

A&M offense to sparkle in packed Rice Stadium

# Ninth ranked Aggies meet hungry Cougars

By GERARD O'DONOVAN  
COMMENTARY

Some years ago the Arkansas Razorbacks came to town on the crest of the waves. The Aggies had lost all their preseason games but were still alive in the Southwest Conference. They had to beat Arkansas to stay in the race. Before a capacity crowd at Kyle Field, then much smaller than now, the Razorbacks nursed a 5 point lead into the closing minutes of the fourth stanza. With less than three minutes to play the never-say-die Aggies began their drive.

It stalled a little and the screaming fans of the Old Army did not like what they saw. The Hogs jumped up and down as they threw the Aggie quarterback for a big loss. It was a 35 yard pass over the top last week, hyperventilation almost wiped out the entire reserved section beneath the Press Box.

The Kansas State coaching staff did not feel too good either. Though Shipman did not have an even reasonable day, that pass opened things up for David Walker, who became the reticent hero. It takes at least two good quarterbacks to play successful college ball; we now enjoy that luxury and more. Lest any readers forget, remember Memphis!

One can not say too much of the offensive line. I saw one photo of the George Woodard "fumble" in the

end zone where Craig Glendenning actually had to come backwards to retrieve the ball. No Kansas State player was yet in the picture. Chalk one up for Glendenning, Myers, Lemons and Swilley, along with center Dennard. Haack, small as tight ends go, looked great and Floyd so far has been the better of the two messenger split ends. With luck, Teate should have had two touchdowns but his time will come, when his timing does.

The offensive diversity is a thing of beauty. Shipman is not generally expected to pass, yet his screens and two long ones to Haack have electrified the crowds. Walker can run and I particularly liked it when David came in for the first time against KSU for third and plenty. Though the play did not net a first down, and most people expected a pass, the correct call was made, a hand off. When Walker plans a pass he becomes the pocket quarterback and he generally takes five strides diagonally backwards. Walker prefers to throw to his right and does so extremely well. Shipman is faster than he looks but he is a notoriously slow starter. He takes ten minutes to get warmed up and then he generally improves as the game goes on.

The offense has spluttered a little, but winning by an average of 19 and one half points we can live with. The running backs are all young and like

Calvin Hill some years ago George Woodard can fall for five yards anytime. The locals too love to watch Curtis Dickey who glides between would-be tacklers and being a track star, he has a phenomenal turn of foot when he sweeps to his right. This is expected, of course, since all tracks are built counter-clockwise. Thus, he cuts hard with his left foot on the inside, his right near the sideline. He works especially well with David Walker, who though left-handed, can pitch-on-the run with his right, without moving his head. Trailing alongside is Dickey ever ready for the kill.

As most people expected, the Aggie defense has performed well. They are back on top of the heap in yards allowed per game at 134, the best in the land.

There are two items personified in the 1976 Texas Aggie football team that deserve notice. If someone says something often enough for a number of years it evolves into a "fact." The fact I have in mind concerns the three things that can happen to a thrown football. It can be caught (good), it can be incomplete (bad) and it can be intercepted (bad).

When a team prefers to run the ball and disdains the pass, success is limited. For non-wishbone teams who throw on less than 10 of their

offensive plays success never exceeded 50 per cent or a 5-5 season. On wishbone teams that threw on less than 10 per cent of their downs initial success (76 per cent) has decreased to 44 per cent in the past six seasons. On the other hand the wish-bone with 25 per cent passing has a success figure of 79-82 per cent, higher than the indefensible super-wishbone. By 1974, the pass had become an integral part of any worthwhile option offense and perennial winners such as Alabama prove this point rather well.

At Texas, where all this began, are there any figures hidden among those piles of statistics? Are there any hidden figures among the Aggie stats of the last two years when we were highly respectable? I found two, that I have never seen elsewhere.

The number of fumbles per offensive down is very much higher than average for all wishbone teams, every game, every year. The number of fumbles exceeds, by a factor of three, the number of inter-

cepted passes, calculated on a basis of 50 per cent passes and 50 per cent running plays. The moral of the statistics is, "Pass."

The second statistic I found concerns the kicking game. Wishbone teams attempt 21 more punts per 10 game season than do the non-wishbone or option teams. The one startling disappointment that became clear to me regarding our 10-0 team through November last year was that we had to punt far more than any top rated contender. The statistics tell the story — we had no offense that compared with Texas, Arkansas, Alabama, USC, UCLA, Ohio State, and nine others.

We had the best defense in the country. Yet, our defense spent more time on the field than any of the other top twenty teams last year. Though we scored plenty, many of our scores came on long gallops and used up little of the clock. We had to punt too often (62 times), more than any other top twenty team and of

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SWC teams, only Rice (67) and TCU (60) came close. Erxleben (UT) punted 49 times and Cheyne (Arkansas) punted 37 times. This year we have punted five times in two games, for a 2.5 average per game.

The point to be made is crystal clear: the offense is more potent because a powerful running game is complemented by carefully placed passes. The defense is again back where it belongs at number one. Let us keep it up against the Cougars in Houston Saturday night.

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## It's onward to Houston

By PAUL ARNETT  
Battalion Sports Editor

A long awaited grudge match will kick-off the Aggies' SWC campaign as they ride the cool breezes of autumn into the fast paced town of Houston. The setting is Rice Stadium, the players are the Aggies and Cougars, and before the final curtain falls some 60,000 fans should witness some fine play called college football.

Anyone who knows the Cougars of Houston and the Aggies of College Station find out very quickly that there is no love lost between the two schools. The rivalry is a bitter one and one which is quite close. The Aggies lead the series 6-5-1.

The Aggies played a solid football game last week. They beat a tough Kansas State team by a score of 14-14. The offense looked sharp, yet the defense had a few mental lapses that can not happen this weekend.

Houston, after winning its opener at Baylor, found out Florida plays football. The Coogs' defense didn't make the trip, and the offense had only third quarter success. The finale was 49-14.

But don't let that score fool you. Houston has a strong team, with an excellent offensive attack. They will be pumped up Saturday night, giving the Ag defense all it can handle.

Speaking of defense, A&M has found the number one slot again. Giving up a meager 134.5 yards a game, defensive coach Melvin Robertson has found himself in an accustomed position. In the sixties he was the defensive coach of Houston. Robertson was not well known because of the offensive prowess the Cougars had established. This game is a little special to him, and no doubt he wants his defense to perform well.


Head coach Bill Yeomen, has

added a mysterious atmosphere to the game this week. His team is working behind closed doors in preparation of the wishbone attack. Florida was a wishbone team, and Yeomen wants his team to play it a bit better than it was played last week. Yeomen has also been known to throw a few wrinkles into his offensive game plan, and Saturday should be no exception.

Coach Emory Bellard approaches this game by switching half backs. Curtis Dickey and David Brothers will start in place of Adger Armstrong and Darrel Smith. Dickey has had an excellent season, gaining 93 yards on 13 carries.

The game should prove quite interesting. Houston is an outstanding offensive team, with a defense who can play if the mood strikes them. The rivalry is there, the ability is there, and for the fans who are there ... one hell of a game.

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