

ALTERATIONS

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the sports

Aggies face Mustang Mania

By MARK PATTERSON
Battalion Staff

Stand by to roll cameras ABC. Players take your places. Quiet on the set. Lights. Camera. Action. Tom Wilson Show, take two.

So it will be Saturday when the Wilson-led Texas Aggies invade Dallas and try to squelch Mustang Mania 1978. Thinking it will be a wild event the boys in TV land have scheduled the affair for regional television. After looking at the characters participating, they have every right to think it will be quite a show.

At least they hope it doesn't turn out like the last Aggie-Mustang game televised. It was back in 1976 and the Aggies came out blowing smoke and never let up, taking a 33-0 victory over the Mustangs. Ron Meyer hasn't forgotten it.

"I just hope we don't stink up the place like we did the last time they put us on TV," Meyer said. "But then, we're not the same kind of team we were in 1976. At least this year we have the ability to score at any time from anywhere."

The main reason for the change in the Mustang offense goes by the name of Michael Carlton Ford. Currently ranked as the second best

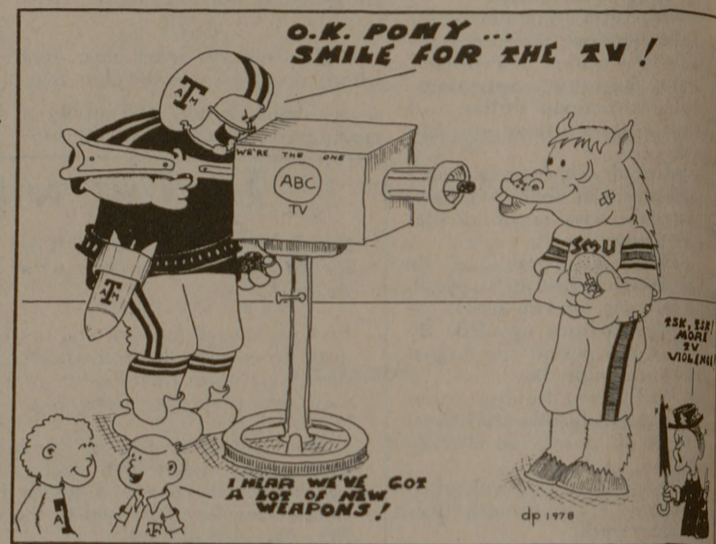
passer in the nation, the sophomore quarterback is hitting on 56 percent of his passes, compiling 1,934 yards on the year.

In last year's game against the Aggies, Ford hit on three first half bombs to lead SMU into the locker room with a 21-7 advantage at the break. But the second half was a disaster for Ford and the Mustangs as the Aggies roared back for a 38-21 victory over the Ponies.

"We played well against them last year, but they came out and put nine of our defensive starters on the bench with injuries in the second half," Ford remembered. "They really don't do anything fancy, they just line up and come at you hard."

And this week they'll come at the Mustangs from who knows where. With Wilson at the controls last week, the Aggies introduced new offensive formations to help defeat the Rice Owls. And SMU can expect to see even more new sets Saturday.

"I have no qualms or questions about us putting in too much new stuff," Wilson said. "But as head coach I have to be careful not to introduce too many new things each week. We'll move as fast and as careful as we can so our players can comprehend what we're teaching



them.

"We'll continue with the man-in-motion and we have some new things we'll use Saturday. We'll just have to see how the game's going to see how many new things we'll try."

The main problem facing the Aggies Saturday is stopping Ford's passing attack. But Wilson feels his Aggies have a jump on the situation. "There's no question that it was good for our defense to face a passing team like Rice last week and them come back and face SMU this week," Wilson said. "So really, we're a week ahead defensively."

"But Ford can kill you in the air. He throws high-percentage passes and is so good picking up his secondary receivers. He does an excellent job of picking up short yardage on third down by dumping his passes to his backs. And because he's so big and strong he can throw the deep-out routes and the deep-post passes very well. He can throw anything for anywhere."

Ford proved he's human after all last week against Texas. In his worst day of the season Ford hit on 10 of 31 passes for 122 yards against a stingy Longhorn defense. The Longhorns continually pressured Ford and keeping pressure on Ford is the only way to stop him.

"We have to keep on him all day if we hope to stop him," Wilson said of Ford. "We can't give him time in the pocket or he'll find somebody to pass to. We need to force him to hurry his throws and go to his secondary receivers or he'll burn us. We can't let him get the ball to (Emanuel) Tolbert. Tolbert leads the Southwest Conference in receptions with 40."

The Aggies offense will be at full

strength with the return of Curtis Dickey to the line. Dickey was held out of the Rice game last week to insure his good health for the SMU contest.

"Curtis is totally well and ready to go," Wilson said. "Holding him out last week really helped him get over his injuries."

"We'll start (Raymond) Belcher at fullback and Curtis at tailback. David Brothers will play back-up at both positions and Adger Armstrong will back-up at tailback. With two-back backfield we finally have some depth at running back. We'll need it against these Mustangs."

"They have a much better offense than they did last year. They played an outstanding game against Texas last week and were really tough inside against the run. As their defensive secondary is very impressive. It ought to be, having played against Ford all last spring. The game ought to be great for television fans. It pits the thrower attack of SMU against the rushing attack of Texas A&M. Plus, the decision might have an effect on who gets to go to a post-season bowl this year."

"This game is important to both teams because we're both still in the running to see who gets a bowl invitation," Wilson said. "We're going into the game 5-2 and in pretty good shape. They're 3-3-1, but they had some pretty impressive wins."

And with a little luck the Mustangs could have been 6-1 at this point in the season, said Meyer. The important part of the season is ahead for the men in red and blue.

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