

Tough again in 1975

# Defense is key to A&M's success

By MIKE BRUTON  
Sports Editor

If you wanted to strike up an inspiring conversation with any Texas A&M football coach, mention the Aggie defense.

They'll all agree that defense has played an integral part in the recent success of the A&M football program. And Melvin Robertson, assistant head coach and defensive coordinator for the Aggies, said this year's eleven should be better than the national runner-up unit of 1974.

With starters returning, including two All-Americans, and 17 lettermen, the foundation to supremacy is already laid for the Maroon defense. Many have questioned the overall depth of A&M's anti-offense device, but there is ample talent that should develop into a solid unit.

Most Aggie opponents point first to the front four when speaking of lack of depth in the A&M defense. But a coach has to go with his starters first and the Aggies have four men that most coaches would be glad to have.

Add 30 pounds to Blake Schwarz, Edgar Fields, Tank Marshall and Jimmy Dean and you get a half-ton wall of muscle. All are excellent pass rushers and runners beware, because there won't be many places to run.

It is true that there's no proven depth in the A&M defensive line, but sophomores Richard Frey and Steve Spitzenberger, along with incoming freshman Johnnie Donahue have enormous potential for an adequate bench.

All-American Ed Simonini heads a fine group of Aggie linebackers who will assist the front four in

thwarting enemy offensive assaults. At the other outside post will be Garth Ten Napel, the Ags' leading tackler last season, who has a habit of robbing opponents of the ball. Transfer Robert Jackson and letterman Grady Wilkerson produce plenty of thunder at the middle linebacker spot.

The key to having a solid 4-3 defense is having linebackers with the ability to coordinate with the line and the secondary in any situation to take away any advantage the offensive unit might have.

The A&M linebacking unit boasts quickness, strength, aggressiveness and mental alertness. There's adequate size in the middle with Jackson (229) and Wilkerson (224). Simonini and Ten Napel aren't considered large for outside backers, but both play with such intensity that their size is inconsequential.

Underneath, Jesse Hunnicutt will be the biggest help to the outside linebackers, as he had a super spring. Sophomores Kevin Monk and Phil Bennett should also see considerable action.

It is a common tendency for an offensive football team to go to the air to try and weaken a strong defense. That strategy could prove detrimental when dealing with A&M's talented defensive backfield.

Everybody's All-American Pat Thomas will lurk in the minds of opposing quarterbacks when they let the pigskin fly. Thomas is the kind of athlete that demands respect, because he has the talent to turn a game completely around if ignored.

Joining Thomas in the secondary will be Willie Thompson at the other cornerback and safeties Jackie Williams and Lester Hayes. Sharing

the strong safety spot with Hayes is Reggie Williams, who was the starter until an injury slowed him in the spring.

Robertson says he plans to do more things with the secondary in the 1975 season, because he has a wider range of talent to work with. Hayes and Thomas both are excellent blitzers and Jackie Williams directs traffic well enough to compensate for any weaknesses created by blitzing.

Versatility is the factor that will enable the Aggie defense to main-

tain their high standard of performance.

Players like Hunnicutt and Hayes, who can step in and play two positions, are like having a couple of extra men. Hunnicutt saw action as a linebacker and defensive end last season, with Hayes having played linebacker for the past two seasons before being moved to strong safety in the spring.

Versatility in having different types of football players should also prove to be an asset to the 1975 Aggie defense. The reckless play of

Thomas and Simonini sets a pace for the entire unit, while Ten Napel's ball-hawking ability results in turnovers for the offensive foe. Fields Dean and both middle linebackers Jackson and Wilkerson produce the physical deterrent, with thinkers like Jackie Williams and Schwarz adding stability.

The way things are shaping up, I'd urge everyone to make a special effort to read your programs next fall to learn the names of the defensive personnel, because they'll probably be on the field so little that you may never know them otherwise.

## Tom Pucci gets job

# Arkansas names new head tennis instructor

FAYETTEVILLE, Ark. — Tom Pucci has been named as the new head tennis coach at the University of Arkansas, Athletic Director Frank Broyles has announced.

Pucci comes to the Razorback athletic program from the University of New Mexico, where he guided the Lobos to their best season in a decade (18-5) in his first year as a college head coach last spring.

Pucci, 27, was born in Sacramento, Calif., where he received his BA degree in physical education from Sacramento State in 1969. He also holds a MA degree from the University of Pacific and a PhD in physical education from the University of New Mexico.

In addition to his coaching duties, Pucci will be an assistant professor

of physical education. He replaces Jeff Cook, who resigned recently to accept a position with a tennis club in Pennsylvania.

"This is a step up for me . . . there is a big challenge here," Pucci

says. "It is an honor to be associated with such a fine athletic program."

Pucci is single, and will be moving to Fayetteville in the next few weeks.

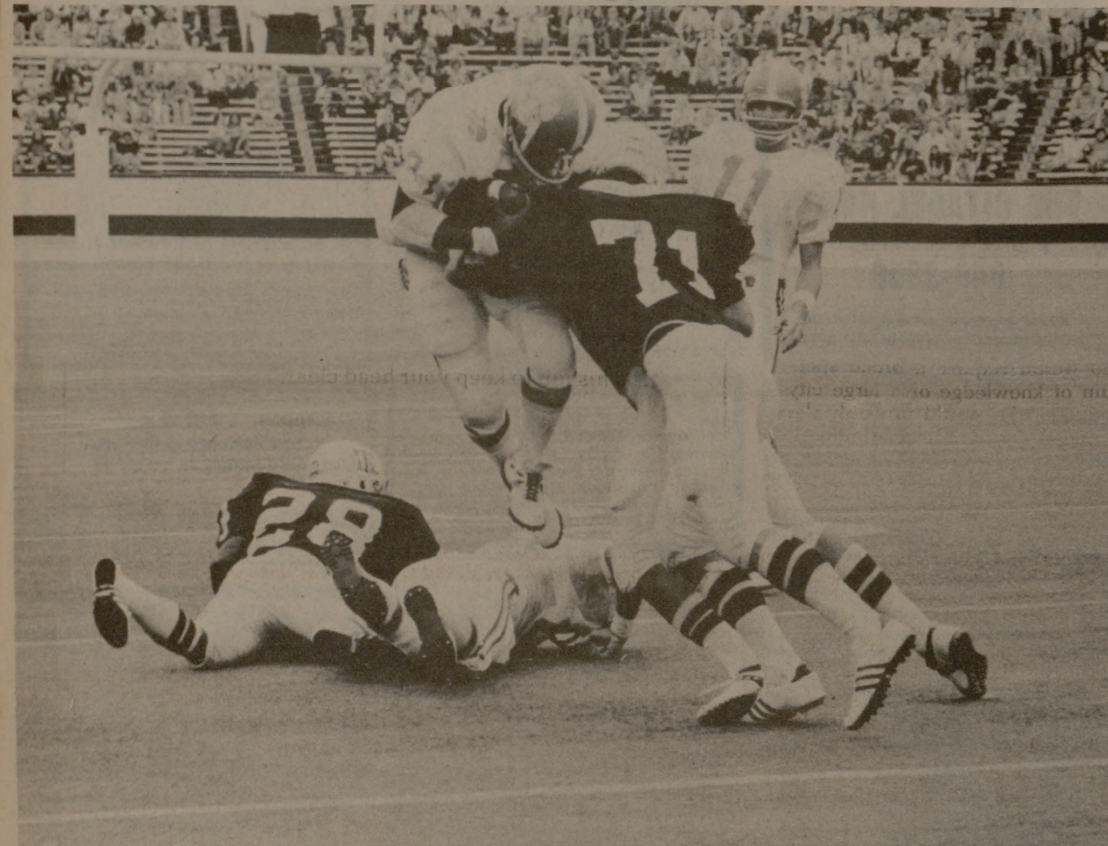
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Typical Aggie defense; Pat Thomas (28) destroys blocker as Garth Ten Napel (71) destroys ball carrier.

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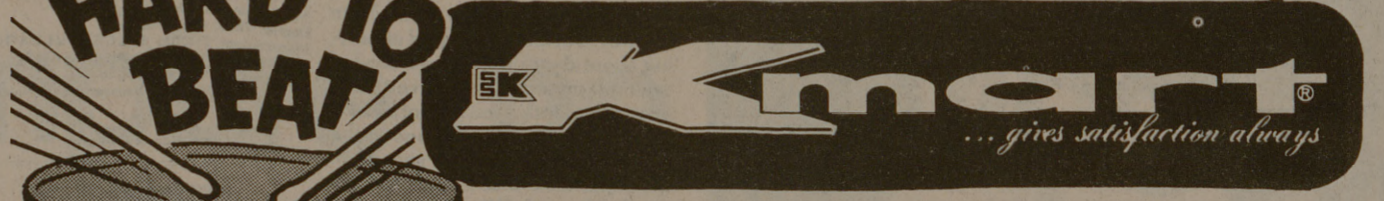
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