

Texas A&M

The Battalion Sports

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Sherrill reflects on first year ...



by John P. Lopez
Battalion Staff

A little over a year ago, Jackie Sherrill was hired as athletic director and head football coach at Texas A&M. And with Sherrill's hiring came immense attention from the media, fans, coaches, football critics and just about everyone else associated with college sports.

In his first year at Texas A&M, Sherrill's every move was scrutinized. And by some, Sherrill's every move was criticized. But despite a sub-par 5-6 football season, despite the attention, despite being questioned constantly about rumors of changes in the athletic department staff and despite the criticism, Sherrill says his first year at Texas A&M was anything but unsuccessful.

"You try to look at all facets and make some judgments," Sherrill said. "Last year our softball team won the national championship, the golf team was in the top ten and won the Southwest Conference title, our basketball team went to the NIT and our baseball team went to the playoffs. So as a total program, these are the things you need to look at when you try to make a judgment."

But what about the football record? Football is what most Aggies take pride in. It brings in money and, more important, prestige to the school. Prior to taking over at Texas A&M, Sherrill enjoyed immense success at the University of Pittsburgh. And many Aggie supporters were counting on the same success to show itself at

Texas A&M immediately — it didn't. But Sherrill said he's still as confident as ever as Aggie head coach.

"The worst thing that could've happened was for us to have instant success," he said. "And then we could have plummeted the next year. When we get there by working hard, people will appreciate it a lot more."

Sherrill added that naturally he would've liked to start out a winner, but he said there was never a point during the football season when he lost his confidence.

"Once you start blaming yourself, then you've got problems," he said. "There are just some things you can't control. What I'm looking for is to do a good job on the things I can control. The (media) pressure goes

with the territory, I don't have any trouble with it. It's kind of like being a quarterback — the pressure is there."

One thing Sherrill and his staff couldn't control during his first football season was the number of injuries that seemed to infest the Aggie dressing room. Running backs Thomas Sanders, Johnny Hector and Earnest Jackson, quarterback Gary Kubiak and tight end Mark Lewis all missed at least one game because of injuries.

"I don't think anybody has enough depth to make up for losses like that," Sherrill said. "Naturally I thought we'd be a little more explosive, but we lost a lot of key players and that took away a big part of the team. It's kind of like making it to the Indy 500 and all of a sudden one of

your pistons is gone. You just can't perform as well as you had hoped."

Another factor which might have contributed to the disappointing year, Sherrill said, was the offensive philosophy. In retrospect, Sherrill said he might have changed some things on offense if he could.

"We probably wouldn't have been as reckless as we were offensively," he said. "We put an awful lot of pressure on our defense. If things were a little different, then the defense wouldn't have had such a big burden put on them."

"And I think defensively we were too concerned about the

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photos by Dave Scott

The Aggies' Jackie Sherrill says he's learned from his first year as athletic director of Texas A&M, and that he has high hopes for the future of the athletic program. Sherrill and the Aggies are currently in the middle of spring football practice.

And discusses the Aggies' future

by John P. Lopez
Battalion Staff

The year is 1993. Jackie Sherrill has been head football coach and athletic director at Texas A&M for 11 years. The Aggie football team has just won its fifth Southwest Conference championship in the last eight years and is being honored at the University special events center.

The 17,000 screaming Aggie fans stand up out of their cushion-backed seats to do a yell for the team.

Over at the ultra-modern track facility, the Texas A&M track team is winding up practice while the swim team is preparing the swimming facility, which is considered by many to be the best anywhere, for a national invitational meet.

Sound a little far-fetched? Maybe. But the above mentioned situation is certainly the direction that Sherrill would like

the Texas A&M athletic department to be headed.

Sherrill said: "My biggest goal is to be set facility-wise and to win in everything."

Simply said, but Sherrill knows that multi-purpose arenas and undefeated records don't come about through the power of positive thinking.

"We want to be competitive, we want to have the opportunity to win the conference title and have the opportunity to vie for the national championship — all the things that I've been able to do in the past," he said. "We're not going to be there every year, but hopefully we'll be consistently competitive."

"I think we're going in the right direction academically and in athletics."

Academically? No typo. Sherrill said he is genuinely concerned about how his athletes push pencils and practice dummies.

"The biggest thing we've accomplished so far is getting the academic people involved," Sherrill said. "The administration is very supportive of us. And it's helped. I think academically we've made an awful lot of progress. The credibility of our athletes has risen tremendously. Our freshmen had a g.p.a. this year of 2.6 and that's quite an accomplishment when you consider that the student body's is somewhere around 2.3. It all fits into place when you're trying to build a program."

The main building block in molding a successful all-around athletic department, naturally, is to have top-notch athletes. But great athletes usually don't attend schools where the facilities don't fit their needs. Sherrill said Texas A&M is well on its way to having the facilities it needs.

"I think there are a couple of facilities that we really need," he

said. "We need a place for our basketball team to play, we need a track and we need a place for our swimming."

"And those facilities are for our other students too. Our students have a large interest in physical fitness and they need a place to go. Our student body deserves a place where they can enjoy special events. They shouldn't have to stand in line for two days for tickets. And they deserve a place where they can go to graduate."

Although still in the planning stages, Sherrill was confident about the locations and time the new facilities will pop up on the Texas A&M campus.

"I don't think we're that far away," he said. "You have to go in stages, but I don't think we're too far away from having the facilities we need. Right now, the plan is to have it (special events center) right across from the intramural fields and the track is

set aside for the area behind the baseball field. There are several possible ways they can be built and I think we're getting closer to that point."

Another reason Sherrill would like to see first-class facilities on the Texas A&M campus is for the Aggie fans, he said.

"I think a lot of schools have support, but they don't have the support of the A&M student body," Sherrill said. "When you win, naturally you're going to have support, but the support here goes a lot deeper than just winning."

Sherrill added that he's enjoyed the association he has had this year with the student body which is one reason he formed the 12th Man Kickoff team — to strengthen the relationship between the student body and the student-athletes.

"I'm very excited about the

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