

The Battalion Sports

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Balanced attack needed against SMU

Relaxation a key, Kubiak says

by Joe Tindel Jr.

Battalion Staff

The Aggie offense breaks huddle. Quarterback Gary Kubiak steps up to the line and surveys the defense. An adjustment must be made for the play to work against the defensive alignment Kubiak sees.

To give the message that the play won't be exactly as planned to the rest of the offense, Kubiak audibles, or changes the play at the line of scrimmage. It's just part of the Aggies' complex offense.

"We've seen a lot of defenses and we change a lot of plays at the line — something that everybody does," the senior quarterback said Tuesday in an interview.

But shouting audibles can be difficult in a noisy place like Kyle Field. So to deal with that situation, Coach Jackie Sherrill has Kubiak using hand signals to get the message to distant folks like wide receivers.

While some of those signals serve a bigger purpose than just to drive away the bugs, others don't mean a thing, Kubiak said.

"We use a lot of fake hand signals too, to keep people from knowing exactly what we're doing all the time, or knowing when we signal we're throwing the ball," he said.

Deives like the Aggies' methods of audibling are just part of an offense that has seen its share of successes and failures. Although criticism of the Aggie offense has often centered around the audible system and frequent use of backs as receivers, Kubiak said neither has been a hindrance to the offensive attack.

"We've been succesful with our audible game," he said. "Some people have caught us in some audibles and hurt us, but then again at the same time, we've hurt some people with some calls we've made at the line."

With regard to the dump pass to the backs, Kubiak said the proof is in the statistics — the good college passing teams have backs who are the leading receivers.

"People wonder why," Kubiak said. "Well, when the linebackers are dropping 10 or 15 yards — getting underneath your deep receivers — you have to dump the ball off to the backs."

"Heck, if I've got a choice between making a 20-yard throw to Don Jones or making a 5-yard throw to Johnny Hector and letting him run the other 15, I'd take my chances flipping the ball out there to Johnny," he said.

Kubiak's reasoning? It's much safer, he said, and backs like Hector or Aggie freshman George Smith can work wonders in open field.

"It's nothing designed or anything," Kubiak said. "It's just a matter of whether the linebackers are going to drop and take Don or Jimmy Teal away from me."

Kubiak ranks 13th in the nation in total offense with 1,539 yards and leads the Southwest Conference in that category, which makes further questioning somewhat ridiculous.

It wasn't mechanical problems as much as it was injuries week after week that kept the Aggies sluggish prior to the Rice game, Kubiak said.

"The biggest thing that happened against Rice was we had Hector healthy, we had Earnest Jackson healthy,

and we've got ... (George) Smith, who's running like a junior or senior right now, and that's meant the world to us," Kubiak said.

Kubiak also attributed the good offensive performance against the Owls to a more relaxed feeling on the part of the team. He said the Aggies will have to be just as relaxed this week against undefeated SMU.

"I think we see the opportunity we have before us," Kubiak said. "All the odds are against us, you know, and we have nothing to lose. We can be relaxed, go down there and give it all we've got. And hopefully, it's time for breaks and things to go our way."

That realization of a golden opportunity may have been one reason why Kubiak described Monday's practice as the best and most emotional workout since Sherrill has been here.

But Kubiak admitted he's about to face the best defense he's been up against this season.

"They can all run, and that's the first thing you look for in a great defense," he said. "They get cut, they get blocked like anybody else, but they hop right back up and make the tackles for no gain."

Kubiak said the Aggies will make no major offensive adjustments in preparation for Saturday's battle with the Mustangs.

"This late in the season, you can't go out and change things," he said. "We'll try to have a balanced attack and try to keep their defense off-balance, because if they get in the groove and they know what you're doing then you're never going to move the ball."



staff photo by David Fisher

Aggie quarterback Gary Kubiak relays a message to his offense during the Aggies' 28-23 triumph over Baylor two weeks ago. Kubiak says the Aggies are confident about this week's game with the Mustangs, but that they'll need to keep the pressure on SMU in order to win. Texas A&M enters the game with a 4-3 record and the fourth-ranked Mustangs are 7-0.

Ownership to make last-ditch offer

United Press International

With seconds ticking off the clock governing the NFL season, club owners may attempt a dramatic move designed to end the 37-day-old players' strike.

Cincinnati Bengals assistant general manager Mike Brown, a member of the NFL Management Council's executive committee, suggested the owners might have to "go over the heads" of union leaders and appeal directly to the rank and file for a contract agreement.

The players may have some moves, too. The New York Daily News reported in Wednesday editions that NFL Commissioner Pete Rozelle and chief negotiator Jack Donlan are to be named by the federal government as chief culprits in stalemating talks.

If the league is to complete its season under anything resembling the original format, the parties may have to settle by this weekend. Otherwise, the season could be canceled or the date of the Super Bowl moved.

"There is a growing feeling among our people that the NFL is trying to back into the USFL (United States

Football League) season," union head Ed Garvey said Tuesday. "They can kill two birds with one stone."

The fledgling USFL is slated to begin in March, weeks after the date of the Super Bowl. Garvey and Washington Redskins player representative Mark Murphy said they think the NFL will play a 14-game schedule that would extend into February. The NFL canceled its sixth week of games Tuesday. Rozelle had said at least 12 games must be played by all teams to constitute a "credible" season before the Jan. 30 Super Bowl.

Brown called the possibility of going directly to the players a "path of last resort" and a "very difficult" path.

Asked how management could bypass union leadership, Brown said: "We would bargain with the leadership, knowing they had rejected our proposal in advance, but hoping the membership would feel obliged to accept the offer."

Union president Gene Upshaw met Tuesday with a lawyer for the National Labor Relations Board. Garvey

said the NLRB could order an injunction forcing the NFL Management Council to discuss the wage scale issue.

The players are demanding a wage scale tied to a central fund, a position the owners have rejected. The two sides have broken off negotiations and no new talks are scheduled.

Garvey said the owners are contacting the player representatives and saying they will make a "take it or leave it" offer Friday.

"They are trying to convince the players and the public that if the players do not accept, they will cancel the season in 24 hours," said Garvey.

If the owners canceled the season, Garvey said, they could be ordered to pay back-wages to all striking players and run the risk of all players becoming free agents. The union chief said the owners would lose too much money and expose themselves to legal action if they canceled the season.

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