

29 Lettermen return to team, coaches optimistic

Outlook for Aggie football squad is bright

Although 24 lettermen departed after last year's 10-2 season, Texas A&M still figures to field a 1976 football team that will be competitive

both at the Southwest Conference and national levels. "I know you don't replace All-Americans with all-Americans but we

have some good, young talent on our squad and we were pleased with the way they filled the holes during spring training," said Head Coach

Emory Bellard.

The Aggies return 29 lettermen, including five offensive and six defensive starters. Of the 29 lettermen, 18 are seniors, 5 juniors and 6 sophomores. Also, 14 are on offense, 14 are on defense and one is a kicking specialist.

THE OFFENSIVE UNIT — Among the 14 offensive lettermen, the five returning starters include center Mark Dennard, right guard Dennis Swilley, right tackle Frank Myers, quarterback David Shipman and fullback George Woodard.

The other returning lettermen include left guard Craig Glendenning, left tackle Billy Lemons, tight end Gary Haack, split end Mike Floyd, halfback Adger Armstrong, center Matt Freeman, left tackle George Burger, fullback Eddie Hardin and quarterback Keith Baker.

At the close of spring drills, the first unit had Haack at tight end, Lemons and Myers at the tackles, Glendenning and Swilley at the guards, Dennard at center, Floyd and junior college transfer Randall Teate sharing split end, Shipman and Baker working at quarterback, Woodard at fullback, Armstrong and sophomore Darrell Smith at the halves.

The second unit had Russell Mikeska at tight end, George Burger and Cody Risien at the tackles, Mark Burger and Curtis Jennings at the guards, and Kenny Kirk at center. Hardin, who broke a collarbone a week or so before the end of spring drills, is the No. 2 fullback while transfer Bobby Mitchell and sophomore Gary Young are the halfbacks.

Others who may play include tackle Ronnie Smith, tight end Chuck Carr, fullback Chet Chandler and halfbacks Holly Wilson and Paul Thompson.

There is an excellent group of freshmen this fall also.

At the close of spring drills, Bellard said: "The offensive line, from tackle to tackle, is a good, sound, solid unit. Tackle Frank Myers is excellent. The other tackle, Billy Lemons, is totally committed. Craig Glendenning and Dennis Swilley are two good guards and Mark Dennard is a solid center... Gary Haack is not real big at tight end but he is a thoroughbred fighter... Mike Floyd and Randall Teate at split ends are good receivers... "Shipman has regained his quickness after last year's injuries. He's

very poised and very confident. Baker needs exposure and playing time. He has very exceptional quickness and an excellent arm. We're going into this fall ready to play both at quarterback," Bellard said.

"Fullback is by far the best shape since we've been here. George Woodard is exceptional and Eddie Hardin came on strong before he broke a collar bone this spring," Bellard added.

He said, "Adger Armstrong and Darrell Smith are disciplined halfbacks with ability. They are very solid. Gary Young and Bobby Mitchell made progress. They have ability but need more discipline."

"Our freshman squad is balanced at all positions and it will provide depth," Bellard said.

The Aggies will run out of the Wishbone formation. They'll likely pass more this fall. They'll break the Wishbone at times and they'll employ motion on occasions, according to Sports Information Director, Spec Gammon.

THE DEFENSIVE UNIT — Among the 14 returning lettermen, the six returning starters include left end Tank Marshall, left tackle Edgar Fields, right tackle Jimmy Dean, middle linebacker Robert Jackson, right cornerback William Thompson and safety Lester Hayes.

The other returning lettermen are end Stacy Breihan, tackle Steve Spitzberger, linebackers Jesse Hunnicutt, Grady Wilkerson and

Kevin Monk, cornerbacks Charles Bell and Mike Williams and safety Reggie Williams.

At the close of spring drills the starters were Marshall and transfer Eugene Sanders at the ends, Fields and Dean at the tackles, Hunnicutt and Monk at the outside linebackers, Jackson at middle linebacker with Wilkerson ready for both spots, Thompson and Mike Williams at the corners and Hayes and Reggie Williams at the safeties.

The second unit had Breihan and Phil Bennett at the ends, Spitzberger and Garry Milligan at the tackles, Wilkerson, Jimmy Kocurek and Gary Tate at the linebackers, Bell and JC transfer Wadine Miles at the corners and Carl Grulich and Larry Johnson at the safeties.

Others who may play include ends Eddie Heath and Jerry Shannon, tackles Johnnie Donahue and Ronnie Walker, linebackers Steve Flynn, Roderick Reed and Phil Grawunder, cornerbacks Gregory Clark and Scott Baldwin and safeties Ralph Barrett, Carl McCormack, John Baber and Greg Sokora.

After spring training Bellard said: "Defensively, we may not have the impressive statistics that we had last year but we'll have a solid, sound, aggressive defense."

"We're solid at defensive tackle. Returning starters Edgar Fields and Jimmy Dean are as good a pair as there is in the country. And, we have good depth there with Steve Spitzberger, Johnnie Donahue and Garry Milligan," he said.

"Middle linebacker is solid. Robert Jackson is very outstanding. Grady Wilkerson is also quality but he worked most of the spring at outside linebacker. Jesse Hunnicutt and Kevin Monk both had good springs as outside linebackers. Hunnicutt is very aggressive and is 100 per cent. I've never seen him any other way," Bellard said.

"The ends are in good hands. Marshall is proven quality. Sanders, who played at the University of Washington as a freshman and who has been here a year establishing eligibility, has talent. So does Stacy Breihan who lettered last year as a freshman," he added.

"William Thompson is a returning starter at one corner and Mike Williams had a good spring at the other corner. Lester Hayes is a quality player at one safety. Both Reggie Williams and Carl Grulich came on strong in the spring."

THE KICKING GAME — Sophomore Tony Franklin is back to kick placements and should be improved. Punting is a point of concern. Mark Stanley completed his eligibility last fall. Bellard said: "If we can't develop one from our present squad, we'll go to a freshman. Some of them have good backgrounds in kicking."

SUMMARY — Continual improvement has been the story of Bellard's teams at Aggieland. The first one was 3-8, followed by 5-6, 8-3, and 10-2. The 1976 team may prove to be the best yet.



It all began 82 years ago at Texas A&M College. Fourteen men, coached by F. D. Perkins, formed the first football team. The team played two games, winning the first by defeating Ball high school, 14-6, and losing the second to Texas, 38-0. The team consisted of: 1. California Morse (Collie), 2. A. P. Watts, 3. Atwood Bittle, 4. Bill Mathews, 5. Frank M. Houston, 6.

Harry Martin, 7. A. W. (Mike) Bloor, 8. Milton Sims, 9. John Burney, 10. possibly E. J. Altgelt, 11. Dicky Peden, 12. W. G. Massenburg, 13. Hiram T. Coulter, 14. possibly J. F. Ellis. Unfortunately the 12th man wasn't around then to help this squad, but they probably would have rather had a 15th man anyway.

1976 Texas A&M Schedule

DATE	OPPONENT	SITE & TIME
Sept. 11	Virginia Tech	College Station 4 p.m.
Sept. 18	Kansas State	College Station 4 p.m.
Sept. 25	Houston	Rice Stadium, Houston 7:30 p.m.
Oct. 2	Illinois	Champaign, Ill. 1:30 p.m.
Oct. 9	Texas Tech	College Station, 1:30 p.m.
Oct. 16	Baylor	College Station 1:30 p.m.
Oct. 23	Rice	College Station 1:30 p.m.
Oct. 30	SMU	Dallas 1:30 p.m.
Nov. 6	Open	
Nov. 13	Arkansas	Little Rock 3:20 p.m.
Nov. 20	TCU	College Station 1:30 p.m.
Nov. 25	Texas	Austin 7:30 p.m.



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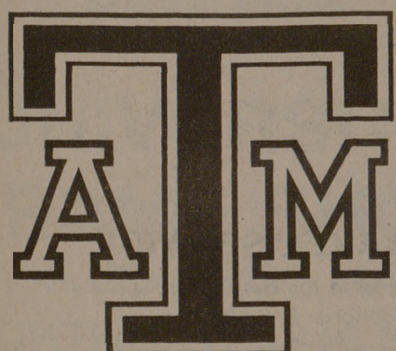
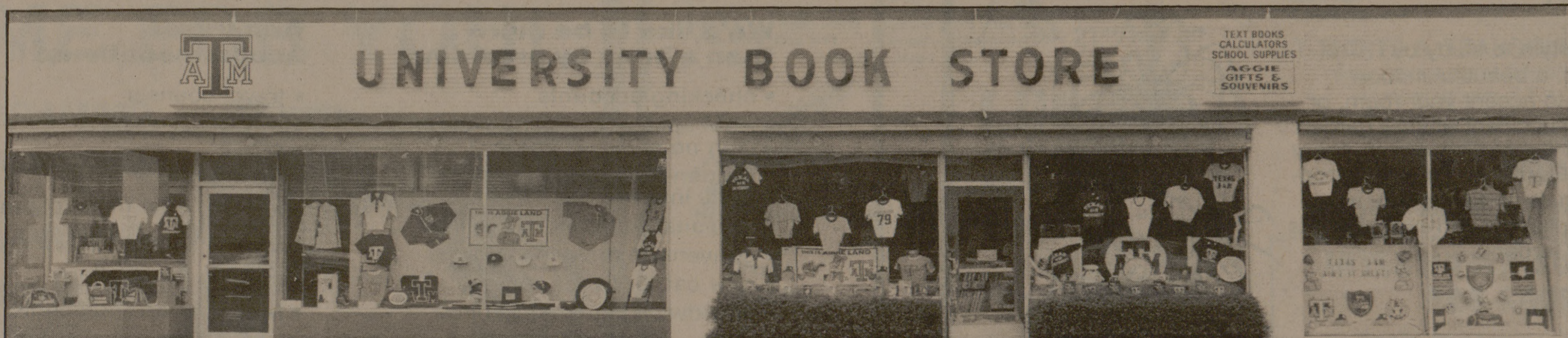
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