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the sports

Teams equal, Wilson says

Ags, Horns renew rivalry

By SEAN PETTY
Battalion Staff

"We're Texas A&M and they're Texas fixin' to line up and play football and nothing else matters," said Texas A&M University head football coach Tom Wilson about the upcoming game with the University of Texas.

That about sums up the importance of the 85th meeting between Texas A&M and Texas in Austin this year.

There is no title on the line, the bowl representatives are not waiting for the outcome and there is no Heisman Trophy winner in the game.

"Records and past performances don't mean a thing in this game," Wilson said. "Although the game doesn't mean much as far as standings, there will be no problem of mental preparation for this game."

Some people think the two teams may have started "preparing mentally" last week instead of thinking about the immediate jobs at hand such as Baylor and TCU. The Bears didn't mind while they beat Texas and at the same time, the Frogs kept the Aggies thinking about their own game until the last seconds.

One thing that may fit into the "big game" picture is the injury situation. Texas has been hit hard recently at some key positions. Wide receiver Ronnie Miksch and defensive back Glenn Blackwood are out for the year while running back Johnny "Ham" Jones and offensive guard Jim Yarbrough have missed three games in a row. Freshman quarterback Donnie Little is also out for the season with a thumb injury. Linebacker Robin Sendlein and offensive guard Mike Baab are doubtful.

The Aggies and Longhorns have a



couple of things in common going into the game. Both are 7-3 on the season, both are going to a bowl game and both, embarrassingly, lost to Baylor which has only won three games all year.

Both teams have played solid defense all year, especially the Aggies recently. Both teams also have offenses that have been inconsistent and mistake-prone, especially in the last two games. Yet, both teams also have potentially explosive offenses and players that can make things happen.

"Texas has so many dangerous people that could break the game open, it makes them hard to defense," Wilson said. "You know

Jones, Jones and Jones can make things happen, they are quality people." Wilson was speaking of receiver Johnny "Lam" Jones, running backs A.J. "Jam" Jones and Johnny "Ham" Jones.

Both teams have good kicking games. Texas is led by punter-kicker Russell Erxleben and Texas A&M by Tony Franklin. The game could be decided by the toe-punch Erxleben or barefoot, soccer-style Franklin.

Franklin needs five points to become the Southwest Conference's all-time leading scorer.

"I'd like to kick two field goals and three extra points," he said. That, of course, would give the Aggies 27

points.

While ABC may be kicking itself for televising the game nationally because of the lack of interest, it still promises to be the rock 'em, sock 'em rivalry it has been since 1894.

"I think they are worried about our offense and we're worried about theirs," Wilson said. "They are worried about our defense and we're worried about theirs also, so I think you have two teams that are about as equal as you can get."

Whether the teams have been equal in the past has not really mattered. Many big upsets have occurred in this long series. In 1948 the Aggies were 0-9 going into the game with Horns and tied Texas 14-14. In 1940, Texas A&M was riding a 19-game winning streak and Texas beat the Aggies 7-0 to keep them out of the Rose Bowl.

"I think they would have to have the edge as far as punting goes," he said. "Erxleben is kicking very well

while David Appleby has not been kicking well all year, yet he has proved this week.

"We're both strong defenses. Our defense is playing better than it has all year," he said. "I would say it will be very much a defensive battle."

With Little out of the quarterback picture, the Aggies must rely on defense either Randy McEachern, Mark McBath because Texas coach Fred Akers is not saying he will start until Saturday.

"It really doesn't matter who plays," Wilson said, "we have to prepare the same for all of them."

And even though for most Aggies the Texas game is "the game" of the year, it is not the biggest game Wilson.

"I'm not downplaying the importance of the Texas game but SMU game was our biggest of the year," Wilson said. "At that time we had set our goals at going to a bowl and it was vitally important that we win that game. It was a very game and the team responded, champions and won it."

While defense should be the name of the game Friday, turnovers could be the most important factor. The Aggies turned the ball over five times against Baylor while Texas was busy setting a school record six interceptions against Baylor.

The question of fan interest is well, interesting. The Aggies turned 1,000 of 7,700 tickets against Texas. In Austin, the Longhorns have sold all of the public tickets and most of the student tickets. Over 70,000 are expected to attend the game depending on the weather.

"Everyone here is excited," said a representative at the UT ticket office. "You never know what will happen. Just look at last week, didn't think that could happen. Baylor. So anyone could win."

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Bayou city contest bears importance

United Press International HOUSTON — An upset win over intra-city rival Houston Saturday would hand Rice Owls head football coach Ray Alborn a sharp recruiting tool to carry into the homes of the state's high school athletes this winter.

"Lord knows," Alborn said, "we need something."

His first Owls team has been embarrassed by Texas, Oklahoma and SMU this fall, but a Saturday night game against No. 11 ranked Houston in the Astrodome is focusing attention on Rice because Houston may need the victory to get into the Cotton Bowl. An Arkansas win over Texas Tech earlier in the day could shove Houston into the Cotton Bowl. Rice, 2-8, was not invited to a post-season bowl.

"We're playing for the Rice University football program rather than to help Texas Tech out. We're concerned about our program. It would be a big boost for our kids to go out a winner," Alborn told reporters.

Houston, however, is as good as Oklahoma, he said. His Owls were beaten 66-7 by the Sooners.

Although the campuses of Rice and Houston are three miles apart, the university's football teams did not play each other until 1972 because of Rice's hesitancy. Once a

force in collegiate football, faded during the 1960s as Houston was building a powerful program.

The resulting series for the Bucket, however, has been fought and unusually competitive with Houston winning five of six games but Rice winning 24-7 last time the Owls played in Houston's home stadium, the trodome.

"I was a little concerned that kids might be intimidated by what, going into the Dome," Alborn said, "but it appears they are going forward to the game."

Alborn was reminded that this season he selected Houston to go to the Cotton Bowl.

"I still think Houston has the team in the conference," he said.

With Houston's head coaching nearby, Alborn told reporters, "My mother used to put me to bed telling me Bill Yeoman stories."

He also said Rice would have a "completely perfect" game compete, but he believes one break early in the game might be enough to give the Owls a chance.

The Owls players received a talk earlier this week from Neely, who coached some Rice teams before leaving to become Vanderbilt athletic director in 1977.

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