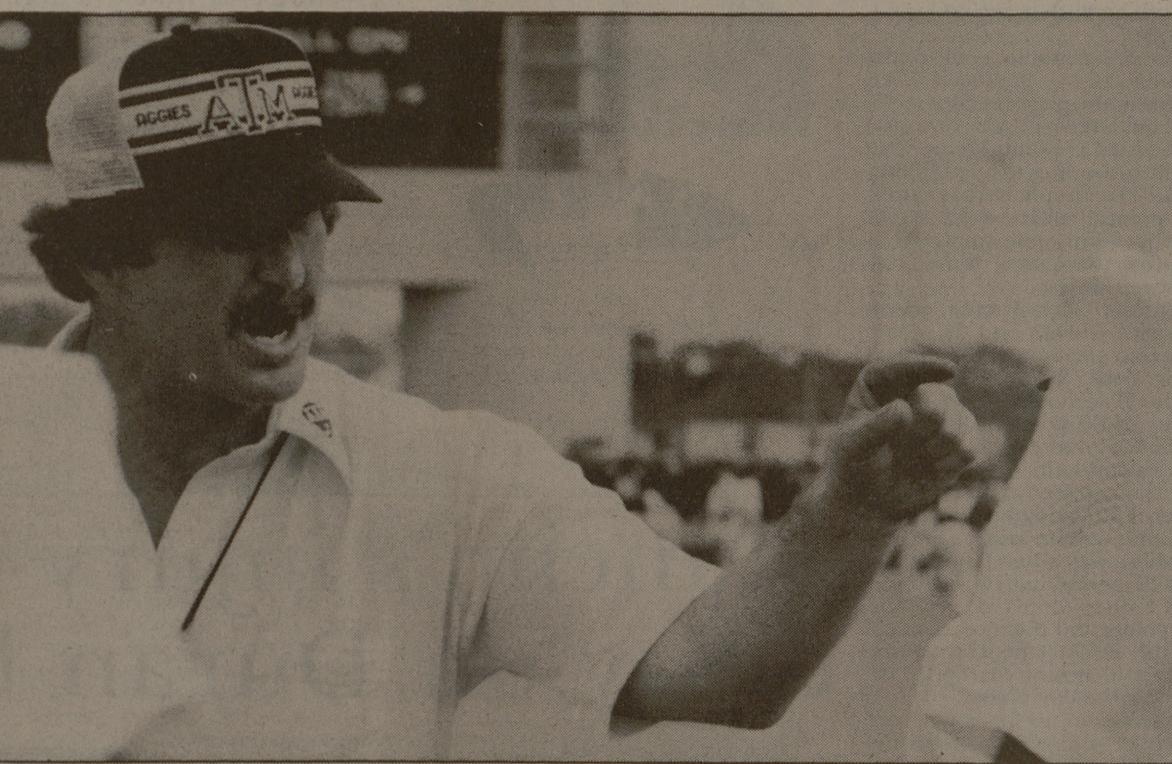


Texas A&M

The Battalion Sports

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Texas A&M offensive line coach Pat "Golden" Ruel instructs athletes during spring workouts. Ruel says

he has high hopes for the 1983 Aggie offensive line, and that he's looking for leaders among his linemen.

staff photo by Frank L. Christlieb

McDonald's strong performance has Brock, Aggies smiling again

by Joe Tindel Jr.

Battalion Staff

A little over a month ago, the Texas A&M women's softball team was struggling through an exhausting road trip. When it was all over, the Aggies brought home five losses and a pitcher with a bothersome shoulder condition.

Since their return home from that trip, though, they've overcome adversity. Shan McDonald is regaining her form and giving pitcher Lori Stoll some relief,

hitting has picked up and the younger players have come around.

The second road trip, more successful than the first, will end today in Ruston, La. The Aggies will meet 13th-ranked Louisiana Tech for a double-header which could prove to be quite a battle.

"I think they have an excellent ballclub," Aggie coach Bob Brock said about the Lady Techsters, "and I think they're going to be up for us, and would love nothing better to do than

beat us in front of their home folks. My team is well aware of that. We've been talking about that all week."

Louisiana Tech's coach is former Texas A&M softball coach Bill Galloway, which should add to the intensity of the battle.

But Tech will have to deal with Stoll, who despite having to pitch considerably more than her share while McDonald was on the mend, still managed to hold on to an amazing .326 earned run average.

But this time Tech also will get to see McDonald, whose return to action is a blessing to Brock and the Aggies. For Stoll, it spells relief.

"It's awful hard to see somebody struggle and hurt," Brock said, "and I think it was a big relief for Lori to see Shan get out there and really have a good game."

"I think that put a smile on all of our faces, and I anticipate that she'll have a fine game

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Lining up

Ruel says experience, hard work of offensive line will pay dividends

by Joe Tindel Jr.

Battalion Staff

One day during spring practice, offensive line coach Pat "Golden" Ruel summoned his linemen to the blocking chutes for a little one-on-one contact. Ruel, brandishing that 3-foot pine stick so well-known to followers of Aggie football, must have seen something he didn't like.

Down over the chute came Ruel's stick. The stick broke.

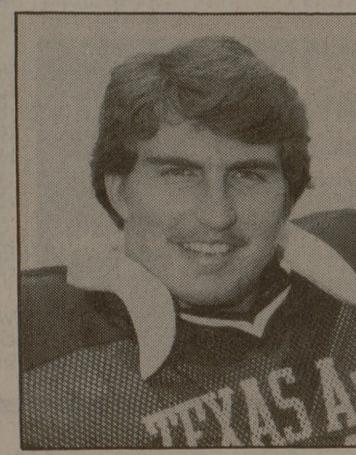
But Ruel no doubt is hoping for considerably more rigidness from his offensive line this fall. With spring practice over as of Thursday, a broad view of the prospects for a successful fall in the trenches reveals two advantages and one disadvantage.

Advantages? Four strong sophomores and one strong junior from last fall will become four stronger juniors and one mammoth senior this coming fall.

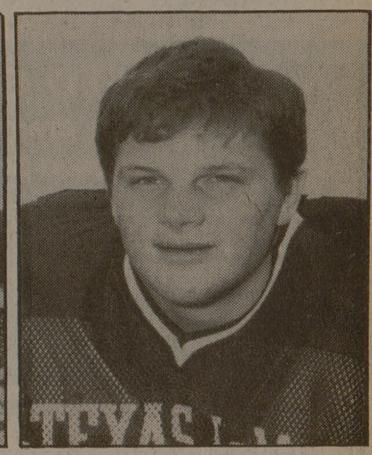
Returning will be sophomores Matt Darwin at center, Greg Porter at left guard and Ken Reeves at right guard. Sophomore Nathan Steadman probably will replace senior Brian Dausin at tackle. And junior Tommy Robison, a monstrous tackle at 6-4, 275 pounds, will return to that position.

"They got an awful lot of experience last year," Ruel said of his linemen. "This really helped this spring. They're a lot more cohesive and they're communicating a lot better up front. That's probably the biggest thing I think the offensive line has to do."

Perhaps communication is so important to Ruel because he considers the offensive line to be a single entity — five acting as



Greg Porter sees progress in A&M line during spring



Aggie center Matt Darwin: offensive linemen improving

one, playing one "position." Or maybe it's because he's looking for his linemen to be the leaders of the team this fall.

"I'm looking for the offensive line to be a controlling force, to lead the leadership role and to be able to handle adverse situations," Ruel said. "I'm looking for them to be able to lead our offensive football team in every way possible."

"They're going to be juniors next year. They're going to have a chance to be one of the better offensive lines in the conference if they will continue to improve. So we want them to be the focal point of our offense."

Now the Aggies must await autumn to see how much spring practice paid off as far as preparing the offensive line for the leadership role.

Darwin, who's competing with sophomore Joe Velasquez

for the starting center role, reflected on the offensive line's progress during spring practice.

"This spring has been very intense," Darwin said. "We've done an awful lot more hitting. We went one-on-one with the defensive line, and that helped a lot. The weight program definitely helped us this off-season."

"We got a lot of things done that we needed to get done. Our pass protection has got pretty good. We need to be able to get a little bit better on our run blocking."

Porter was also positive about the results of spring workouts.

"In the second week, we picked up where we started off last fall," Porter said. "I think we've progressed a lot more than we did last fall. Just playing with each other longer is just naturally going to help."

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