

Aggies begin workouts today

Spring assembly starts under Wilson

By SEAN PETTY
Battalion Sports Staff

Whether you realize it or not, football is in the air once again. It seems like only yesterday the Aggies were preparing for the Hall of Fame Bowl. But it's been three months and a recruiting period later and now 110 football players will be suiting up for the first day of spring football training at Bryan's Viking Stadium.

Just think, today starts the 1979 season which will end some time in late December and hopefully for the Aggies, in the Cotton Bowl on New Year's Day.

But this is spring training. This is where all the drives to the Cotton Bowl and national prominence start. It's a four-week period of hitting, learning, running, sweating, scrimmaging and more learning and hitting. Most players can wait to put on the pads and begin knocking heads. On the other hand, the

coaches are chomping at the bit to try out new offenses and defenses, switch personnel around and hopefully, put the best 22 men on the field by the fall.

This year's spring drills can be compared with an automobile assembly line. Head coach Tom Wilson, who has brought in some new football engineers to go with the old, will supervise the assembly of the 1979 Aggie machine which he hopes will be a workable and winning one. The drive for the Southwest Conference championship starts today.

"We've had a very successful off season," Wilson said. "We are more physically ready than we have been in a few years. All the guys are much stronger and in much better shape than they were going into spring training last year."

"I'm just tickled to death about getting started. We've got a lot to

learn and a lot of new things to try out.

"We've got several priorities that we must take care of this spring. The main thing on offense is the full implementation of the I-formation and all of the formations and options off of it. It is going to take time and patience to get the new system down. We have a completely new numbering system for the offensive plays.

"Defensively, we will stay with the 4-3 (four linemen, three linebackers) but we have a whole lot of technique to learn."

In putting together Texas A&M's winning 1979 model, Wilson must start with the steering wheel of the offense, or the quarterback. Juniors-to-be Mike Mosley and David Beal should be the leading contenders to take the wheel of the Aggie offense. Mosley returns after starting all 12 games last year.

The offensive backfield, which is the wheels of the Aggie unit, will be led by Heisman Trophy candidate Curtis Dickey at tailback. David Brothers and Roger Wiley will fight for the fullback spot while Temple Aday and Emerson Brown will make Dickey earn his tailback spot.

Wilson said they will just have to wait on George Woodard to see if he plays this fall.

"We have to go without George in our plans right now," Wilson said. "I hope he comes back by fall but it all depends on his weight and if his leg is ready."

According to Wilson, Dickey, the 1978 SWC 100-meter dash champ, will workout with the football team Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday but will continue running track on Saturdays.

Speaking of speed, the men who will be running under Mosley's and Beal's passes are standard equipment from last year's 8-4 team. Doug Teague, Al Nasser, Gerald Carter and Mike Whitwell will handle the receiving duties once again for the Ags. Wilson also recruited a good crop of receivers and expects help from some of those

prospects along with David Scott, a transfer from Kilgore Jr. College.

Wilson and his fellow coaches will run into a couple of snags when they try and work out the moving force of the Aggie offense, the offensive line and tight end.

"One of our tight ends is going to have to come to the front this spring," Wilson said. "We lost Russell Mikeska (the 1979 Aggie Heart Award winner) but have three men who have a good shot at the position; Chuck Carr, Phillip Simpson and Pat Flinn. One of those three must take charge."

"It's also going to be very hard to replace a talent like Cody Risien (All-SWC offensive tackle). Cis Jennings and Kyle Golson should go at it at the quick tackle position."

There will be other changes in the offensive line. Preston Dickson and David Bandy will lead the fight for center while Ed Pustejovsky, who was center last year, will move to strong guard. Zach Guthrie and Thomas Gregory will battle for the strong tackle position. Quick guard will be held by Doug Holmes, Pat Hagerty or Scott Hays.

On the other side of the line, the unit that will be responsible for stopping the likes of Penn State, Texas, SMU and Texas Tech remains almost intact from last year's young defensive team.

"Our top priority on defense is the defensive tackle position," Wilson said. "Gerald Galloway and Tim Ward will lead the fight for the right tackle position while Mack Moore, a junior college transfer from California, and Arlis James, who was moved from offense to defense, will battle for the left tackle spot."

The defensive end positions will be tough to wrestle away from Jacob Green and James Zachery but Keith Baldwin, Paul Pender and Jon van Sant will try just that this spring.

The defensive secondary will be headed up by senior-to-be, Carl Grulich at free safety. Dan Davis and Leandrew Brown will go all out for the left cornerback spot while Elroy Steen and Darrell Adams will fight for the right cornerback. John Dawson has been moved from free safety to strong safety along with Jimmy Hamilton who was moved from cornerback.

There is nothing but optimism in the linebacking corps as four of the five linebackers who split time last year return. Mike Little and Randy Harvey will bust heads for the strong side linebacker position while Doug Carr and Mark Tullous battle for middle linebacker and Cal Peveto and Lynn Maughmer fight for the weak side linebacking spot.

With the defense and offense past the blueprint stage and on the line, all Wilson has left is the kicking game. The biggest problem is trying to replace all-America kicker, Tony Franklin. But Wilson feels sophomore David Hardy will be able to fill the, uh, shoe of Franklin.

"David is an excellent kicker and I'm not worried about him at all," Wilson said. "We also have David Appleby back to handle the punting chores. So our kicking game is in excellent shape but we are going to spend more time than ever on it this



Aggie linebacker Mike Little grabs TCU quarterback Steve Bayuk in action last fall. Little and the Aggies will be grabbing tackle dummies soon, as Texas A&M's spring training begins today at Bryan's Viking Stadium. Battalion photo by Pat O'Connell

spring to eliminate mistakes in the fall.

Wilson and his fellow coaches will put the 1979 Aggie test model on the road this spring and put it through every test they can think of. They will test it for strength, crash resistance, speed, handling and eventually try and come up with the best '79 model in the conference.

"We're just going to try and get the right people in the right places this spring," Wilson said. "We're going to work on a balanced offensive attack. We're not going to be pass-happy by any means like some

people think. "Everyone is ready to go. The staff is really excited and the players' attitudes are tremendous. We'll just see what happens."

And how should the 1979 Aggie model match up with the other conference units?

"All I know is that there are going to be five teams in this conference at the beginning of the year that can go to the Cotton Bowl and four will fall by the end of the season," Wilson said. "I'm sure we are not going to be picked to win the conference but I guarantee we'll be out there giving

it our best every Saturday. We'll be ready."

So who will it be in '79? The new SMU Mustang with the horsepower? Or the "Joneses" of Texas? Or maybe the Texas Tech signed around Texas Tech? Hadnot? Or the old Cougar?

At this point, the only thing that matters to Texas A&M is who the Maroon and White game weeks from now. Then Wilson's men can worry about their 1979 model on the road.

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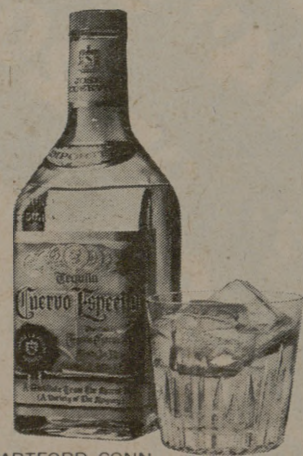
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