

Sports



Texas A&M Head Football Coach Tom Wilson

Photo by Michele Rowland

All-SWC quarterback in mid-60s

Wilson recalls career at Tech

By GAYE DENLEY
Battalion Staff

At a scrawny 140 pounds, Corsicana High passing wizard Tom Wilson had only a handful of scholarship offers to choose from.

"I really wasn't a very good football player coming out of high school, and I really didn't have that many offers," the Texas A&M head football coach and former all-SWC Texas Tech University quarterback said.

"As a matter of fact, I felt like all during the time I was in high school I'd end up at Baylor, because I'd been going to Baylor and those were the years they had the great passing coaches," Wilson said.

"But somewhere along the way in March of my senior year I got married, and Baylor had a rule that said you couldn't be married when you were a freshman. And so really Texas Tech was the only scholarship offer that I had."

Red Raider Coach J.T. King's confidence in Wilson's arm paid off for Texas Tech, which led the conference in rushing in 1964 and in passing in 1965, the two years that Wilson started in the quarterback spot. Pound for pound, the flyweight quarterback packed the meanest punch in the conference, setting several Red Raider passing records that still stand. By a margin of several hundred yards, he tops Texas Tech's list for the most yards passed in a single season, completing 172 of 283 attempts in 1965 for 2119 yards and 18 touchdowns.

He also holds the records for the most completions in a single

game, 26 against the University of Arkansas in 1965, and the most completions in a season, 172 in 1965.

"We were a passing offense — we were an 'I' formation team. We dropped back and threw the ball a great deal," Wilson said.

"I became the starting quarterback my junior year, and we led the conference in rushing — didn't throw the ball very much. Then in our senior year, we were playing Texas, and they were just beating the dickens out of us.

"The second half we started throwing the ball, and it was very effective. And so after that, we just threw the ball all over the lot every game."

King once called Wilson the smartest player he ever coached and granted him the rare privilege of calling his own plays his senior year. Wilson remembers one play in particular he called against Texas A&M in 1965.

"The game had bounced back and forth. We were ahead, and then (Harry) Ledbetter, the A&M quarterback, had thrown a long touchdown pass to go ahead with just about a minute left.

"A&M had kicked off to Tech, and we had moved the ball down to about the 30, about 70 yards away, and it was third and 10. We were in the huddle and we really didn't know what to do, so we made up a play in the huddle...it was kind of a flea-flicker type of thing.

"And we did it, and it scored. And we won the ball game with just a few seconds left."

After receiving his degree in education in 1966, Wilson spent nine more years calling the plays for Tech, not from the huddle but from the press box as an assistant offensive coach. In 1975, he came to Texas A&M as offensive coordinator in an effort to broaden his coaching experience.

"I wanted to be a head coach. I think everybody's ambition is to be a head coach," Wilson said. "I had always been there at Tech, and I needed to work under some more people and another program."

In just three years, Wilson saw his wish come true. He assumed the position of head coach halfway through the 1978 season when Emory Bellard resigned, and has since compiled a career record of 16-15 three games into the 1981 season.

As a coach, his philosophies reflect King's faith in his abilities and Wilson's own determination to excel.

"I didn't weigh but 140 pounds when I played, and it really took a

lot for him back in those years to name me and give me a chance to play as his number one quarterback," he said. "When I was a player, I didn't have a great deal of ability. In order for me, personally, to play, I had to do the right things, I had to want to, I had to have a strong desire. I still believe in those things."

Although his original intention when he left Texas Tech was to gain enough experience to someday return to his alma mater as head coach, Wilson said his perspective has changed in his six years with the Aggies.

"I think that's everyone's dream (to return as head coach) when they leave somewhere, when they were as close to the situation as I was and have all the memories that I do," he said. "When I left, that was what I was going to do — go out and prepare myself, hoping someday to come back as the head football coach.

"I had an opportunity last year to go back, but I've got a job that's not finished here yet."

Schramm denys rumors that Kush going to Dallas

United Press International
DALLAS — Tex Schramm says he has never talked to Harold Ballard and apparently he is not all that anxious to start now.

It was Ballard — owner of the Canadian Football League's Hamilton franchise — who started the "Frank Kush rumor," Tuesday and it was Schramm — president and general manager of the Dallas Cowboys — who shot it down every way he could.

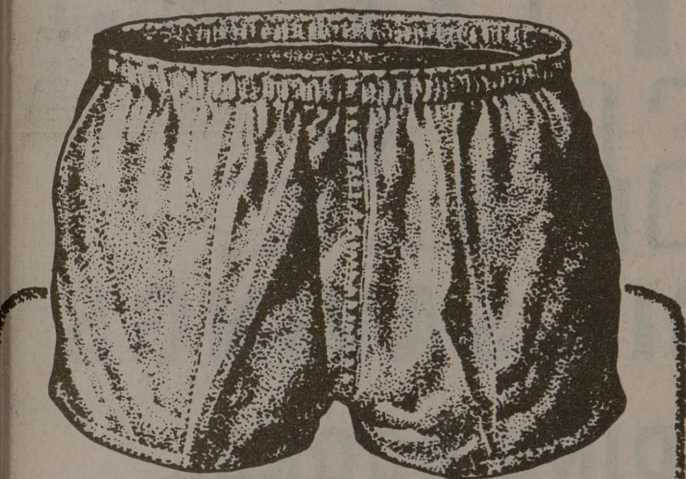
Ballard was quoted Tuesday as saying he had been told by NFL sources that Kush, the former Arizona State and current Hamilton coach, was being considered as either a replacement for Dallas coach Tom Landry or for an assistant's job on Landry's staff.

Nothing, Schramm said, could be further from the truth. "It's an irritation to me to even have to recognize that kind of

story," Schramm said. "It beats the hell out of me (how the story got started). Somebody up there must be smoking something."

Schramm said he had never had an occasion to visit with Ballard. But he said the Cowboys scouting department, headed by Gil Brandt, kept up a relationship with most coaches in Canada as well as collegiate coaches throughout the United States.

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