

Defense does its share

Woodard-led offense kills Rice

By PAUL McGRATH
Battalion Sports Editor

Although visions of upset danced in their heads, the hopes of the Rice Owls vanished in a fashion similar to rather "flushed" conclusion of the MOB.

Pulling the handle on the Owls was a tenacious fullback disguised as a tank by the name of George Woodard, a cool, steady quarterback named Mike Jay and a determined defense which maintained its

poise despite two early Rice scores. Recollections of past upsets at the hands of the Owls caused a minor panic among the Aggie faithful, but three second half touchdowns erased all doubt as to who commanded the contest, A&M coming away with a 33-14 win.

The Texas A&M offense, much maligned in the early part of the season, played perhaps its best game of the year. The offensive front wall blasted gap after gap in

the Rice defense, allowing the Aggie backs to garnish 378 yards rushing. "The offensive line did a great job. This was definitely their best game," said offensive co-ordinator Tom Wilson. "Our lineman did a good job blocking on the inside gaps, allowing Woodard to hit the crease. It was a physical football game and they responded well."

Woodard hit the crease for 167 yards in 32 totes, the most carries by an Aggie back since Emory Bellard took charge in 1972. The 249 lb. freshman rambled over and through the Owls, partly due to the fact that he outwitted every member of the Owl defense.

Woodard rushed for 48 yards in both the first and fourth quarters and had 74 steps in the turnaround third period. He missed the entire second quarter with slight injuries.

"Of course George has a tremendous future ahead of him," said Wilson. "He's added a lot to our offense. Everybody is tickled to death with him." The Aggie first year man, without a flowery nickname as has his Texas counterpart, has played in four games, accumulating over 100 yards in each contest.

Jay filled the shoes of injured David Shipman more than adequately. The ex-Marine, starting his first game in two years, gained 83 yards in 15 carries. He and Woodard combined for 250 of the 378 A&M rushing yards.

Jay scored two of A&M's touchdowns, including the go-ahead points in the third quarter. Wilson said concerning Jay's performance, "We feel he did an excellent job. Mike did a good job of faking and handled the option well. He showed a lot of quickness. We're real pleased with him."

The entire offense can take a good deal of the credit for A&M dominating the game after the first minutes. Gaining 25 first downs and running off 88 plays (to Rice's 59), the Aggie attack was awesome to behold. On

first down plays, an important statistic for A&M's ball control offense, the Ags averaged 5.3 yards. Overall, A&M averaged 4.7 per rush and 4.5 per play.

The consistency of the Aggie assault was aided by the fine field position given them by the defense. A&M's average starting point was their own 40. This, along with the fact that the Aggies managed about 30 yards a possession, put them in striking distance throughout the game.

It was Rice that did the preliminary striking, however. Rice quarterback Tommy Kramer hit running back John Coleman on two scoring passes in the first half, making it only the second and third times the third ranked Aggies have been behind all season.

The first Owl score was set up by a 35-yard pass and run when Kramer caught A&M in a safety blitz. "We had a safety blitz on the pass was just there," said Melvin Robertson, the man behind the nation's top defensive team. "I didn't give them enough credit. They just caught me."

On the second touchdown, "Garth Ten Napel was covering Coleman and Kramer started to leave the pocket. Garth came off to cover the run and Kramer threw it. It was just one of those things," said Robertson.

While Rice was having its big plays, the defense managed a few of its own, particularly by safetymen Lester Hayes. Hayes played a part in each of the three A&M touchdowns in the second half. He disrupted a Rice punt, putting the offense in great shape at the Owl 12. Hayes later recovered an Owl fumble also at the 12 and in the fourth period, intercepted a Kramer pass and returned it 43 yards, although his yardage was wiped out by a penalty.

After the early scare, the Aggie defense settled down and dictated the terms to the Owls. Agground, Rice collected 32 yards in 33 attempts with a total of minus eight in the second half. Rice went without a first down from the second quarter to four minutes remaining in the game, over 33 minutes.

Last year, getting behind early seemed to have strange effects on the Aggies. Now, the experience of three seasons creates that intangible element called poise. "We've got a bunch of seniors playing and that poise ought to come out," Robertson said.

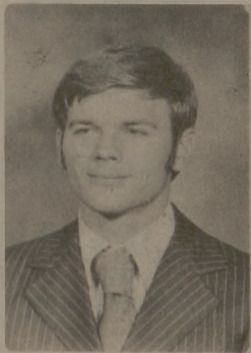
This marked the first time this year the A&M defensive 11 has surrendered two touchdowns in a single game. Although their ranking in scoring defense may fall, their position as number one overall should not be affected.

A key factor to the Rice game was the foot of Tony Franklin. Only a freshman, Franklin booted a new A&M field goal record with a 59 yarder in the closing seconds of the first half. He was two of five for the afternoon, while playing with a slightly sprained ankle.

He and the rest of the Aggie wounded should be ready for the showdown with Texas November 25. According to Wilson and Robertson, all starters will be able to suit up.

The Aggies now move to 9-0, the only Southwest Conference school still undefeated. However, the most difficult part of the schedule is coming up. Thus, there is good reason to say that the season is just beginning.

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Fem Water poloists take tournament title

By CAROLYN BLOSSER
Battalion Sports Writer

Texas A&M proved to be an ungracious host as the Aggies' "A" team downed the Clear Creek Water Polo Club 5-3 to win the Women's Southwest Water Polo Championships. It was a reversal of last year's championship when Clear Creek won 3-2.

Both A&M teams "A" and "B" advanced to the championship round. In semi-final action, Clear Creek beat Clear Lake 10-7 while A&M bested their team "B" by a score of 8-1. Clear Lake overwhelmed team "B" 21-9 to take third place honors.

In preliminary games, the Aggie offense was led by Barbara German who scored nine goals. Vicki Brown was A&M's second highest scorer with seven goals. In the championship game, Brown scored two goals while George Ann Collins, Jean Collins, and Nina Gauntt each scored one.

Jean Collins says, "I think defense was our strongest point. Our goalie, Debbie Starr, made a big difference in the game." Starr adds, "We found the weak point in their offense and our defense took care of it."

Clear Creek came into the tournament boasting a 35-game winning streak, which the Aggies abruptly ended in the final game. The women all agree that this is one of the finest games they have ever played.

German says, "We really had to work hard for the title. Determination had a lot to do with it." Brown says, "We finally put it all together when we needed to."

Six Aggies were selected to the All-Tournament Team. German and Starr made the first team and Jean Collins, Patty Shannon, K.K. Kueteman, and Jeannie Buckles made the second team.

According to Dennis Fosdick, the caliber of play throughout the tournament was greatly improved over that of the first year—1974. The entries doubled and are expected to increase again in 1976.

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