Sherrill begins new season without fanfare, fireworks

john wagner

"We begin the Sherrill era."

And so it began, a beginning as simple as the five-word sentence that Texas A&M President Frank E. Vandiver used to introduce the Aggies' 1982 football season.

Make no mistake, there were those in the standing-room-only crowd at all-University night who were there to listen to the band, or practice a few yells, or maybe even learn some Aggie traditions.

But you can bet the farm that most of the people crammed into G. Rollie White Coliseum Monday night were there to see that same beginning.

Sure, they whooped and cheered when Head Yell Leader Tom Joseph welcomed everyone back. And they sat politely through several introductions and short speeches. But it was evident that most everyone wanted to hear Jackie Sherrill.

So when Joseph brought the Aggies' new head coach on stage, you'd have thought it would've been quite a spectacular introduction, complete with fireworks and a long red carpet.

But if you expected fanfare and flamboyancy, you would've been disappointed. Fanfare and flamboyancy aren't Sherrill's style — red carpets aren't his bag. Gridiron green with white stripes is his favorite carpet color. Fireworks are scoreboards with lots of points for the good guys. It's easier to prove what you can do than to tell what you can do.

So without much ado, Joseph introduced the Aggies' new head coach. Sherrill came up on stage like he'd been in Aggieland all his life.

You could tell right away, however, that this wasn't just another new coach trying to gloss his way into the fans' hearts. Sherrill spoke softly at first, then in stacatto bursts, almost nervously — feeling out the crowd as they felt him out. It was the first encounter between the man who is supposed to lead the Aggies to football supremacy and the students who want so desperately for him to do so.

Slowly, simply, both coach and crowd seemed to gain more than respect for each other. They gained an understanding — a realization of common goals that wasn't completely there when the evening began.

Not to say Sherrill wasn't aware of the potential support the Twelfth Man can give a football coach. He told a story about his first day on campus:

A student walked up to Sherrill and asked, "Have you seen us perform?" Sherrill replied that no, he hadn't seen a game yet. "I'm not talking about the players, Coach," the student said, "I'm talking about the student body."

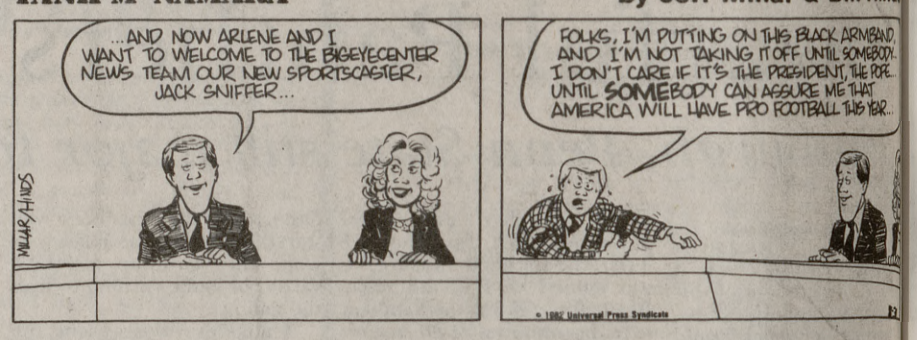
That's the kind of support that makes coaching a little easier, and Sherrill seems determined to use his Kyle Field advantage to the fullest. He told the crowd that when the Aggies get Boston College "in there, (Kyle Field) we're not going to take any prisoners."

And just as Sherrill was aware of the Twelfth Man, Aggie fans are more than familiar with Sherrill's success at Pittsburgh, success that is almost legendary now. Consecutive 11-1 seasons, top-ranked defenses, numerous bowl games — and all these accomplishments in so little time. It didn't take long for the students to let Sherrill know what they would consider to be a successful season here in the Southwest Conference.

The chants of "We want Cotton" that spread around the coliseum before the program began were impatiently shortened to "Cotton Bowl, Cotton Bowl" not long after Sherrill introduced his coaching staff and starting line-ups.

"We want Cotton" and "taking no prisoners" — those are big words, winning words. For Aggie fans, they have a nice ring to them. The Sherrill era is here, and the students are liking what they're hearing.

TANK McNAMARA — by Jeff Millar & Bill Hinds



Royals roll as Leonard stifles Rangers at home

United Press International

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — The Kansas City Royals have made a believer out of Texas Ranger Manager Darrell Johnson.

"I don't think the other people can keep up with them," said Johnson in the wake of an 8-3 loss to the Royals Monday night.

It was Kansas City's fourth straight victory over the Rangers in a span of seven days, its seventh straight win overall and opened a 2½-game lead over California in the American League West.

"Kansas City is playing great baseball," said Johnson. "They've got it rolling and the schedule is in their favor. They're just playing too good."

The best team in baseball at home with a 45-17 record, Kansas City will play 19 of its final 31 games in Royals Stadium while the Angels must play 20 of their last 32 on the road.

However, Royals Manager Dick Howser doesn't feel the schedule will be the main factor down the stretch.

"The difference will be the pitching and our pitching has been very good the last month," said Howser. "I looked it up and nobody has pitched better. It's the strongest it's been all season, which is what you like to have in September.

Dennis Leonard, 9-3, allowed 11 hits but just three runs in winning his sixth straight and fourth in a row since returning from the disabled list Aug. 8.

The Royals backed him with 14 hits, including four by the league's leading hitter — Willie Wilson — in winning for the 10th time in the last 12 games.

Wilson, who figured in three of the Royals' four scoring innings, scored twice and drove in two runs in lifting his average to .348.

"When Willie gets on you figure we're going to score some runs," said Howser. "The games he doesn't get on, we usually lo ven't won."

Wilson, who has failed to b safely in only 19 of 106 gam this season, credits his success the plate with being able to g complete concentration.

"I block out the batting ra just like you block out th crowd," said Wilson. "Aterwar you hear it, but I try not to thi when I'm at the plate. Thinki is my worst enemy because th I start thinking of what a pitch has and where he might thr the ball. I jst have to be able react."

Cougars' no-name show should finish season near top of SWC

United Press International

HOUSTON — Coach Bill Yeoman's 21st Houston team potentially is a steamroller offensive outfit whose line is back intact from 1981 when it led the way to 20 points a game, despite fumbling 39 times.

Under Yeoman, Houston has gone two years now without winning the SWC title and going to the Cotton Bowl, an unusually long time for the newest conference member. And the Cougars are getting hungry.

In Houston's first four years competing for the football title starting in 1976, the Cougars went to the Cotton Bowl three times.

Yeoman, disappointed during a third-place finish in the SWC last season, has worked the Cougars fearsomely since then.

"We may have hit a little more," Yeoman said. "Last year our pads weren't down like they should have been. Bodies weren't hurtling over the line like they should have been."

Looking at game films of the 7-4-1 season made him sick, he said.

"I couldn't believe how many times we got inside the 20-yard line and didn't get a point," he said. "We fumbled at the worst times all season. If we hang onto the football this fall someone is going to have to work hard to stop us.

Houston's offensive line of center Billy Kidd, 6-4, 245; guards Scott Marshall, 6-3, 245, and Bobby Grimes, 6-4, 250; and tackles W.C. Ransom, 6-5, 260, and Maceo Fifer, 6-6, 265, has a year of experience together. All are red-shirt seniors except for Marshall, and he's a red-shirt junior.

Up front defensively the Cougars look vulnerable, and so Yeoman prefers in the two weeks before his season opener at Miami not to say much about the line. Houston follows Miami by playing Arizona State and Lamar.

"We're going to have to pursue like a bunch of wildmen on defense because we're gonna make some mistakes," he said during a team appraisal Monday for visiting sportswriters on the Southwest Conference Press Tour.

Houston did not lose in the regular season after Oct. 17 last year, although their season ended on a sour note in a 40-14 debacle against Oklahoma in the Sun Bowl.

Experienced junior quarterback Lionel Wilson, who has gained 10 pounds to 214, again directs that talented offensive line, but his running backs and wide receivers are relatively inexperienced and unproven as regulars.

Yeoman said backs Dallas Wiggins, Donald Jordan and Patrick Franklin are quicker than the backs who performed last year. And wide receivers Milton Watson and David Roberson are bigger and block better.

Houston should score more and should give up more. For the first time in many years, Yeoman does not have a bellcow performer in the defensive line; nor does he have an all-conferance performer at defensive end or linebacker. The Cougars' secondary led by free safety Calvin Eason and left cornerback Butch LaCroix, is outstanding.

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