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**Broyles, Bellard discuss  
teams' chances for game**

Associated Press

LITTLE ROCK — Arkansas Coach Frank Broyles was giving a pep talk Wednesday — to the Razorback fans, not the players.

"I'd like to say one of the big factors in our game Saturday will be whether our fans are truly involved in the game," Broyles said. "I hope it will be like the Southern Cal game two years ago."

In that game, Arkansas upset USC, the eventual national champion, 22-7 before a full house that called the hogs constantly.

Arkansas plays Texas A&M Saturday at Little Rock with the host role in the Cotton Bowl at stake. A&M is 10-0 for the season, 6-0 in the Southwest Conference and ranked second in the country. Arkansas is 8-2 for the season, 5-1 in the SWC and ranked 18th.

A victory by Arkansas means the Razorbacks would share the championship with A&M and Texas and would oppose Georgia in the Cotton Bowl because they haven't been since 1966. A&M went in 1968. Texas played in the Cotton Bowl in 1974.

An A&M victory would give the Aggies undisputed claim to the SWC

title. The loser of Saturday's game will play Southern Cal in the Dec. 22 Liberty Bowl at Memphis.

Does Arkansas have a home field advantage?

"That's a help . . . not an advantage," Broyles said. "Especially, if the fans are involved."

The game has some natural matchups.

A&M's defense is No. 1 in the country, allowing an average of 175.5 yards per game, and No. 1 in defense against the run, with an average of 71.9 yards per game.

Arkansas is second in the country in rushing with an average of 335.9 yards per game and leads the Southwest Conference in total offense with an average of 409.3 yards per game.

Texas entered last week's game with the Aggies as the top scoring team in the country but managed only a field goal against the A&M defense in a 20-10 loss. Texas' other score came on a punt return.

"They are a complete football team in every respect," Broyles said of the Aggies. "Their defense is outstanding because of many factors — they're experienced, talented and have speed. You can pick out any of them, watch them one game and you would say they were all-conference."

Broyles said Arkansas' offensive guards have the difficult assignment of blocking defensive tackles Jimmy Dean and Edgar Fields. "Those two are like having two nosemen," Broyles said. "Because of A&M's linebackers, those two run around and do anything they want."

Broyles said A&M's linebacking trio of Robert Jackson, Ed Simonini and Garth Ten Napel are as good as any group he could remember in the SWC.

Broyles also said Arkansas' defense would have to handle the Aggies' Wishbone attack.

"The burden is going to be in the trenches on their running play because of the fullback George Woodward," Broyles said. "And, you've got to be ready for the deep pass if you try to crowd them."

A&M Coach Emory Bellard echoed Broyles' remarks about the Aggie defense.

"Our defensive team is very quick, has great strength, is very aggressive and they've been playing together a long time," Bellard said. "We've got several fellows that are All-American type caliber."

"I know it sounds trite, but we've got to contain their offense, move the football and play the kicking game solid," Bellard said.

"They can make sustained marches, and they're capable of making the big play," Bellard said.

Arkansas' big-play ability diminished when running back Jerry Eckwood injured a knee against Utah State Oct. 25. Eckwood, who gained more than 750 yards rushing in the first six games, will not play against the Aggies.

Ike Forte, who rushed for 967 yards in nine games, dislocated three toes Nov. 15 but is expected to play. He will be joined in the backfield by Roland Fuchs, a senior.

Mike Jay started at quarterback for A&M last week, but injured his back and will not play Saturday. David Shipman, the starter at the first of the season, will direct the Aggies' attack.

"We will miss the continuity as much as anything," Bellard said. "Jay has been playing and practicing with the team for four or five weeks now. Shipman was a little rusty, but he's back at full speed and, with a week of practice, should be ready. You've got to remember that the only thing that got him out of the lineup was an injury."

The kickoff is set for 3 p.m. A crowd of more than 50,000 is expected.

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**Pro playoff picture  
big question mark**

Associated Press

Winning, as the late Vince Lombardi said, is the only thing. For a change, that's exactly what governs the match-ups in this year's National Football League playoffs.

As in recent years, the Minnesota Vikings and Los Angeles Rams in the National Conference and the Oakland Raiders in the American Conference have wrapped up divisional titles. Unlike recent years, they can't afford to sit back, rest on their laurels, rest their starters, play their reserves and wait for the playoffs.

They've got to keep winning, if they want "the edge."

The post-season picture is shaping up, all right, but there's still a lot to be decided. In one case, things are a bit out of focus.

In recent seasons, the home field in the two playoff rounds preceding the Super Bowl were determined on a simple, alternating basis, determined before a regular-season game was played.

"In the National Conference," the schedule might say, "the Eastern Division champion is at the Western Division champion and the wild-card team is at the Central Division champion . . . unless the wild-card team is from the Central Division. In that case, the Eastern Division champion is at the Central Division champion and the wild-card team is at the Western Division winner."

So the so-called home-field advantage was decided not by past success but in effect by the whim of the schedule-maker.

No longer. Now that homefield advantage goes to the winningest teams . . . maybe. This year, the first-round of playoffs, set for the weekend of Dec. 27-28, are determined as follows:

"In each conference, the two division winners with the highest win-loss percentage during the regular season will be the home teams. The division winner with the best percentage will be the host to the wild-card team and the division winner with the second-best percentage will be the host to the third division winner, unless the wild-card team is from the same division as the winner with the highest percentage. In that case, the division winner with the best percentage will be host to the third division winner and the second-highest division winner will be host to the wild-card."

That last phrase is what brings up the "maybe."

Despite all the attempts of the NFL hierarchy to reward the winningest teams with home games in the playoffs, a team with a better record may still wind up as a visitor. That, at least, is how it looks with three weeks to go.

Consider, for example, the AFC. Based on the current percentages,

the Pittsburgh Steelers 10-1, .909 and the Raiders 9-2, .818 are the hosts with the Miami Dolphins 8-3, .727 going to Oakland and Cincinnati 9-2, .818 going to . . .

Oh, wait a minute. The wild-card team can't play the top winner if they're both in the same division. So Cincinnati at Pittsburgh is out.

That means, based on the 11-game standings, it's Miami at Pittsburgh and Cincinnati at Oakland.

Let's say back to the argument's sake idea that the Bengals win two of their last three games and the Raiders lose two of the three. What you've got then is Cincinnati, a wild-card team with a possible 11-2 record, coming in as a visitor against a division winner with a poorer record, in this case Oakland's projected 10-3.

Don't rule out Houston in the Central Division and Baltimore and Buffalo in the East. They're still contenders.

The NFC setup is hardly much clearer.

As it stands now, the Vikings 10-1, .909, and the Rams 9-2, .818 would be the home teams in the first round. The Dallas Cowboys and St. Louis Cardinals are both 8-3, .727, tied for first in the East Division.

For argument's sake, and using nothing more than alphabetical order, say Dallas wins the division and St. Louis finishes second. That would send St. Louis, as the wild-card, to top-winner Minnesota and third-winner Dallas to second-winner Los Angeles.

In year's past, with the East-at-West and wild-at-Central setup, it would be nice and tidy. But things can change an awful lot in three weeks.

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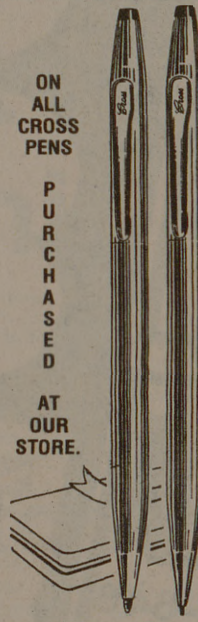


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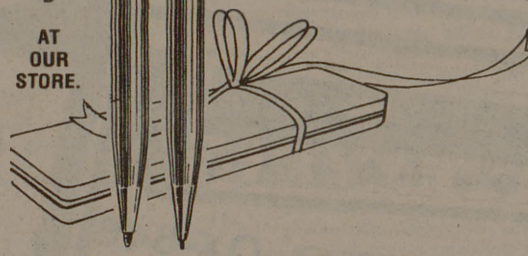
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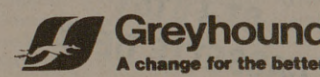
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