

TCU victimized by Kubiak's effort

Return of Aggie quarterback brings Sherrill victory No. 5



staff photo by John Ryan

by Frank L. Christlieb
 Sports Editor

What a difference one player can make. Without senior quarterback Gary Kubiak's services for nearly two full games, the Texas Aggies struggled and struggled while fighting for their lives and respectability. But against the Cotton Bowl-bound SMU Mustangs and the Bluebonnet Bowl-bound Arkansas Razorbacks, the Aggies had been outscored 82-9.

When Kubiak entered Saturday's game against TCU, he hadn't completely recovered from the hip and ankle injuries he sustained against the Mustangs. From the Horned Frogs' point of view, however, Kubiak and the 10 receivers to whom he completed passes loomed as threatening as a fully armed regiment of Nazi soldiers.

And when all the shots had been fired and the last Horned Frog had seen enough of Kubiak and his well-trained cohorts, outgoing TCU coach F.A. Dry and his players wished they could have closed their season against another team.

Any team except Texas A&M, that is. Kubiak's 32-for-46 effort, worth 288 yards and three touchdowns, gave the Aggies and first-year coach Jackie Sherrill a 34-14 victory — their fifth of the season against five losses. A victory over Texas in Thursday's Thanksgiving Day matchup in Austin will give Texas A&M its 50th winning season since 1900.

Sherrill, who has shoved season-long criticism aside rather than allowing it to interfere with his coaching duties, gave credit where it was due after the Aggies' triumph.

"I thought that going into the game, Gary (Kubiak) could do the things we needed to do to move the ball, and he did," Sherrill said. "Gary had an excellent day. I'm really sorry I didn't have another one or two years to coach him, because he could have had a chance to do well and maybe to lead the nation in passing. He could have had a chance for all-America in another two years if he'd still been here."

"He wasn't as mobile as you'd like him, but he's the toughest player I've ever been around. He's really been through a lot since he's been at Texas A&M. I think that playing like he did and breaking the records really speaks highly of him. He'll definitely have a career in pro football... because of his knowledge of the game and his ability."

Kubiak, who has completed 171 of 290 passes this season for 1,820 yards, set two records in Saturday's game:

— Kubiak's 18 touchdown passes this season breaks Edd Hargett's Texas A&M record of 16, set in 1968;

— Kubiak's 171 passes completed this season breaks Hargett's record of 169, also set in 1968.

The senior from Houston St. Pius has now completed 304 of 561 career passes for 3,950 yards and 30 touchdowns. Kubiak has completed 54 percent of his career passes.

Kubiak's only mistake came during the third quarter, when Anthony Allen intercepted a pass in the end zone.

"Before the game, I didn't feel too darn good," he said, "but as I got into the flow of the game, I felt a lot better."

And were you happy with your final performance in front of a Texas A&M crowd?

"Hell, I wish I hadn't thrown that interception," Kubiak said with a smile. "No, I'm happy to win. It's my last time to play in Kyle Field, and I wanted to do well. I just wish I could have been here to play for Coach Sherrill a few more years, because I really like him a great deal. But I guess you've got to face reality."

Kubiak said his talented receivers have been the major factor in the success of the Aggie passing game this season.

"It says a lot for our passing game," he said. "When I got here, we were throwing four or five times a game, and now we're throwing about 35 times a game. We've done it successfully because we've kept our receivers healthy."

Junior split end Don Jones, who caught 7 passes for 89 yards against the Horned

Frogs, said the presence of Kubiak in the Aggie offense made all the difference in the world.

"I think you can tell the difference when Gary's back at the wheel — that's the key, and it was the biggest difference," Jones said. "He really knows what he's doing and he has the experience. He's really trying to leave his mark on Texas A&M."

Several players from both teams were involved in scuffles during the game, several of which resulted from late hits and what Aggie linebacker Bobby Stroger described as "cheap hits."

Stroger said: "We had more discipline than they did. I knew we were going to win. They (the Horned Frogs) had no class at all. I think everybody on the team and everybody in the stands knew that. They had a lot to play for, but if they don't have what it takes deep down, they're not going to win. "Both teams were hitting hard, but (TCU) was hitting cheap and late, and it was never called."

Aggie defensive tackle Fred Caldwell, who sustained torn knee ligaments on an injury in the second quarter, agreed with Stroger.

"I think TCU really didn't have anything to play for," he said. "I think they had a lot of false emotion and really no leadership on the field at all."

Caldwell, who probably will be operated on today, said the Texas A&M defense has come a long way since the season-opening 38-16 loss to Boston College.

"The defense has improved a lot as the season has gone on," Caldwell said. "When we got people settled into their positions after all the changes, that really helped us a lot overall."

The Aggies, who will play the Texas Longhorns Thursday at 1 p.m. in Austin's Memorial Stadium, say the game will be an important one for Texas A&M.

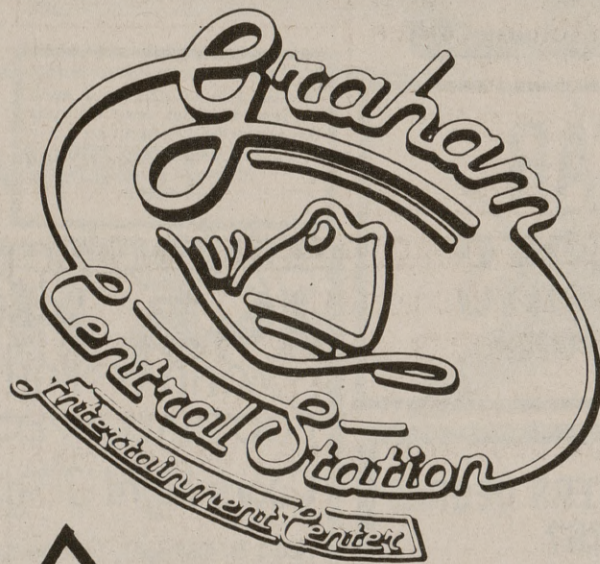
"We're looking forward to playing them," Stroger said. "I hope we can go in with the same intensity we had today and that the Lord will be with us."

Aggie defenders Jon van Sant (bottom), Ray Childress (53), Will Wright (33) and Domingo Bryant (6) bear down on TCU quarterback Anthony Gulley in the first half of Texas A&M's 34-14

victory Saturday in Kyle Field. Texas A&M will visit the Texas Longhorns in Thursday's Thanksgiving Day matchup at 1 p.m. in Memorial Stadium, while the Horned Frogs finish the year 3-8.

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