

the sports

Aggie opponents helped by inside info

Texas A&M coach Tom Wilson said Monday he and his team had not been looking for excuses, but admitted helpful information about the Aggies' offensive game plan had been forwarded to Texas Tech coaches before the A&M-Tech game earlier this season.

In addition, Wilson confirmed game films of the A&M-Tech game appeared to show that a Red Raider touchdown pass was actually dropped in the end zone by the receiver.

A&M lost that game, 21-20, in a keystone contest of a thus-far disappointing season.

"Yeah," said Wilson, in his first full year as A&M coach. "We've had some rough things happen this year."

The story of the stolen game plan information first appeared Sunday in the Eagle.

Tech officials said an anonymous caller telephoned the athletic department office before the Raiders-Aggies game and — after telling a secretary that he did not want to talk to any coaches — relayed information concerning the type of formations A&M was using in practice.

"The first concrete evidence I had of it was when (Tech coach) Rex Dockery called us and told us about it," said Wilson.

"Actually he had one of his assistants call us on the Thursday before the game and then I called Rex to confirm it."

"We were flipping a tight end from one side to the other. We started with it on the first series of the game and it didn't look like it was affecting them. They made a simple adjustment to it and since it wasn't working to our advantage we stopped using it."

"We were aware they had been told about this. But they had enough class to call us and tell us about it. I didn't want to say anything about it because I didn't want to make excuses."

Wilson declined to speculate on who might have sent the information to Tech, but after the Raiders game he closed his practices.

"We had a fairly open policy before, but we knew who was there," Wilson said. When asked whether the information had been relayed by a "friend" of the school, Wilson replied:

"You said that, I didn't."

Baylor coach Grant Teaff, whose team beat A&M in the second week of the season, 17-7, also said he remembered receiving an anonymous letter concerning plays that A&M would use against the Bears.

"But I usually get one or two letters before every game," said Teaff. "People always want to tell you about a play or something. That letter went right where all the others go — in the waste basket."

"Any team would be foolish to go out and prepare on the basis of something in a letter."

A&M will take a 3-4 record into its regionally televised meeting with SMU Saturday. In addition to the losses to Tech and Baylor, the Aggies fell to Houston on a touchdown scored in the final 15 seconds of play.

And as SMU coach Ron Meyer prepared his team for the Aggies, he brought up the business of the "phantom" Tech touchdown Monday.

"I may be going blind, but I swear that the film shows the ball hitting the kid in the hand and slamming right down to the turf and then bouncing back into the kid's hands," said Meyer.

The pass to which Meyer referred was a five-yard scoring throw to L.M. Cummings which ignited a Tech rally early in the fourth quarter. That score reduced the A&M lead to 20-15 and Tech went on to score the winning touchdown with 8:21 left.

"One official started to signal an incomplection," said Meyer and another official in the back corner of the end zone signals touchdown.

"I think that's what the films show," said Wilson. "And I think the Tech coaches would say the same thing. But the officials have a hard enough time without us getting on them. It's just one of those things."

Aggies, Ponies on television

Texas A&M officials announced Monday Saturday's game between the Aggies and Southern Methodist will be televised regionally and will kick off at 11:50 a.m.

The original kickoff had been set for 1:30 p.m.

A&M and SMU are two of the Southwest Conference's most disappointing teams this year, both plagued by injuries and both 3-4 for the year.

It will mark the fourth consecutive week a SWC team has been involved in an ABC telecast.

Oilers taking the wins

United Press International
HOUSTON — For a coach whose team has the second-best record in the American Football Conference, Bum Phillips is sure on the defensive.

Maybe the imposing lineup of opponents the next six weeks is worrying him. Or maybe the incessant questions about his on-again, off-again quarterback are getting his goat. Or possibly opposing defenses' new-found ability to stop Earl Campbell are the root of the irritability.

Just maybe, however, the Houston Oilers' 6-3 record is hiding a team playing poorly, and Phillips knows it.

"I'm not making any excuses," he said Monday as he appraised a lackluster 27-24 overtime win over the New York Jets. "I'll take the win any way I can get it."

But then he offered two reasons, penalties and poor field position, why the Oilers offense, which was booted numerous times Sunday, failed to generate enough yardage to protect a 14-point lead in the fourth quarter.

"You could call a penalty on every play in every NFL game," he said. "But basically the referees are not supposed to call the ones away from the play that have no bearing on the play. They called them all (Sunday)."

During the fourth quarter the Oilers, leading 24-10, allowed the 4-5 Jets to twice drive less than 45 yards for touchdowns.

"We were backed up," Phillips said.

If the coach was not being critical, several of his players were as they seemed to dread relying on efforts like the one they used against the Jets in their upcoming games against Miami, Oakland, Cincinnati, Dallas, Cleveland, Pittsburgh and Philadelphia.

Linebacker Gregg Bingham said, "If you don't have anything good to say, don't say it."

Tight end Mike Barber added, "We're not playing the kind of football we're capable of. I'm very upset."

Despite the worries, the AFC Central race is still a dog fight with 7-2 Pittsburgh leading Houston and Cleveland by one game.

No other AFC team besides

Pittsburgh has better than a 6-3 record, so the wild card picture includes Miami, New England, Denver and San Diego besides the three Central Division teams.

Miami hosts the Oilers Monday night.


Beat-up Cowboys may play

United Press International
DALLAS — The Dallas Cowboys Monday placed quarterback Roger Staubach, running back Preston Pearson and linebacker Thomas Henderson on the questionable list for next Sunday's meeting with the New York Giants.

But club officials said there was a 50-50 chance all three would play.

Staubach, who suffered a mild concussion during Dallas' 14-3 loss to Pittsburgh Sunday, also had a twisted knee during the game. Pearson was carried from the field on a stretcher with what proved to be a pulled muscle in his knee and a rib cartilage separation.

Henderson pulled a hamstring muscle in the game.



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