

Sports

Former coach talks of famous teams

Robertson — a defensive genius

By RITCHIE PRIDDY
Sports Editor

This is the first of a two part series about Aggie defenses under Melvin Robertson. The second part will follow in Wednesday's paper.

When one thinks of great collegiate defensive teams of the past one has to think of the Texas Aggies. From 1973 to 1978 the Aggies led the Southwest Conference in defense while ranking high in national defensive statistics. The man responsible for those defenses is Melvin Robertson.

Robertson, who now owns two liquor stores in College Station, was the Aggies' defensive coordinator from 1973 to 1978. During that time his defenses were recognized as some of the best in the land.

Although temporarily out of coaching, Robertson is still considered by many to be one of the most intelligent defensive coaches in the game. This is evident by the number of coaching jobs he has been offered since leaving Texas A&M in 1978. Robertson has received job offers from as far away as the University of Pittsburgh and Mississippi State.

Robertson came to Texas A&M in 1972 when Emory Bellard was named head coach. He and Bellard had known each other for quite some time (they had coached against one another on more than one occasion) and when Bellard accepted the job, Robertson was the first person he called.

Robertson began his coaching career in Stanton and after a successful coaching stint there, moved on to Sweetwater, where his teams captured six district championships in as many years. In the fall of 1965, Robertson joined the University of Houston staff as a secondary coach for Bill Yeoman. That coaching staff included former professional coaches Bum Phillips and Chuck Fairbanks.

A year later Fairbanks left for Oklahoma and greener pastures, and Robertson was named defensive coordinator. That was the beginning of Robertson's claim to fame.

During his tenure at Houston he put together a 4-3 defense that was no less than awesome, rated as the number five defense in the nation. Not many people can remember that Houston defense, since at the time, Houston was running a new veer offense while destroying opponents right and left.

Robertson came to Texas A&M with just one thing in mind — to build a winning defense. He did just that.

From 1973 to 1978 his teams dominated the SWC in total defense all but one year, and were rated as the number three defensive teams in the nation behind

Alabama and Michigan in that time.

He didn't do anything special to build his famous defensive squads, other than to throw in a little motivation. That motivation became a trademark of his teams, as did players of the caliber of Ed Simonini, Pat Thomas, Lester Hayes, Robert Jackson, Jackie Williams, Edgar Fields, Tank Marshall and Garth Ten Napel. The list goes on and on.

He ran a basic 4-3 defense with a few alterations, something which many people deny.

One can sense the excitement in Robertson's voice as he describes his 4-3 defenses which became feared and respected throughout the nation: "You have four down linemen attacking the offensive line — they can lay their ears back. If they can whip them, and you can get them to do that, you've got three linebackers that can slide up and down the line. They are the hardest people to block and those guys can flat get around the ball. Well, you've got four secondary guys keying backs, the ball and quick rotations. You can't hardly block them. So, if the play is a run you've got seven guys that can get to the ball. Then, if those four linemen can escape their blocks, which they are taught to do, you have 11 players around the ball."

He said that if the offense sent a receiver deep, somebody would cover him, but the other 10 players were supposed to be within five yards of the ball. They usually were.

"You throw in a little motivation and enthusiasm and you can swarm the field. That's the best alignment to get the most people around the ball and that's the name of the game anyway."

On occasion he would throw in a few stunts and blitzes to keep the offense honest. "I always felt that you've got to attack the offense."

"We always got criticism that we blitzed too much. We didn't blitz near as much as what people said."

Robertson told his players that he wouldn't call a blitz until they showed him that they could whip the other team.

"I told them that they had to be cranked up — their motor running 100 percent — or I wouldn't call anything because it would make us look bad if we got beat. I could tell if they were fired up out there. If they weren't we'd run a straight 4-3 all day long."

Asked how he got his teams motivated he said: "You just talk to them. You know, about pride, hustle and motivation."

Robertson demanded an all-out effort from his defenses, another characteristic that set them apart from the average defense.

"You've got to have your best players out there and they have to be tough, hard-nosed — the kind



Staff photo by Brian Tate

Melvin Robertson, former defensive coordinator for the Texas Aggies, proudly stands in front of his store window displaying some of the memorabilia

from his coaching days. Robertson is considered by many people to be one of the finest defensive coaches in the game.

that would not complain about broken legs or anything like that. I'm talking about those minor things that you are going to have all your life as long as you play football.

"If you can't play with a high level of efficiency, aggressiveness and never let the defense down you'll never have a great defense — and that's what we had. We had it where the entire defensive squad was like that. Practice would be unreal. They loved to practice. We had some fun out there practicing. We were going hard and tough everyday."

"We always preached to never be in the damn training room —

didn't want to see any of the defensive guys in the training room."

Needless to say, very few defensive players were hurt enough to report to the trainers.

The 1975-76 teams stand out in his mind as two of his best defensive squads.

"The 1974 and '75 squads were good. The '76 team was *dang* good. Those were probably the best ones. We had two or three at Houston that were comparable but the offense was so good there they kind of overshadowed the defense."

"Here, we averaged 50 turnovers a year — that's five a ballgame. Plus, our opponents punted an av-

erage of eight times a game. Normally, you are going to get the ball 14 or 15 times per game, so you're talking about eight times they didn't do anything and five times we got a momentum-type thing like an interception or fumble."

(continued)

Doubles highlight Ag tennis tourney

By RICK STOLLE

Battalion Staff

The First Texas A&M University Three-way tournament turned out to be quite a tournament for matched pairs.

David Pate and Greg Amayla of TCU were the finalists in singles and the teams of Doug Crawford-Craig Kardon and Tom Fontana-Johnny Levine of the University of Texas were finalists in doubles the weekend tournament at the Omar Smith Tennis Center on the Texas A&M campus.

Pate won the singles competition and the doubles championships will be played later. The Aggies also had two doubles teams reach the quarterfinals before falling to the two Texas teams.

The Aggie team of Ron Kowal-Tom Judson beat Peter Kuro Mike Metzger of TCU 7-6, 7-5 in the first round. They then defeated Chris Doane-Kevin Dul of TCU 6-3, 6-2 before losing to Kardon-Crawford 6-2, 6-2.

Aggies Brian Joelson and Mike Pazourek beat Todd Lesco George Lee of TCU 6-3, 6-2 and Paul Crozier-Ted Erck of Texas A&M retired before losing to Levine-Fontana.

Texas A&M coach David Kent said, "The doubles match between Joelson and Pazourek against Levine and Fontana was the best tennis match since the NCAA finals. Both teams played their hearts out and neither deserved to lose."

He said the upperclassmen did not play as well as expected especially in singles, but the freshmen came through and played very well. Two of the three juniors on the team lost in the first round. The Aggies have no seniors on the squad this year.

Both Kowal and Judson lost first round matches but Kent said the two came back to play very well in doubles. "The tournament was a great experience for us," Kent said, "the freshmen played exceptionally well."

Kimmo Alkio, a freshman from Finland, took eventual champion Pate to three sets before finally losing 4-6, 6-2, 6-0.

"Kimmo played a great match, I think he surprised Pate a bit because Kimmo has played some tough matches and was prepared for him," said Kent. "Unfortunately, the surprise wore off after the first set."

Freshman Mike Pazourek defeated Kures and Metzger both TCU 6-4, 0-6, 6-0 and 6-0, 6-0, respectively. He was defeated by quarterfinalist Crozier of Texas 6-1, 6-4.

Genario Fernandez defeated George Lee of TCU 7-6, 6-7, before losing to teammate Joelson 6-2, 7-5.

"Genario really showed some spunk in his matches," said Kent. "He had a very good tournament."

The excellent showing by the freshmen encouraged Kent. He said he is optimistic about the season with the help and fine play of the freshmen will provide.

"They will certainly give a lift to the team," he said. "Our freshmen must be considered a threat to anyone they play, and they have the ability to play with anyone in the conference."

The teams next competition is scheduled to be in Austin at the University of Texas Three-way tournament between Texas, A&M and Trinity University Oct. 2-4.

Kent said the team will have to work on singles but is looking forward to the stiff competition the tournament will have.

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