

A&M's Fuller leads defense

by Joe Tindel Jr.
Battalion Staff
Few people would think Jeff Fuller and the weather would have anything in common. But there's little difference between the behavior of a storm and that of the Aggies' weak-side linebacker.

Off the field, Fuller seems to be as calm as the eye of a hurricane. During a game, he pops opponents like its surrounding winds mangle trees.

The soft-spoken junior certainly has spoken loudly on the field. His 58 unassisted tackles and four interceptions tell the whole story. He's the leading tackler on the team, and any back or receiver who lies in his path is in for a storm.

Surprisingly enough, this year was Fuller's debut as a college linebacker. When he started the season, he was a safety, but Head Coach Jackie Sherrill soon saw his intensity could better be used closer to the line of scrimmage.

Technique was the only thing Fuller had to adjust to play his new position, he said in an interview Tuesday.

"One thing I had to get used to was playing off larger blocks," Fuller said. "That was one of the hardest things to do."

He said his quick change of positions initially evoked a little ribbing from some of his teammates.

"The guys really joked about it to me because I was pretty good at safety and all of the sudden I was at linebacker," Fuller said. "It really shocked me at first."

Nobody's laughing now.

Intangibles help strengthen the Fuller storm. He said he's like the other players on the defense in that he gets a great deal of his inspirational fuel from the Aggie crowd.

"They get us more intense," he said. "They're up there yelling and at times, we can't even hear the snap."

"That's (crowd support) one of the biggest factors as far as our team is concerned," Fuller said. "You know our crowd is always there, and when they're there and yelling, that makes us play harder than we usually do."

But with the season almost over, Fuller's had a chance to reflect on the 10 games that the Aggies have unexpectedly split down the middle. He's as baffled as anyone else about the defensive problems.

"It's hard to say what caused the breakdowns," he said. "We've been up and down all season."

"A lot of the guys are up every game. Things just haven't gone our way."

The multiple offenses the

Aggies face were often baffling to the secondary, Fuller said. Some of those multiple offenses were run by some exceptional quarterbacks, which often made Fuller's position more complicated.

"You're used to playing inside and all of the sudden you (have to) go out and cover a slot man," he said.

"Offenses are just getting so technical... you just can't cover everything."

But Fuller and the Aggies still have the big one left. The linebacker hopes he can bring his bad weather to Austin and rain on the Longhorns' effort.

There's a different kind of pressure involved in playing Texas, as well as a different kind of motivating force, Fuller said.

"When you play Texas it just... brings out something in you," he said. "It makes you do more than you can do."

The 'Horns don't have a fat playbook, Fuller said, but what

they do run, they run well. He said he'll be on the lookout for some talented backs as well as receivers like Herkie Walls in the Turkey Day contest. Fuller compared the Texas offensive attack to that of Arkansas.

Even though the Aggies are

5-5 at this point, Fuller said, the game will be as intense as it always is.

"This is a big game to us," he said. "We're looking at it as a bowl, because it's a great rivalry."

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Cowboys to tackle Cleveland

United Press International
IRVING — The Dallas Cowboys and Cleveland Browns will provide the second half of the National Football League's Thanksgiving Day feast Thursday and those who tune in can only hope they do not have to watch a turkey as well as chew on one.

"It is all very unpredictable," Dallas coach Tom Landry said. "If you assume that the NFL is playing at its top caliber... well, there is no way."

"If that was the case then you would not have to work at all. You might see sparks of brilliance. But you have to get in a groove and sustain it and you won't see that."

"You usually don't go out in front 24-0 and then get beat (as San Diego did against the Los Angeles Raiders Monday night) if you are properly trained for what you have to do."

The NFL Thanksgiving schedule, which annually features games in the Pontiac Superdome and Texas Stadium, will go on this year despite the fact that players have been back at practice facilities for only a week.

The Detroit Lions host the New York Giants in the day's opener.

Dallas has a 10-3-1 record on Thanksgiving Day, and part of the reason the Cowboys agreed to host a game on the holiday each year has to do with the fact that their opponent usually gets less work than they do.

In addition, the added time following the holiday game gives Dallas time to recoup for the late-season schedule. Dallas has a 13-1 record the week after Thanksgiving.

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