

Texas A&M

The Battalion Sports

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Football practice begins; QB spot 'up for grabs'

by Frank L. Christlieb

Battalion Staff
Coach Jackie Sherrill and his staff weren't the only people who wanted to take a look at the Aggie football team's initial spring workout Tuesday in Kyle Field.

Although the practice didn't officially start until 4 p.m., the players began to flow onto the field at the stadium at about 3 p.m. And by the time the 156 players—including scholarship players, walk-ons and 40 play-competing for spots on the Twelfth Man kickoff team—gathered at the center of the field at 4 p.m., about 30 people had taken seats in the stands to watch.

In addition, Sherrill's second Aggie spring training attracted reporters and photographers from Austin and the local area, as well as a high school coach, Merrett Green and other high school coaches. Even a couple of Sherrill's new recruits, who won't work out with the team until August, found time to watch their future teammates work out for the first time since the 1982 season ended with a 53-16 loss to Texas on Nov. 25.

Other familiar faces were seen during the workout, which lasted just over two hours. Curtis Key, a former Texas A&M running back, and James McWhorter, a former lineman, are helping Sherrill and his staff as assistant coaches. The workout featured lots of blocking by players and coaches, a couple of minor skirmishes and blocking drills and more excitement than Kyle Field has seen since the end of the past season. And rest assured that Sherrill and his staff welcomed the sights and sounds of the opening day of spring workouts with open arms.

Sherrill, whose squad finished the 1982 season 5-6 overall and 2-4 in the Southwest Conference, said opening day

Twelfth Man athletes trying to make squad

by Frank L. Christlieb

Battalion Staff
For 40 Texas A&M students who have their sights set on becoming members of the Twelfth Man kickoff team, March has been a busy month.

The squad, Jackie Sherrill's 15-man brainchild which he plans to use as kickoff coverage at all Aggie home games next season, will be made up of non-scholarship Texas A&M students, including non-regs and members of the Corps of Cadets. The original plan called for only cadets to be eligible for the team, but during December, Sherrill opened the squad to all interested Texas A&M students.

On March 1, 250 male students who had hopes of covering kickoffs for Texas A&M next season began working out in Kyle Field under the supervision of Aggie assistant coach David Beal. The practices included agility drills and tests of strength, speed and quickness.

After two weeks, the first cut was made and only 75 athletes remained. Another week of workouts passed and another cut was made, after which Sherrill was left with 40 players—22 cadets and 18 non-regs—whom he invited to spring practice.

Sherrill, who's as confident as ever about his kickoff squad, said after Tuesday's spring-opening workout that all 40 players will remain with the team for the next month.

But, Sherrill said, about 15 will be chosen after spring training to become the Twelfth Man kickoff squad for the 1983 season.

"The (40) Twelfth Man players will work with everyone

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back, but I think the offensive line probably looks more advanced and further along than any other area."

Sherrill finds himself with seven returning starters both on offense and defense, while 14 of his top 22 players on offense and defense return as well. Competition for positions in the offensive backfield should be among the strongest on the team, since Sherrill has lost quarterback Gary Kubiak and running backs Johnny Hector and Earnest Jackson to graduation.

While talk about the starting quarterback job has centered around the left-handed John Mazur, a junior transfer who started all 12 games for the USC Trojans during the 1981 season, Sherrill said he's not playing favorites this early in the game.

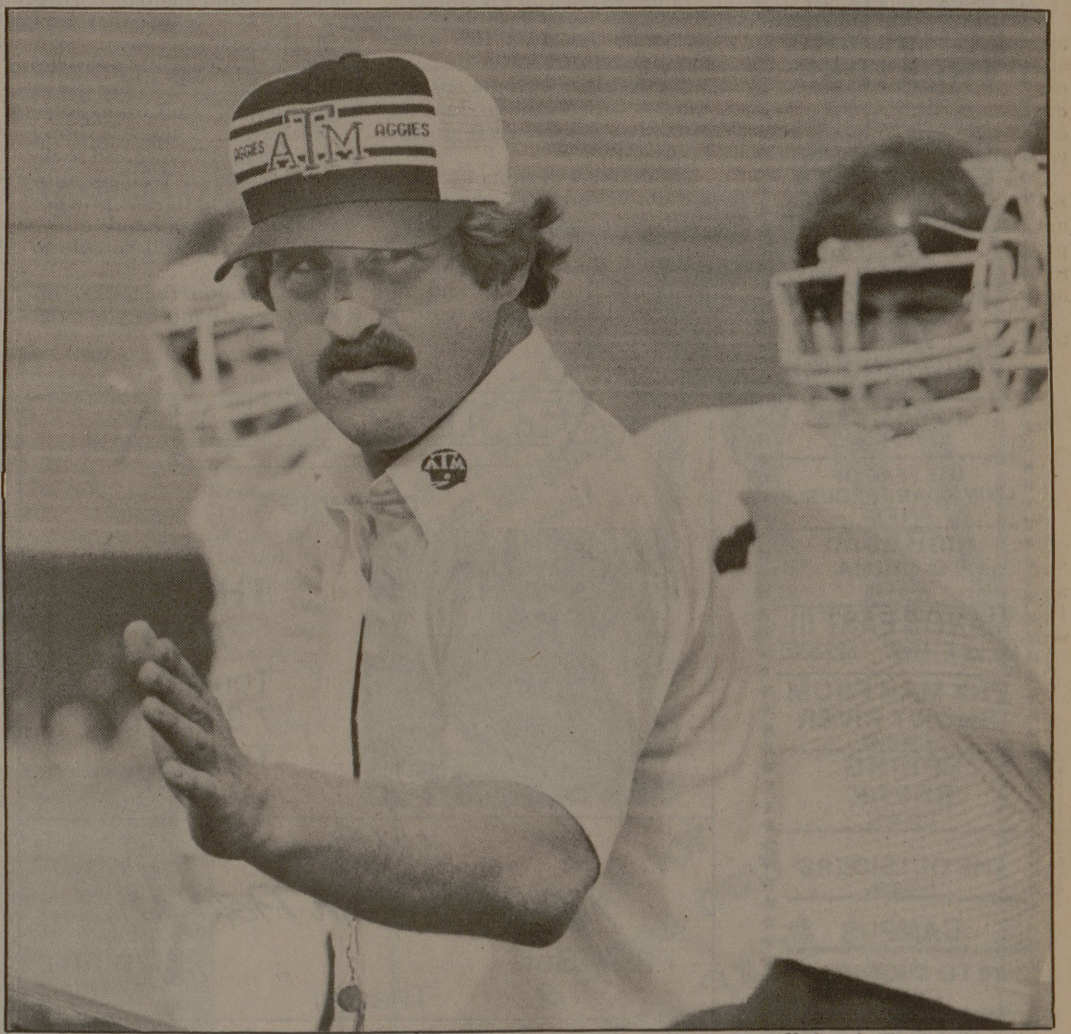
"There won't be a number one quarterback until we line up for the first game," he said.

John Elkins, who will be a junior in eligibility during the fall, will join freshman Kevin Murray in battling Mazur for the spot vacated by Gary Kubiak. Murray, a 6-2, 187-pounder from North Dallas High School, played professional baseball during the fall but is working out with the team this spring.

Incoming freshman quarterbacks Craig Stump, Jay Hess, Paul Gasper and Johnny Holland will enter the picture when fall workouts begin in August.

Elkins, who filled in for the injury-plagued Kubiak several times during the past season, said Tuesday that he realizes there'll be intense competition for the quarterback spot.

"Since I've been here for three years and I know the offense pretty well, you could say I have a bit of an edge," he said. "But I'm just going out to do the best I can and to execute and be a leader."



staff photo by Frank L. Christlieb

Offensive line coach Pat Ruel offers suggestions during spring training's first workout Tuesday. The workouts, in Kyle Field, are open to the public.

Spring training notes

Aggie football team spring workouts, which are open to the public, will take place between now and April 28 in Kyle Field. Practices will be held from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesdays through Fridays and from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. Mondays.

In other workout notes, tight end Jeff Paine has been moved to linebacker for spring drills. Weakside linebacker Jeff Fuller

dropped out of school and went home to Dallas earlier this semester, but is expected to play in the fall.

Two players who were starters prior to injuries during the 1982 season, tight end Mark Lewis and running back Thomas Sanders, should return when fall practice begins in August.

Sherrill and his assistants

have said that they plan to install a new 3-4 defense for the fall. The defense will feature three down linemen, including a nose-guard and two ends. Early indications show that Keith Guthrie and Kermit Foster will compete for the noseguard spot and Ray Childress, Scott Polk, Thomas Graham and Chris Lammers will be in the running for the end positions.

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