred the ball loose, and Mike Bunger recovered it at the 13. Two plays later, Doug Neill and Ralph Sacra cleared the way for Green's 14 yard scoring run. McDermott's extra point try was wide after a penalty nullified a good conversion, and A&M led, 9-3.

The Owls bounced back, with Williams making the 28 yard field goal with 3:20 to go in the half. A pass from Gadd to Butler was good for 52 yards, with the tight end from Conroe getting away from Brad Dusek. Hoot finally knocked him out of bounds at the 12.

Here the Aggie defense got stingy again. Bird caught Gadd for a loss of three and Hoot tipped a pass intended for Butler, forcing the field goal, which made it 9-6.

King passed 26 yards to May for a first down, and Green and Neill picked up two yards each to set up an unsuccessful 57 yard field goal attempt by Roberto Payan.

Statistically, the first half belonged to the Owls. Eight first downs to five, 165 yards to 103 and 40 plays to 28 were Rice's credits. However, a lost fumble and an intercepted pass set the Aggies up for scores twice.

The wind kept A&M from try-



EIGHT WHITE JERSEYS caused Rice's Preston Anderson to fumble a second quarter kickoff. Mike Bunger (47) recovered the loose ball on the 13 yard line, and two plays

later, Mark Green scored a touchdown for the Aggies. A&M went on to win, 18-13. (Photo by Mike Rice)

ing a 49 yard field goal in the middle of the third quarter. A fumble recovery by Boice Best was made possible by Kent Finley and Grady Hoermann's jarring tackle of Steve Ogletree.

Late in the period, Green sandwiched runs of one and eight around a plunge for three by Neill to get a first down. The drive continued into the fourth stanza

with a 21 yard pass from King to Polasek. Burks ran for six, and Todd Christopher fell on his fumble to keep the drive alive at the Rice 36.

King hit Robert Murski on the right sideline for nine yards and a first down. Green took a pitch-out for nine, then ran through the middle for two more and another first down. Little more could be gained, and McDermott kicked a 28 yarder to break the school record and put the Aggies in front 12-6 with 12:19 remaining.

Rice stormed back, going 81 yards in eight plays to score. A pass to Brown for 16, a 13 yard run by Vincent, a piling on penalty, and another pass to Brown for 13 yards, set up the Gadd-to-Butler pass for the touchdown of 18 yards. Butler fought off tackles by Bird, Lee Hitt and Dusek to go over near the right flag. Williams' PAT made it 13-12.

Four big pass plays put the

Aggies back on top. A 12 yard look-in to Burks on third and seven was good for a first down. Then, on third and 13, King hit Joey Herr cutting over the middle for 27 big yards to the Rice 28. May was next, catching another King aerial on the right sideline for 21 yards.

May fell on his already cracked wrist, and went out of the game. In his place, Robertson caught King's pass over the middle after the quarterback had rolled out to the left. An underthrown pass to Neill was unsuccessful for the conversion, but A&M led 18-13 with 6:46 to play.

The Owls got moving again twice, but the Aggie defense rose to the occasion both times. Gadd was stopped short of a first down at the A&M 28 on a fourth and four, and Hitt intercepted a pass at the 39 on a third and 10 to stop another drive.

A 74 yard punt by Robertson had given Rice the ball on their own 20. Standing on the 11, the

Abilene senior booted it completely out of the Owl end zone.

Both offensively and defensively, big plays spelled victory for the Aggies. In their fourth straight win, Hoot was credited with 15 tackles and one knocked down pass. Hoermann had 11 stops and a blocked pass. Van Odom and Best each had nine tackles, and Best a fumble recovery.

Bland Smith and Bill Wisbold got eight tackles each, with Smith knocking down one of Gadd's passes. Luebbehusen made seven tackles, but his pass interception was the big play for him. Hitt had six tackles and intercepted a pass, in addition to knocking one down.

Only the University of Texas Longhorns are left for A&M. For the Aggies to take the conference crown, they need help this weekend. Rice must beat TCU, and Texas Tech must win against Arkansas to set up a showdown for the championship on Thanksgiving Day.

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