

# Sports

## Improving Owls look to ambush Aggies

By KURT ALLEN  
Battalion Staff  
When the 1980 season began, few people expected the Texas A&M-Rice game to be anything resembling a close contest. But all that has changed in the last seven weeks. Rice is no longer an easy win for its opponents and the Aggies are poss-

ibly headed for their worst finish in the last eight years.

Believe it or not, the Owls have already won more games this season than they did all of last year. That may not seem like much considering Rice was 1-10 in 1979, but the Owls are 2-4 so far, including a Southwest Conference win. Winning a conference game is something Rice never got close to doing last year.

An even closer inspection shows the two Owl wins were 17-7 and 28-24 decisions over LSU and TCU respectively. Rice also managed to score 21 points in the fourth quarter against Texas to make a rout a respectable loss. Then, just last week, the Owls gave Texas Tech a scare by nearly upsetting the Red Raiders before losing 10-3.

The logical question which comes to mind would be what all these facts and statistics mean. What they mean is that Rice can no longer be taken for granted. It also means Texas A&M has got to get its act together after being dismantled 46-7 by Baylor in waterlogged Kyle Field.

Much of the Owls' new-found vigor can be traced to Head Coach Ray Alborn's "Great Overhaul of 1980." After 27 pass interceptions and 15 fumbles last year, Alborn replaced the traditional passing offense with a double option version of the veer.

Since the new offense was introduced, Alborn has added a slight twist to it. He now uses two quarterbacks extensively. Junior Robert Hoffman takes care of running the veer and senior Randy Hertel comes on in certain downs to run the passing attack.

The veer was instituted to lend steadiness and consistency to the Owls, but no one would have known it by watching Rice's inept performance against Tech. The Owls turned the ball over seven times (five fumbles and two interceptions) and had

Fance had 64 of the Owls 154 yards against Tech and Wilson chipped in another 37.

Defensively, Rice has no big-name players this year, but the squad is getting the job done nevertheless. Alborn said he feels his defense has played well enough to win and has praise for such players as linebacker Robert Williamson (6-1, 224), end Will Rub (6-4, 229) and nose guard Brad Bierstedt (6-3, 240).

Alborn also found some humor about the coin toss, saying his players would have to work on it before playing the Aggies. It seems the Rice captains gave the Raiders not only the wind on last week's kickoff, but also the ball.

Rice enters College Station Saturday under conditions similar to 1978. That year, the Aggies had also lost consecutively to Houston (33-0) and Baylor (24-6). It was after the Baylor game of course, that then Head Coach Emory Bellard resigned. Current field boss Tom Wilson took over the reins and smoked the Owls 38-21. It remains to be seen whether Texas A&M can repeat history Saturday.

There's no doubt that Rice is fired up and it isn't only because the Owls know they have their best shot in years to beat the Aggies. Perhaps just as important a reason is the fact Alborn lost not one, but two offensive coordinators to Wilson and the Aggies in just a matter of months.

First Ted Unbehagen left the Owls for the lucrative Texas A&M program in January. Then his replacement, Dick Rader, left after being on the Rice payroll just five weeks. Alborn had been counting on Rader to teach the Owls all the finer points of the veer system.

Ironically, an Aggie wound up succeeding Unbehagen and Rader at Rice. He's George Cortez, and along with new offensive coordinator Les

Koennig, the two have brought

Owls to where they are now. All in all, there's no doubt Saturday's matchup between the Aggies and Aggies should be the most interesting in years. But there's another item that should add another dimension to this year's game: the Marching Owl Band, better known as the MOB, plans to make the trip to College Station well.

The MOB has a new band director this year who hails from USC. In an interview with a Houston newspaper last month, the new head director felt the hostility between Rice and other conference schools, especially Texas A&M, was in the past.

The plan is for the MOB to continue its routines with improved musicianship. However, for schools which are a bit touchier, the MOB will be toning things down a little this year.

## Johnson leads Spurs

United Press International  
SAN ANTONIO — George Johnson grabbed 15 rebounds and led five shots, including a key three-point shot, to lead San Antonio Spurs to a 123-120 victory over San Antonio Spurs Tuesday night.

San Antonio led 119-116 with remaining when Nater drove John Shumate and Johnson to the top of the lane to shoot from behind. The 6-11 Johnson grabbed a rebound at the other end of the court and laid the ball in for the Spurs up 121-116.

## Top 20

United Press International  
NEW YORK — The United International Board of Coaches 20 college football ratings after weeks, with first-place votes in

1. Alabama (36) (6-0)
2. Texas (2) (5-0)
3. UCLA (3) (5-0)
4. Notre Dame (1) (5-0)
5. Georgia (6-0)
6. Florida St. (6-1)
7. North Carolina (6-0)
8. Nebraska (5-1)
9. Southern Cal (5-0-1)
10. Ohio State (5-1)
11. Pittsburgh (5-1)
12. Penn State (5-1)
13. Baylor (6-0)
14. Arkansas (4-1)
15. South Carolina (6-1)
16. Missouri (5-1)
17. Oklahoma (3-2)
18. Brigham Young (5-1)
19. Washington (5-1)
20. Southern Miss. (6-0)

Note: By agreement with American Football Coaches Assn., teams on probation by the NCAA are ineligible for the national championship competition by the UPI Board of Coaches. The only team currently on probation is Auburn.

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