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Owls' comeback not enough

By MARK PATTERSON

Battalion Staff
Given six quarters Saturday the Owls may have been able to beat the Texas Aggies. But forced to play the standard four, the Owls came out on the short end of a 38-21 decision.

The Owls trailed the Aggies 28-0 the half. But in a way that is becoming familiar to the Owls, they tried in the second half to make the game exciting. Behind the passing of quarterback Randy Hertel Rice rallied for three second half touchdowns. But this time the rally was just short.

I told this team at halftime that they could move the ball on them (A&M). Rice Coach Ray Alborn said they showed that we could in the second half. With our kind of offense we score some points.



I told our guys going into the game that if we kept tackling A&M and kept sticking them, they'd stop the ball. And they did early in the game.

The Aggies fumbled the ball three times in the first half, twice losing it to the Owls. Yet Rice was unable to capitalize on the two turnovers. One contributing to their first half ineffectiveness was the passing of Hertel. Missing most of the week's practices with a hip pointer, Hertel based on his first five passing attempts, hitting only 6 of 16 passes in the first half for 54 yards with one interception. Hertel ended the game with 33 for 190 yards.

My hip bothered me but only on days that I had to roll out or scramble on," Hertel said. "When I just slipped back and threw I didn't want to put any pressure on it. But when I was running I couldn't get the reaction I needed to throw the ball

hard enough. I was underthrowing open receivers because of it. And the A&M rush didn't help my cause too much either. They were knocking me around all day."

In hopes he could create the same excitement generated last week against Texas Tech, Alborn pulled Hertel nine minutes into the game and inserted sophomore quarterback Robert Hoffmann. Against Tech last week Hoffmann led the Owls to scoring 22 points in 10 minutes. But last week's magic wasn't there against the Aggies.

"Randy was overthrowing everybody in the first half so we wanted to give Robert a try," Alborn said. "Plus we were hoping he could do it again this week. But he couldn't move the ball either. Then he got hit (on a roughing the passer call) and got his bell rung and he was out for the day.

"We put Randy back in and we were watching upstairs (in the pressbox) to see if he was still ineffective. We were ready to go with Mark (Snyder) if we had to. But right when we were ready to take him (Hertel) out he'd do something great and

we'd leave him in."

Before the Owls had broken a sweat they found themselves 21 points down in the first quarter. But they made the proper defensive adjustments and held the Aggie attack in check for most of the ball game.

"The Aggies introduced the man-in-motion against us to try and determine our defensive coverage," Alborn said. "And it confused us at first. It shouldn't have because we've been working on that set all season."

"We were making the proper defensive calls but we weren't executing them. We were slanting against them on the line the way that the man in motion would be going. But I don't know if it was the crowd noise or what, but the players said they were having a hard time hearing our check-offs. So we had some people slanting one way and others were slanting the other way. It looked pretty confusing."

The Owls looked confused on the Aggies' first play from scrimmage. The Rice secondary was burned on a 52-yard Mike Mosley to Gerald Carter bomb for the game's first touchdown and the Aggies first TD in three games.

"I felt like they would come out throwing the ball and they sure did," Alborn said. "Actually our kid (safety Mike Downs) was in a good position to intercept the ball, but he slipped right before the ball got there and they scored."

The Rice safety echoed the thoughts of his coach about the play. "No, that pass didn't catch me by surprise," Downs said. "I just misjudged the ball. I thought it would come short and I slipped trying to stop. It kept going and they got it."

While the Aggies were introducing new formations, Rice introduced one of their own. On their third play of the game quarterback Hertel dropped back into the shotgun formation to receive the snap.

"We like it because it gets everybody spread out all over the field and it gives our quarterback a chance to see the whole field," Alborn explained. "If we have the quarterback set seven yards deep the defense has to rush eight yards to get to him."

"We've been working on it for three weeks but we just got it down good enough to use this week. It didn't really help us today. But it will on down the road."

Nuggets defeat Rockets

United Press International
DENVER — George McGinnis and David Thompson each scored 26 points Sunday to lead the Denver Nuggets to a 134-121 NBA victory over the Houston Rockets.

The triumph was Denver's seventh straight over the Rockets, to have never beaten the Nuggets since the former ABA club joined the NBA three seasons ago.

The Nuggets broke open a close game late in the third period. They led 84-81 with 2:34 to go in the

quarter but went on a 23-9 surge over the next five minutes to take a comfortable 107-90 lead.

Houston closed to within 111-103 but Thompson scored seven straight points in the next 40 seconds to clinch the win.

Rick Barry led Houston with 29, Moses Malone had 23 and Calvin Murphy 22 but could not overcome Denver's balance.

Dan Issel and Charley Scott each added 15 points for Denver and Scott handed out 12 assists.

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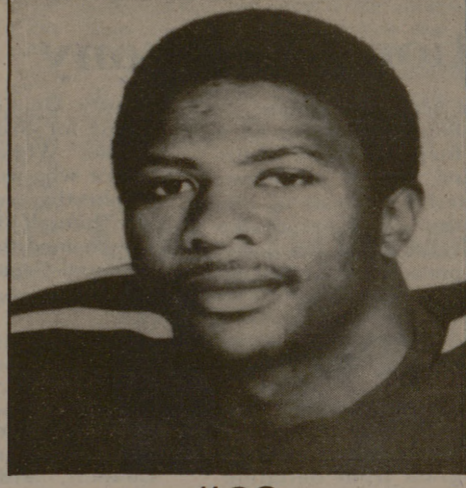
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