

The Battalion Sports

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Better than 0-6?

Alborn says winless Owls should give Aggies close game

by John P. Lopez
Battalion Staff

When Texas A&M faces Rice Saturday on Kyle Field at 2 p.m., the record book will say the Owls are 0-6 on the year and that they've allowed more points than any other squad in the Southwest Conference.

With those statistics, the Owls should probably be pigeons for the Aggies, but Texas A&M quarterback Gary Kubiak says the record book can be misleading.

"They're really a pretty good team," he said after Thursday's workout in Kyle Field. "Their defense is the strong part of their team. When I saw the film of the LSU game, Rice had them 14-0 at halftime. I expect them to play well."

Rice coach Ray Alborn also thinks the Owls should fare well against the Aggies.

"I'm the coach, so I'm supposed to say that I think we're better than our record shows," Alborn said in a long-distance interview. "But I really think we are. If you look at the bounce of the ball, we could be a lot better if it bounced our way."

"But I'm still impressed with the way our guys have handled themselves in this situation. When we fell behind Texas Tech last week 20-7, everybody wrote us off, but we showed some class and came back to go ahead 21-20. We still lost the game, but we didn't give up."

Kubiak injured his shoulder last week against Baylor, but will be ready to play Saturday. Aggie

coach Jackie Sherrill said the injury shouldn't hamper Kubiak's performance against the Owls.

"He's been throwing the ball well all week," Sherrill said. "He hasn't missed a practice all week."

Kubiak said: "It feels a lot better than it did last week. It was sore before the Baylor game because I didn't get enough rest the week before, and I got a pretty good shot on it and reinjured it. But it's felt pretty good this week."

Although Rice's defense is far from overpowering, Kubiak and his aerial circus will have to contend with some of the better individual defenders in the conference.

Clenzie Pierson, the Owls' 6-foot-7-inch 255-pound tackle

and linebacker Richard Gray, who already has 92 tackles on the year, are especially worrisome to the Aggie offense, Sherrill said.

The unenviable task of handling Pierson will fall upon Aggie offensive tackle Tommy Robison, who said Pierson is the best defensive lineman he'll have faced all year.

"I've watched him on film and he's really a good, big and strong lineman," Robison said. "He does everything well, but he's probably better against the run. So I've been working hard on my technique coming off the ball and I've been concentrating on staying low."

Defensively, the Aggies will have to contend with Doug Johnson, who took over the

reins as the Owl quarterback last week and was impressive in his first start of the year against Texas Tech.

Aggie safety Domingo Bryant said Johnson should try to exploit the Texas A&M secondary.

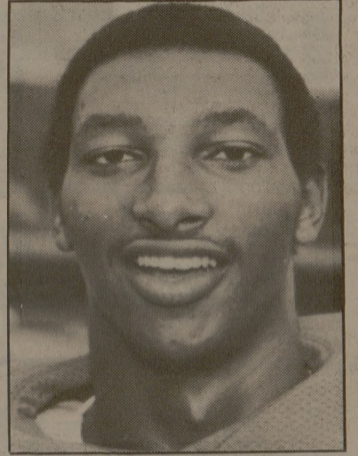
"They run a lot of pro-set (formations) on offense, so they should come out and throw at us," he said.

QUICK FACTS: The Associated Press cited Bryant as Southwest Conference defensive player of the week after his performance against Baylor ... **Jerry Bullitt** was chosen as the Texas A&M defensive player of the week however, for his numerous key tackles against Baylor ... **Jeff Fuller** was also cited by AP after

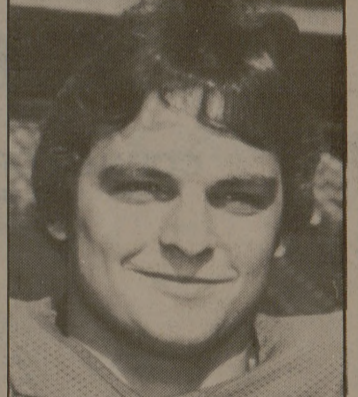
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Coach Ray Alborn searches for the right combination



Rice tackle Clenzie Pierson anchors Owl defensive unit



Quarterback Doug Johnson to start his second game

Johnson motivating force for Rice

by John P. Lopez
Battalion Staff

Doug Johnson received a message from the heavens and refused to listen.

Johnson wasn't being sacrilegious; he just wanted to keep playing football—despite all the signs from above. In two years at Rice, Johnson has had four knee operations, a chipped knee cap, two broken fingers, a torn hamstring and was red-shirted once.

Johnson says the thought of quitting crossed his mind more than once.

"I couldn't believe I was getting injured so often," he said Thursday in a long-distance telephone interview. "The only

thought that kept crossing my mind was that somebody up there either didn't like me or didn't want me to play ball anymore. It was really a discouraging and frustrating experience."

But Johnson, an all-state defensive back and all-district quarterback at Pasadena Dobie High School, decided to keep playing football. And Rice head coach Ray Alborn couldn't be happier about Johnson's decision.

"Doug did an excellent job last week against Texas Tech under the circumstances," Alborn said about Johnson's performance in the Owls' 23-21 loss to the Red Raiders. "He made a few mistakes, but as the game wore on he got better and

better. He proved that he can move the team down the field. He's had time to gain confidence and work with the team a little more this week, so he should do a good job Saturday."

Johnson passed for two touchdowns and a two-point conversion, and ran for another touchdown against Texas Tech—good enough for Aggie head coach Jackie Sherrill to take note.

"I thought he took the team and did a good job moving them down the field," Sherrill said. "He's got confidence and has fire in his eyes. I was really impressed with the way he played."

Perhaps one reason the Owls moved the ball better last week was Johnson's unique way of

motivating the Rice offensive line into playing with more intensity.

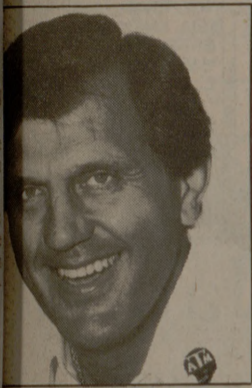
"I knew our offensive line was better than it had been playing," he said, "so when I got in there (the game), I just started yelling and screaming at them. I guess it worked, because in the second half we caught up and got real close to winning. I think we did a good job overall. I just wanted to stir a few emotions in the huddle and get the team going. I don't think I upset anyone, so I guess it worked all right."

"But we need to have a better showing against the Aggies. They have some of the best talent around and they're coming off a big win. Kubiak can pick you to shreds when he throws

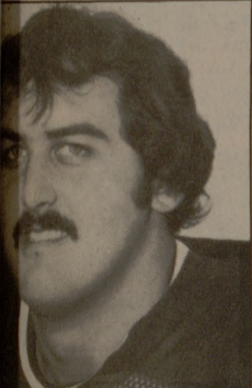
the ball. I just hope I can help us out. I don't think we're going to do anything real spectacular against them, but I think we might throw a little more than we have."

The last time Johnson played at Kyle Field was two years ago, when the Owls defeated the Aggies 10-6. Johnson said he hopes he can help Rice defeat Texas A&M again Saturday.

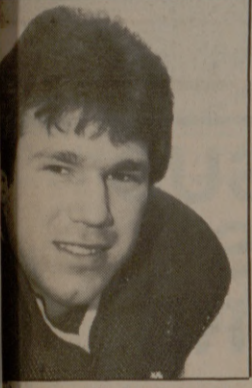
"I think we're coming along pretty good on offense and our defense has been pretty solid all year. It's kind of hard to set goals when you come in during the middle of the season and your team has an 0-5 record. But my goal is to win at least four out of our next five games and set the tempo for next year."



Sherrill looking for and conference victory



Tommy Robison to toughest test of year



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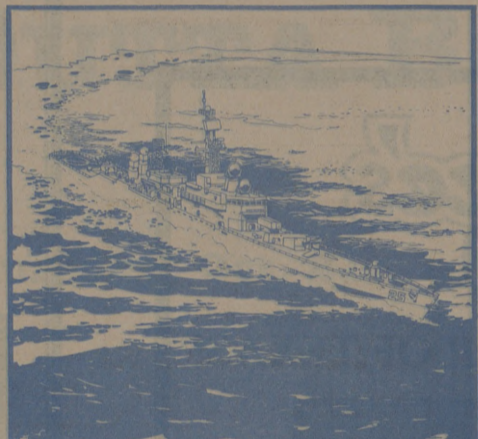
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