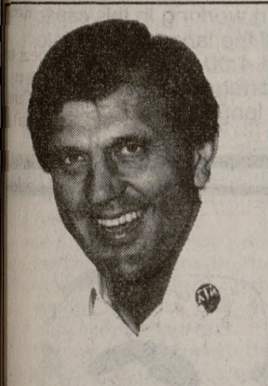


# The Battalion Sports

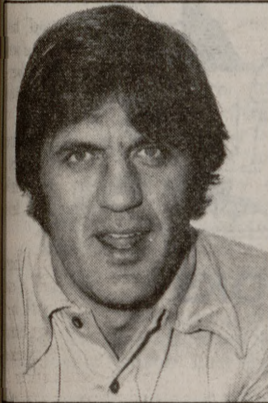
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Persistence paves way for Aggies' new coach

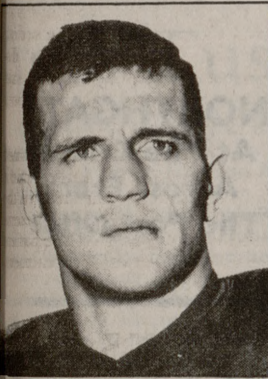
## Dedication key to Sherrill's success



Aggie coach Jackie Sherrill



Sherrill at Pittsburgh, 1974



Sherrill at Alabama, 1964

**Editor's note:** Texas A&M's Jackie Sherrill, who spent the past five football seasons as the Pitt Panther head coach, opens the 1982 Aggie schedule with a career record of 53-17-1. In the second of a two-part series, Sherrill's family, friends and former associates discuss his success and the factors that motivate him.

by Frank L. Christlieb  
Sports Editor

It wouldn't be surprising to look up the word "winner" in Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary and find the first, and possibly the only, definition stated in two simple words.

Jackie Sherrill. That would be more appropriate than "one who or that which wins," although Sherrill fits that description perfectly.

It seems Sherrill, the Aggie head football coach and athletic director since Jan. 19, has been nothing but a winner throughout his life, which began 39 years ago in November.

Playing football at Biloxi High School in Mississippi, then moving on to the University of Alabama, Sherrill played linebacker, center, fullback, defensive end and nose guard during his career. Transition from playing to coaching didn't detract from his success, since Sherrill was able to compile a .758 winning percentage in five years at Pittsburgh and one year at Washington State.

Sherrill, one of eight brothers and sisters, grew up in Duncan, Okla., until moving to Biloxi during his sophomore year in high school. At that time, Sherrill moved in with his brother, John, who at 57 ranks No. 2 in age among the family's children.

Early life wasn't easy street for Sherrill, who grew up with his mother, his brothers and his sisters, since his father left the family when Sherrill was four months old.

His mother, Mrs. Dovie Sherrill, turned 79 in August. She still remembers when her son began playing organized football during his fourth-grade year.

"He was always ambitious," Mrs. Sherrill said. "He used to bring in every old football uniform that they'd have over at the school and say: 'Momma, wash these — all we've got to play in are these dirty uniforms.' So, I'd wash them and he'd go right out and get them dirty again."

Mrs. Sherrill, who has been partially blind for the past five years, recalls that her son always kept his mind and hands busy.

"Jackie was always a-doin' something," she said. "He didn't come up the easy way — he did it the hard way."

In the aspect of being a hard worker, Mrs. Sherrill said, her son hasn't changed to this day.

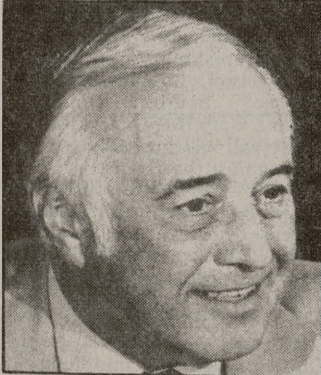
*"He says he's going to win. I say as long as (Jackie) feels like they've got the material, they're going to win. He feels so sure of his players and has so much confidence in them. He's always been that way." — Mrs. Dovie Sherrill*

She said that, even in appearance, Sherrill seems to have remained constant since he was a junior in high school.

"When he comes home," she said, "everybody says he hasn't changed a bit — and he really hasn't."

"He's one of those people with his nose in his work, so he doesn't get a chance to come home too often."

Her son, Mrs. Sherrill said, has always maintained "a policy of loving the other guy" in his



Pitt AD Edward Bozick

work, and she considers this to be one of his strongest assets. "He never forgets anybody," she said. "If you do him harm, he'll walk off and leave you alone and not have anything to do with you. Otherwise, he'll never forget you."

Mrs. Sherrill expresses optimism about the possibilities present within her son's new team at Texas A&M.

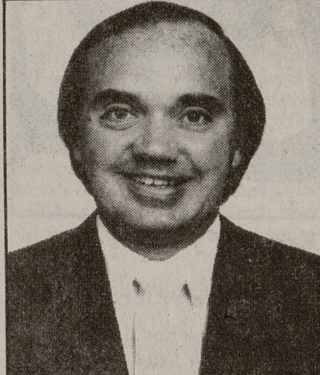
"He says he's going to win," Mrs. Sherrill said. "I say as long as he feels like they've got the material, they're going to win. He feels so sure of his players and has so much confidence in them. He's always been that way."

Her son, Mrs. Sherrill emphasizes, makes a determined effort to bring success to his teams. And although he's often received top-notch performances from his players, Sherrill's values sometimes urge him to achieve even greater heights.

"Sometimes, the best, he thinks, isn't good enough," Mrs. Sherrill said.

Serafino "Foge" Fazio, chosen to succeed Sherrill as the Pitt head coach in January, was an assistant at Pitt during Sherrill's five years there. Fazio, 43, said he's found determination and persistence to be two of Sherrill's keys to success.

"I think the thing Jackie has is



Dean Billick, Pitt athletics

that he's a hard-working coach," Fazio said. "You know when you're an assistant coach under him and he asks you to do something, you do it, because he would do the same thing for you."

"The players respect him a great deal. He was tough, but he was up-front and honest with the players, and they respected him for that."

"He knew how to discipline his players, too," he said. "Coach Sherrill always had an expression: If you ever get your hand caught in a cookie jar, you'll get your hand slapped. So he knew just how to handle his players."

Fazio, also an assistant at Pitt while Sherrill was assistant head coach between 1973-75, went to the University of Cincinnati for four years until Sherrill became the Panther head coach. After one year coaching the Washington State Cougars, Sherrill replaced Coach Johnny Majors at the Pitt helm.

Sherrill then called Fazio and asked him to join the Panther staff, which had been depleted when Majors took most of his assistants to Tennessee.

As usual, Fazio said, Sherrill seems to have done his homework at Texas A&M and is prepared for the 1982 season.

"I think that Jackie's done everything a coach has to do prior

to the (season) to perfection," Fazio said. "He's got some good returning players, he hired a fine staff ... they had a good spring and the players know where they stand with him."

Along with Majors, Sherrill worked under several other prominent college coaches, including ageless Paul "Bear" Bryant and former Arkansas coach Frank Broyles. Bryant, the University of Alabama coach under whom Sherrill played and held a graduate assistant coaching position, maintains a close friendship with one of the most skilled players he's ever coached.

"Jackie was certainly a versatile football player," said Bryant, who coached at Texas A&M during the 1954-57 seasons. "He contributed greatly to the football program here at Alabama. Football came easy for him. He played on championship teams here and did very well."

"I have great respect for him as a player and a coach. He was really a good, steady player for us — he's a winner. I think he

*"I think in the long-term look, Jackie Sherrill won't settle for anything less than a national championship. I think he has some objective as far as wins for his first season, but I don't think he'll panic if he doesn't reach that." — Dean Billick, Pittsburgh associate athletic director*

has a tremendous desire to excel in everything he does. He's a bright young man and he works hard."

But Bryant isn't making pre-

dictions about the Aggies' chances under their new coach in 1982:

"I don't have any idea what will happen this year — you can't really judge that. I think they will do well, but I really don't know exactly what they've got down there. I know they've got good facilities, but I don't know much about the team."

Dean Billick, named associate athletic director at Pitt during June, held the position of sports information director during most of Sherrill's stay at the school. Billick has been at Pitt for 17 years.

"Jackie did a tremendous job for us," he said. "He and Johnny (Majors) worked hand in hand to bring the program up. They had to get their fingernails dirty and really had a difficult job."

"He's familiar with what it takes to turn a program around. He's first and foremost a winner."

Billick commended Sherrill for his devotion to the community while he was at Pitt.

"He was very conscious of his obligations to the community and the university," he said. "He became involved and was a very good representative for the university community. He's also a very hard worker."

"He really matured a great deal while he was here and grew into a top-notch coach right in front of everyone's eyes. I think he has a good background and has been associated with a lot of tough coaches and has learned a lot from them."

Sherrill and his Pitt players always knew their roles on and off the field, Billick said.

"He has a reputation of being a disciplinarian and of getting to know his players well," he said. "I think he has a way of understanding young football players but he also has a way of conveying that he's the head football coach and what he says goes."

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