

Donahue keeps defensive line intact

By D.D. GRUBBS
In his room at the A&M athletic dorm, defensive tackle Johnnie Donahue keeps a few plants, explaining that they add to the atmosphere of a room and "make me feel more at home." This season, the 6-6, 245-pound junior has established some roots of his own on the front line of the Aggie defense and feeling more at home often in opposing backfields.

Donahue was one of those A&M players who had to wait his turn the last couple of years as the Ags were blessed with the finest pair of defensive tackles in the Southwest Conference, Edgar Fields and Jimmy Dean. They have since graduated, along with most of the defense from last year, and Donahue was called upon as one of the players who would have to pick up where they left off. It was quite a responsibility but one he had waited a long time for.

"I knew I'd get my chance sooner or later, it was just a matter of time.

I don't try to copy either Edgar or Jimmy, although I did admire the way they played the position. Each player has his own way of getting the job done, as long as it results in winning.

Nonetheless, there was some apprehension going into the 1977 season concerning the A&M defense, what with only three starters returning from the year before.

"We've really come a long way," says Donahue. "Most people didn't expect us to be the dominating force we had been the past few years, but we've held our ground and the defense is getting better every week."

Donahue played his high school football at Houston Yates where he made all-State. He earned his first varsity letter at A&M as a sophomore last year but saw only limited action due to the quality of players ahead of him on the depth chart. An ankle injury has slowed him down somewhat this season but Donahue still is the Aggies' leading tackler on

the defensive front line.

"I first hurt my ankle in the Michigan game and it's been bothering me since. I'd get out there to start the game but after three or four licks, it would start giving me trouble, I just keep my mind on the game and try not to think about it."

Defensive line coach Paul Register admires Donahue, both for his athletic ability and attitude.

"Johnnie has been playing hurt since the Michigan game but he's still playing well. He's just a tough individual and an all-conference type defensive tackle. He used his size real well and although he isn't as quick as a Fields or a Dean, still plays both the run and the pass exceptionally well."

In preparing for each week's opponent, Donahue concentrates on the man he will line up against Saturday, but in general takes a pretty liberal view of his job.

"When the games starts, I usually play it by ear. A lot depends on how the other guy comes out and I'll

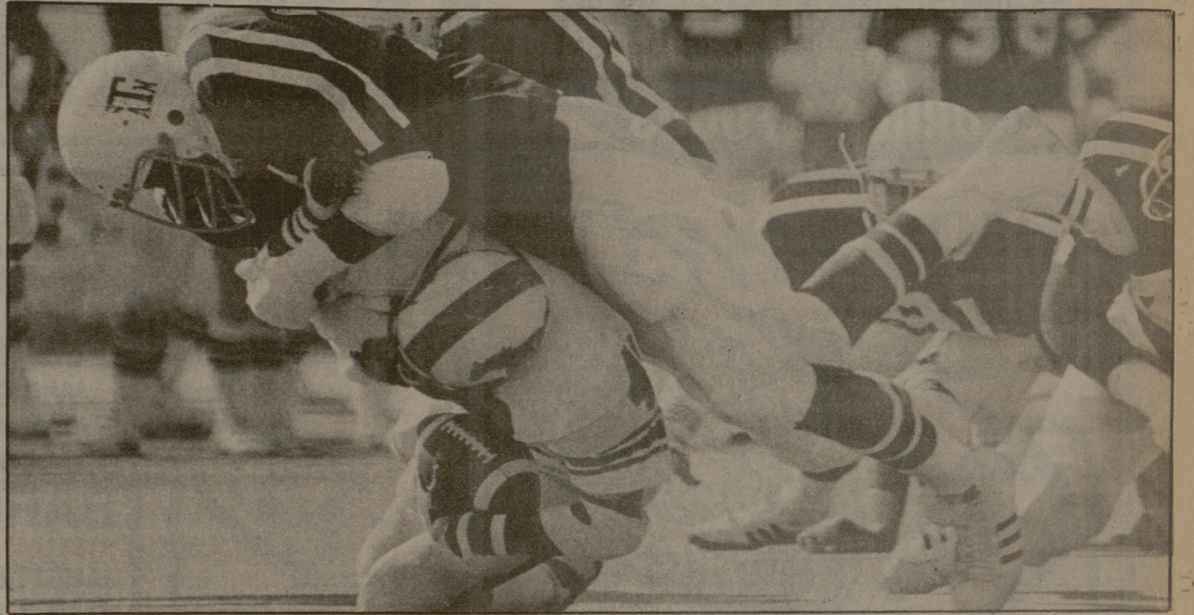
spend the first part of the game feeling him out. He might really be up for me and fight me tooth and toenail, or he might lay back and I might end up having a great day at his expense.

With the toughest part of their schedule behind them, five straight games on the road including Texas Tech and Michigan back-to-back, Donahue feels the Aggies can just take the rest of the season a step at a time.

"We're not looking ahead to any game except the one scheduled for that particular week."

With an open date this week, A&M has a little more time to prepare for Arkansas. After such a hectic pace the first part of the season, this is a welcome change.

"Those five straight road games were a tough grind," says Donahue. "It cut down on our sleep and left us a little unsettled. It's good that we've got three of our next four games at home so we can get more rest during the week."



Johnnie Donahue smothers SMU quarterback Mike Ford. Donahue leads the defensive line in tackle this year. A&M defeated SMU 38-21.



Dickson Walker Dickey

Aggie notes...

"If David Walker isn't hurting tonight, he's abnormal," Coach Emory Bellard said of his senior quarterback after the Sulphur, La. native ran for 182 yards and one touchdown and passed for 87 yards and two touchdowns in the 38-21 win over SMU. "In my opinion, at least, it was his best football game since he's been here. He really played a physical game," Walker said. "SMU was taking the pitch man and the fullback every time and that left it up to me to make something happen."

Center Mark Dennard bruised a shoulder in the SMU game and Preston Dickson was called forth to fill the breach. "You can't imagine how proud I was of Preston," said Bellard. "Dennard is so good, it's hard to imagine playing without him and I had some concern when Preston went in, but he did an excellent job. I thought Dennard was the best center in the SWC last year and I know there's none better this year. If one player deserved recognition and didn't get it last year, it was Dennard."

Bellard had high praise for SMU. "Ron Meyer and his staff have done an excellent job. SMU is a good, sound football team. Freshman QB Mike Ford is a dandy and that Whittington is one darting runner. He has great moves and the ability to knife through a defense," Ron Meyer said. "A&M is a very physical football team. Our injuries really showed in the second half. When you lose your main guys on defense it takes the guts out of your club. Those main guys were Charles Hunt, Champ Dickerson, Putt Choate and Tim Jones." QB Mike Ford: "We've seen 4 or 5 in A&M's class this year but they have a lot of physical people and they came after us and caused us a lot of problems."

A&M now is 4-0 in SWC play and has an open date this week. Then, 3 of the final 4 games will be played at Kyle Field. Arkansas comes in on Nov. 12; A&M goes to TCU on Nov. 19; Texas is at Kyle Field on Nov. 26 and Houston comes to Kyle Field on Dec. 3. SMU couldn't get off the game's first scrimmage play because of the crowd noise, but it was just a "welcome home, Aggies" salute. A turnout of 53,932 jammed 49,700 Kyle Field, the largest ever for an SMU game at Aggieland.

The Aggies will work in shorts and shoulder pads one hour each afternoon on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday of this week. They'll start serious preparations for Arkansas next Monday. Big George Woodard netted 96 yards against SMU and now has a career total of 2,447, which moves him into second place on the all-time A&M list behind Bubba Bean's 2,846. He passed Bob Smith who had 2,415. Curtis Dickey netted 93 against SMU and now has 1,346 and needs 120 to pass John David Crow who is No. 7 at 1,465. In his first start, against TCU, as a freshman, David Walker ran for 81 yards in 1973. That was his best single game rushing until last Saturday when he ran for 182 against SMU.

Texas A&M baseball coach Tom Chandler has announced that the Aggies will play an exhibition game against the Houston Astros on April 5 in A&M's new 5,000 seat stadium. The Astros will stop in College Station on the way to their 1978 season opener in Cincinnati April 6.

"We're anticipating the largest crowd ever to see a collegiate team play in Texas," Chandler said. "This game will be a big boost for collegiate baseball and give Astro fans in the local area a chance to see the team the day before they open the season. It's a great tribute to our program that Astro president Tal Smith agreed to play us."

The Aggies are the defending Southwest Conference champions and have gone to the NCAA playoffs for the last three years.

The Texas A&M women's cross country team captured the TIAAW state championship Saturday in Georgetown. The Aggies had 38 points in the 5,000 meter race to 59 for runnerup Texas.

Individually for the Aggies, Ileana Hocking was second, Martha Sartain third, Kim Mallory ninth, Cindy Cockroft 11th, Cathy Cooke 14th, Susan Johnston 18th, Keress Hawkins 25th, Jo Ellen Ronan 38th and Marty McGraw 39th.

This Saturday the Aggies host the AIAW Regional Meet. The state title is the second for A&M's young women's program. The swimming team won state last year. The cross country team is coached by David Williams.

The Texas A&M women's volleyball team will compete in the UTA-TWC Invitational Tournament in Fort Worth Friday and Saturday. Last weekend the team qualified for the state meet Nov. 11-12 in Arlington by finishing third in the East Zone meet in Huntsville.

A&M lost to Lamar, beat SFA and Sam Houston, and lost to Houston in five sets. The Aggies are now 27-15 for the season. "Wendy Wilson and Vicki Marshall had outstanding games," coach Dave Schakel said.

The Texas A&M women's tennis team defeated Houston in a dual meet, 5-2, last week and will compete in the SFA Tournament in Nacogdoches Nov. 7-8.

Winning for A&M were Elise Richardson, Betty Shillcutt, Alexis Hefley and Debbie Odum in singles, and Susan Schilling and Kathleen Sissom in doubles.

The Texas A&M women's gymnastics team opened its season with a victory over Southwest Texas in a dual meet last week. The Aggies host TWU and Lamar in a meet Saturday.

Against SWT, Patti Sloat finished first in Class I All-Around with Tanya Hrabal second and Tina Martin fourth. Cindy Gremillion was first in Class II All-Around.

Simpson injured; career in jeopardy

United Press International —ORCHARD PARK, N.Y.— The spectacular career of O.J. Simpson, pro football's most recognized star may be over.

Simpson, who said he would retire from football after the 1978 season, will undergo left knee surgery soon which will sideline him for the rest of the season. The operation may also force the NFL's second all-time leading ground gainer to alter his plans.

"That's a subject I can't deal with right now," Simpson said regarding his future in football. "I have another year on my contract with the Bills. Once the operation is over and rehabilitation is complete, I'll begin to think about the future. But not before this."

The operation to repair cartilage damage will be performed by team physician Dr. Joseph Godfrey in Buffalo. No date for the surgery was set.

Bills spokesman L. Budd Thalmann said the decision to operate on the former Heisman Trophy winner

was a consensus opinion of Godfrey, Dr. Robert Kerlan and Dr. Karl LaBriola. Kerlan, team physician for the Los Angeles Rams and one of the country's noted orthopedic specialists, and LaBriola examined Simpson Monday in Los Angeles. Simpson flew there following Buffalo's embarrassing 56-17 loss to the expansion Seattle Seahawks Sunday.

Simpson was unable to pinpoint when the injury occurred but said the knee had been bothering him since a game against the New York Jets Oct. 3.

Simpson, who holds the league's single-season rushing record with 2,003 yards gained in 1973, touched off speculation as to his future following the Seattle game. He picked up just 32 yards and sat out the second half.

Published reports have indicated that Simpson, who wants to pursue an acting career following his pro football days, would not return to the Bills next season if his knee needed surgery.

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by Martha Rosson

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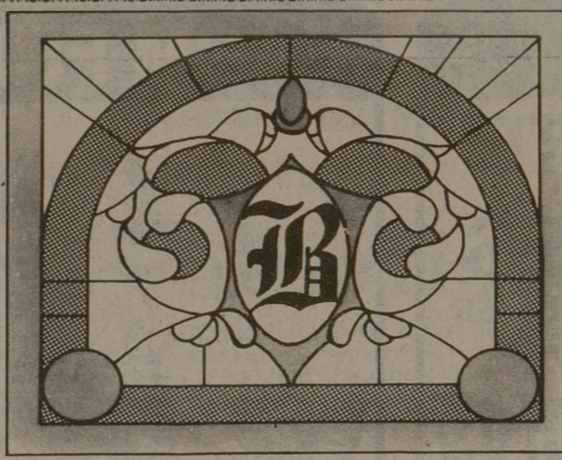
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