

Texas A&M

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SWTSU shooting for repeat of 1981 title

Wacker, Bobcats accustomed to success



by Frank L. Christlieb

Sports Editor
SAN MARCOS—Deep in the heart of rolling prairies, pecan trees and the waters of the San Marcos River lies Southwest Texas State University.

Southwest Texas State — home of parties, the Maroon and Gold, Strahan Coliseum and Jim Wacker's Bobcat football team.

While the school has steadily gained a reputation as "the progressive university with a proud past," Wacker has spent four seasons bringing his NCAA Division II team to national prominence. And the drama that's been unfolding since Wacker took over as the Bobcats' coach in 1979 has kept SWTSU fans on the edge of their stadium seats during those seasons.

The past weekend, the No. 1-ranked Bobcats scored four touchdowns in the fourth quarter to overcome a 34-10 East Texas State lead and emerge with a 38-34 victory, unblemished record intact. Although Wacker's 13-1 national championship squad in 1981 didn't have many of those last-second victories, the 45-year-old coach says this year has been a little different.

"You can't compare one year to the next, because you're playing different teams and a different tempo," Wacker said Thursday. "I think it's a lot tougher on these kids in a lot of ways. After you've been the national champion, you've been ranked No. 1 the entire season and you've been defending conference champions for two years, you know that ev-

erybody you play builds their year around playing you.

"They scrutinize your offensive package and your defensive package and ... because of that, I guess, it's the price you pay for success."

Wacker, whose career record stands at 98-33-1, is in his 12th season of coaching. He spent his first five seasons as head coach at Texas Lutheran and his next three at North Dakota State. During those years, his teams have managed 5, 5, 6, 11, 11, 9, 9, 6, 7, 8 and 13 victories.

And the key to Wacker's success? It's very simple, he says.

"The key to any successful program is talent, and any coach who doesn't realize that is crazy," he said. "If you have the athletes, you have a chance to win. It starts with recruiting and inviting the right kind of kids that you can deal with."

"I can't coach any type of athlete. I don't want to coach the outlaw. I'm going to coach kids with character and I'm going to coach good kids. They're not angels, but I'm not going to recruit the bad kid."

Wacker said this year's SWTSU bunch might not have the overall talent of the 1981 squad, but it has proven itself a winner.

"I don't think we have quite the degree of talent we had a year ago, because we graduated some top seniors," Wacker said. "There was some great talent in that class and that's made it tougher."

"By the same token, the kids have time after time risen to the occasion. Last week (against

ETSU) was a classic. I've never been part of a comeback like that. When it was 34-10, there wasn't anybody in the world that was giving us much hope, but the kids just kept believing."

Right now, it's a home football weekend in San Marcos. SWTSU is ready to line up Saturday in Bobcat Stadium against the Angelo State Rams, who are right on the Bobcats' heels in the Lone Star Conference race.

While the Bobcats are 4-0 in Lone Star Conference play, the Rams have a 3-1 league record and are 4-3 overall. If not for two forfeits resulting from the presence of an ineligible player, ASU would be 6-1.

Wacker knows his players will receive a strong test when the Rams come to town for Saturday's game.

"ASU has as much speed as any team in the nation — anybody," Wacker said. "Some of the speed in the conference is unbelievable. Angelo happens to be blessed with more than anybody."

Wacker said the Rams and Bobcats are a study in contrast in styles of play.

"We depend a lot more on the running game than they do and they depend on the passing game," Wacker said. "We depend on a multiple defensive system ... there are a lot more dissimilarities than there are similarities. East Texas was really physical on us — about half our starting defense is out."

"It's tough. We've had two good days of practice — they're banged up, but they're coming back. I really think we'll be ready

to play a great football game Saturday if we can stay together physically. It's going to be scary — it is scary."

Whereas quarterback Mike Miller was the Bobcats' No. 1 phenom during the 1981 season, Ron Jacoby has played effectively in passing for 1,132 yards and seven touchdowns this year. Against ETSU, Jacoby set school records by completing 23 of 38 attempts for 286 yards. He also rushed for 55 yards to wind up with 341 in total offense.

"He had an unbelievable game," Wacker said, "and it's great to see it happen for a kid like Ron Jacoby. He's not a great gifted athlete."

While Miller was Wacker's star quarterback, Jacoby could only sit by, wait for his chance and watch Miller pass for 1,837 yards and 14 touchdowns. When he wasn't passing to all-conference split end David Vela and a host of other receivers, the gifted Miller was rushing for 566 yards, 11 touchdowns and an average of 5 yards per carry.

But Wacker certainly hadn't forgotten about his No. 2 quarterback.

"He was the best backup quarterback I ever had," Wacker said. "The reason for that was attitude. Generally, that's the worst position in the world. In the past, I've had more trouble keeping backup quarterbacks positive and with a good attitude than any other player on the team."

"But Ron (Jacoby) was a team player, he backed Mike (Miller) all the time and was always positive. If he got in a game he was happy, and if he didn't he was happy."

Wacker said the Bobcats will be hard-pressed to win their re-

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Southwest Texas State head football coach Jim Wacker has led his teams to a combined 36-8 record during four seasons at the school. The Bobcats,

who won the NCAA Division II title in 1981, are No. 1 in the nation with an 8-0 record this season. Wacker says capturing the 1982 title won't be easy.

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