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the sports

Appleby's punts back on track

By KURT ALLEN
Battalion Sports Staff

The next time a Texas A&M punt doesn't travel a Ray Guy-like 50 yards, don't blame David Appleby. The Aggies' punter may be following the coach's orders.

Appleby, a 5-10, 185 pound senior from Dallas W.T. White, said his average distance per punt dropped during the Baylor game because Aggie head coach Tom Wilson told him to move the ball and not worry so much about the distance of his punts.

"All week before the Baylor

game, Coach Wilson kept telling me to work on moving the ball more. That means getting the ball off into the air quicker," Appleby said. "So you've got to remember that anytime a punter is asked to speed up his delivery, to rush his kick, there's just more of a chance that something will go wrong.

Appleby said Wilson was striving for a 40-yard average and no return on punts. The head coach wanted the ball to move quicker to avoid any blocked punts.

"I know he was worried about the success Baylor had with blocking

punts last year," Appleby said. "I also think the memory of that blocked punt during the Brigham Young game was still fresh in his mind, and he wanted to prevent that from happening again."

It was the blocked punt during the BYU game that spoiled an otherwise excellent night for

Appleby before the Ags ever played a game as Wilson continually talked of the weakness of the punting game and the necessity of a good punter.

"I really don't know why everything fell into place during that (BYU) game, after all the trouble I'd had lately," Appleby said. "During the summer, I worked hard and lost 15 pounds. I thought that would really help. But when I got back to A&M for the fall, my kicking was a mediocre, on-again-off-again thing."

"Things really didn't click for me until the start of the BYU game. I went out onto the field and just felt I could kick well. Suddenly I had all of my confidence back. I bet I was probably more nervous during practice the whole week before the game."

During practice sessions, Appleby and the punting unit are not given a regular time to work on their punts.

"We just work on the finer points of our kicking game during most of practice. When the main drills are over, then the team spends some time sending rushers up against our punting unit."

His main goal, at this point, said Appleby, is to work on his delivery

so that he gets the ball into the air no more than 2.1 seconds after the ball is snapped. Although the goal is 2.2 seconds, Appleby strives for 2.1 seconds.

Appleby said he credits the team's good spirit in the face of losses to Wilson.

"I feel like Coach Wilson is on our level. He's very open and easy to discuss problems with. He just flat came out and said to the team if anyone had any questions about what the coaching staff wasn't doing."

Looking ahead to Saturday's game with Penn State, Appleby said the contest is of top importance to Aggies, because it will make a season either go up or may be for good.

"Any way you look at it, it's very attractive. Up until now it's been a strange season."

"I think we need to come out of Texas Tech game with a 2-0 record. Otherwise, you eventually get to the point where if you're not winning, you don't feel like playing like Carl Grulich said the other day. Any team that's successful has to have some luck and without breaks, you'll go nowhere. That's what we're waiting for."



David Appleby

Appleby. The infamous punt came with 2:43 left in the fourth quarter and the Aggies on their own seven yard line.

Appleby's partially blocked punt traveled only 12 yards and set up the winning B.Y.U. score. Nevertheless, Appleby averaged 44.7 yards-per-punt. Appleby's career average at Texas A&M is 40.5 yards. His best season was his sophomore year when he averaged 43.3 yards per kick.

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and snapper in college than in the pros.
"Maysel asked me if I thought some of my problems in camp had been because of the holder and snapper," Erleben said. "I told him, 'No, I've never had a bad snapper or holder as long as I've been kicking. That wasn't the problem.'"
Erleben said Maysel then asked him how he rated Longhorn snapper Scott Huntington and holder Rickey Churchman in comparison with the Saints' players handling the same job, center John Watson and holder Ed Burns.
"I replied, 'Lou, I miss the good and you miss the pain you've been working with,'" all I said. If I had said the players were better, I'd have burned in Austin."
Erleben, drafted No. 1 by the Saints but who played just one regular season game before being placed on injured reserve for free with a pulled muscle, apologized to Watson and Churchman as he arrived at the training facility.
The newspaper story also mentioned Erleben as saying the Saints drafted Churchman as his holder.
"I told (Maysel) I heard some guys talking about his change of draft, and that it would be great were drafted by the Saints together again," Erleben said. "That's all. This whole thing made me mad as hell. I wish (the paper) would call again."
American-Statesman sports editor Jim Trotter said only that the paper was confident its story was correct.
"We stand by our story," he said.

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