

Sports

Want national championship

Aggie team is talented

United Press International
The Texas Aggie football team now knows success. Unfortunately, it may have spoiled them.

and lay a claim for the collegiate national championship. Bellard, a dapper, pipesmoking coach, is thoughtful in reply to questions. He was careful not to use the words, "national championship," as he spoke to a group of sportswriters.

Quarterback David Walker did, however.

"Yes, the national championship is in the back of our minds. If we keep everybody healthy, we have a shot at it," Walker said.

Other Aggie players also are excited about their chances, and the A&M alumni — needless to say — are convinced history is in the making. They have bought out 49,700-seat Kyle Field for all five home games.

Unfortunately for the Aggies, the obstacles facing their talented team, beginning Saturday afternoon in Kyle Field, are higher than they have been the past two years when they won — but did not win big.

Bellard lost 10 defensive starters or part-time starters. Many of those were players he had trained for four years, and they showed it by becoming the fourth finest defensive unit in the country in 1976.

"I think we will take a wild swing at 'em defensively," Bellard said.

It is true that if a highpowered Aggies' offense can outscore their early opponents, the defense might hang on long enough to realize their high hopes.

Walker acknowledged that he has thought about being forced to score in bushels in order to win early in the season, especially when the Aggies play before 103,000 persons at Ann Arbor, Mich., on Oct. 1.

"That will be tough," he said, "but our defense might be far along by then."

A&M has the guns and they have been used for an average of 40 points per game since offensive coordinator Tom Wilson took over the playcalling duties from Emory Bellard six games into the season of 1976.

"At this stage this is the best offensive team we've had at A&M," Bellard said.

George Woodard, a 1,153-yard rusher in 1976 from the fullback slot in the wishbone, and Curtis Dickey, a 9.4 sprinter with a reputation to match, give the Aggies a brutal backfield combination.

Dickey will be crucial as an outside runner to take the keying off Woodard whose rumbles up the middle were virtually stopped in 1976 by Texas Tech and Houston.

Walker is a fifth-year senior who fulfills the exacting standards of wishbone-inventor Bellard.

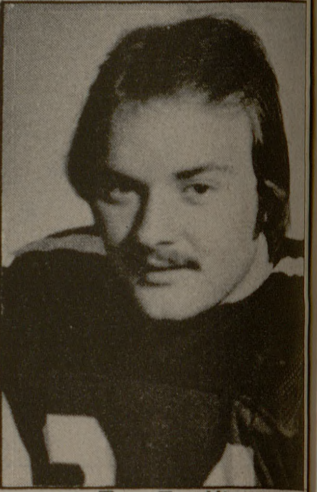
"He's as good as anybody in the country," the coach said. Other offensive standouts who Bellard praised were split end Darrell Smith, tight end Russell Midesda, halfbacks David Brothers and Adger Armstrong, and the entire offensive line.

Placekicker Tony Franklin, the shoeless sidwinder who booted a 71-yarder last season, is another story. He has kicked "a bunch in the 70s" this preseason, Bellard said.

There is a move afoot to allow Franklin to kick a 75-yard field goal for an NCAA record.

"I've given it some thought," Bellard said. "The ball would have to be placed on our 42-yard line. I have figure that anytime it's beyond our 40, we could try it."

Then the interview session came back down to earth.



Tony Franklin

"Aren't you putting yourself in the spot saying all these things?" a reporter asked.

"I'm just talking about my players. I'm saying it like I believe it," Bellard said. "I guess all the coaches think they have the best players."

The coach was then asked if he would be happy with a record of 10-2.

"It depends on where the record is," he said.

Considering the rebuilding going on in A&M's defensive trenches, where they were so some last season, the "two" could come early. The Aggies play two straight games on the road after losing Kansas Saturday.

"I don't like that," Bellard said. "There was time not too long ago the coach said, when A&M had to enter contracts to play at Michigan, Illinois and LSU without a return visit from those popular teams."

"At the present time we don't have any problems making home and-home contracts," Bellard said. "We're looking at stadium expansion which would involve a third deck on each side and expand the seating to 13,000."

Astro Watson undergoes tests

United Press International
HOUSTON — Houston Astro first baseman Bob Watson, who had been hospitalized since Sunday for tests, was discharged from Methodist Hospital Tuesday afternoon.

Watson underwent tests to determine the cause of muscle spasms. Dr. Harold Brelsford, the team physician, said the diagnostic studies showed no abnormalities.

"It is felt that the patient's muscle spasms were primarily due to salt electrolyte depletion due to prolonged use of diuretics," Brelsford said. "This has been corrected and he is able to resume play."

Roger Staubach returns to Dallas Cowboy lineup

United Press International
DALLAS — Dallas quarterback Roger Staubach, who has sat out the Cowboys last two exhibition games with a pulled hamstring muscle, was given the go-ahead Tuesday by coach Tom Landry to play in the club's final preseason game.

Dallas meets Pittsburgh Thursday night on national television.

"Staubach will be back in," Landry said. "The soreness from the pull is gone, but there is still some color left in the leg. He is going to have to be careful that he doesn't run too fast on it." But putting a muzzle on Staubach is like carrying water in a soup strainer.

"He might extend himself a little more than he should," Landry said. "But I think he will stay under control most of the time. He could go up to three quarters."

"But if he isn't looking all that good he might play just one half." Landry has played the Staubach situation with extreme care during the preseason. He has often said that Staubach's recovery rate is not so good now that his No. 1 quarterback has reached the ripe old age of 35.

But if there is any risk in Staubach's performing against the Steelers Thursday night Landry is willing to take it because Staubach needs the work.

Everybody seems to need work in fact, since the Cowboys played very poorly last Saturday in losing to the Houston Oilers, 23-14.

"You sure can't say we are on schedule when you get beat like we did last week," said Landry. "Our main problems right now are defensively because we have played many different people in different positions."

"I think our defense will pick up. Of course we didn't play a running team last week and they gained 25 yards on us. I don't know how much Pittsburgh will gain."

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