

Sports

Aggie spring training begins today

The emphasis will be on defense. Coach Emory Ballard and his players begin their sixth spring football session today.

Aggie defense has dominated the Southwest Conference (SWC) for the past four seasons, and has ranked high nationally as well. Last season the Ags were No. 4 in the nation in total defense with a 2.7 yards per game average, only

three yards out of second place. They finished second in the nation in rushing defense, allowing an average of 96.7 yards per game. Only 13 letterman and three starters return from last year's defensive unit. The three starters are, strongside linebacker Kevin Monk, cornerback Mike Williams and free safety Carl Grulich.

A fourth starter could be back next fall. He is defensive end Eugene Sanders, a classroom casualty. Much of last year's talent was lost to graduation, including all-America linebacker Robert Jackson and all-America safety Lester Hayes. Add to that list defensive tackles Edgar Fields and Jimmy Dean, defensive end Tank Marshall, linebacker Jesse Hunnicutt and cornerback William Thompson, and one can see why the emphasis this spring is on defense.

Among the other 10 returning letterman, there are some who have had starting roles. Those 10 men include ends Phil Bennett, Stacy Breihan and Eddie Heath; tackles Steve Spitzberger, Johnnie Donahue and Garry Milligan; linebackers Jimmy Kocurek and Frank Lemmons; cornerback Jimmy Hamilton and safety Larry Johnson.

Returning squadman who could make strong bids this spring include ends Jacob Green, Jerry Shannon and Mark Giamfortone; tackles Gerald Galloway, James Scoggin and Jonnie Svatek, linebackers Lawton Carlton, Ken Rollins, Gary Tate, James Zachery, Dick Frazier, Randy Harvey and Steve Flynn; cornerback Wade Miles and safeties Greg Sokora, John Baber, Ralph Barrett and Carl McCormack.

On offense, the outlook is much brighter. Lack of depth at quarterback is the only major problem, with that not being totally solved until the fall. Minor problems will be filling the voids at each guard slot, and at tight and split ends.

Red Sox only team to challenge Yanks

United Press International
PATER HAVEN, Fla. — Don Zimmer, beginning his first full season as Boston Red Sox manager, is concerned with the seemingly off-season improvements made by the defending American League champion New York Yankees.

Zimmer worried too much about his uncertain pitching staff. That is most important to Zimmer for the Red Sox to get off to a start—something they didn't do in the AL champs a year ago. By early May they were 6-15 and never fully recovered.

and Campbell we've improved greatly, too." Zimmer's big problem, assuming his hitters all have typical seasons, will be the starting pitching where aging ace Luis Tiant 21-12 is closing in on 37; Workhorse Ferguson Jenkins 12-11 is coming off of Achilles heel surgery; southpaw Bill Lee has had shoulder problems and Reggie Cleveland and Rise are considered "iffy" each year. There has been talk about an effort to land left-hander Vida Blue from the depleted Oakland A's, but unless that happens, Zimmer has a lot of uncertainties on his mound staff, while his chief rivals, the Yankees, are deepest in that same department.

One position change should help alleviate the split end problem. Darrell Smith will move out to that position from his running back slot. He has great speed and excellent hands. Doug Teague will also be trying out for the position.

At tight end, returning letterman Russell Mikeska must fight off challenges from three fine squadmen. They are Chuck Carr, Phillip Simpson and Kyle Golson.

Red Sox, who figure to give the Yankees the best run of all the clubs this year, return most of their starting cast which won the pennant and took the Cincinnati Open games in the 1975 season.

Strengths: In Lynn, Fisk, Yaztrzemski, Scott and Jim Rice, the Red Sox present as potent a middle batting order as any opposing pitcher will face in either league. Campbell, Jim Willoughby and possible rookie Bob Stanley look like a strong bullpen which will see a lot of activity this year. Excellent defense at every position but second and third.

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Filling the two guard positions should be no problem for Ballard. Top candidates are Thomas Gregory and Ed Pustefovsky. Each man had starting assignments last year.

The Ags' kicking game should be quite strong. David Appleby returns as the punter, with Tony Franklin picking up the rest of the kicking duties.

Carl Yaztrzemski, titular ace of the club, is coming off one of his best years 102 RBI, while Carlton Fisk .225, 17 HR, and fielder Fred Lynn .314, 10 HR and shortstop Rick Burleson are being counted on to play up all year long now that their contract disputes with the front office have been settled.

Weaknesses: A most uncertain starting pitching rotation. Big question at third base where the still unproven Butch Hobson experienced sore arm woes in spring training. Denny Doyle and Doug Griffen likely to platoon at second although neither has proved to be the answer to Bosox brass.

The wishbone offense will still be the main formation. The bone will consist of David Walker, George Woodard, Curtis Dickey and David Brothers, which rushed for 3,007 yards last year. A&M passed over 1,000 yards as well.

Spring training's major goal will be keeping the Aggies in their position among the nation's major football powers. The Ags were ranked 7th and 8th on the wire polls last year.

In addition, the Red Sox reacted sluggishly first baseman Scott, 18 homers, 77 RBI in a year with the Milwaukee Brewers in the winter and signed relief ace Campbell in the free agent market.

New faces: Campbell will help the bullpen—a major disaster area in Fenway Park last year; Scott adds to an already awesome offense; rookie pitchers Rob Stanley and Jim Vosh given good chance to stick as relievers and Don Aase has outside shot at landing starting berth.

Outlook: Unless the pitching situation crystallizes rapidly, Red Sox can not expect to overhaul the Yankees. A strong second place finish is more likely.

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