

Texas A&M

# The Battalion Sports

Monday, August 29, 1983/The Battalion/Page 13

## Huge offensive line hopes to lead Texas A&M to more wins in '83

by John P. Lopez  
Sports Editor

There's been a huge shadow hovering over Texas A&M's Kyle Field this preseason.

No, Hurricane Alicia hasn't decided to stop in College Station. And, no, the Goodyear blimp hasn't been practicing its flights while the Aggie football team practices.

Both Alicia and the blimp could surely cast a pretty hefty shadow, but the shadow hanging over Aggie practices is much bigger.

What is this phenomena? No phenomena, just the Aggies lining up for a scrimmage.

You see, when Jackie Sherrill first took over the reins as head coach of Texas A&M in 1982, he inherited a lot of talented and well-conditioned athletes. He was satisfied with the talent he had on his team.

That is, he was satisfied until he looked at the offensive line. Then he must have thought he encountered his first Aggie joke.

No joke. The Texas A&M offensive linemen were weak, puny and sometimes inept for major college play. It's not that they weren't good athletes, they just weren't the kind of linemen Sherrill wanted.

"We were really weak," Tackle Tommy Robison says. "Everybody we went up against was stronger than us."

So Sherrill hired offensive line coach Golden Pat Ruel and Texas A&M embarked on an all out effort to strengthen and beef up the Aggie front wall.

Mission accomplished.

The Aggie line this year will consist of tackles Nate Steadman, 6-3, 265 pounds and Robison, 6-4, 285 pounds, guards Ken Reeves, 6-5, 270 pounds and Greg Porter, 6-3, 265



*'We needed the size and strength just to keep up with guys like Michael Carter. And now that we have it, we all feel a lot better with each other and have confidence in ourselves.'* — Texas A&M center Matt Darwin on the Aggie offensive line.

pounds and center Matt Darwin, 6-4, 270 pounds.

From tackle to tackle, the Aggies average 271 pounds. As a comparison, the average weight of the Houston Oilers of the NFL is 262 pounds.

Sherrill calls the Aggie line "The Pack" because of the way the linemen vigorously work together on and off the field. And recently, he said the Texas A&M offensive line was "the best I've ever coached."

Those are pretty big words considering Sherrill coached one of the best offensive lines ever in 1981 when he was at Pittsburgh.

But Ruel said the pack's dedication will certainly prove that the Aggie line will not only be big, but good.

Maybe even great? "That's hard to say," Ruel said. "We have to see how they perform. But I will say that they've been getting better and

better everyday.

"They're just a really close knit group of guys. They work very hard and I feel like this line has the potential to take the offense a long way."

Perhaps one reason the Aggie offensive line has put in so many extra hours in the weight room and at the dining table is because, for the most part, the linemen have quiet, reserved social lives.

They have hair well above their collars and pretty much look like the boys next door.

"Matt (Darwin) and me are the quiet ones," Steadman said. "We like putting in the hours because it pays off in the end

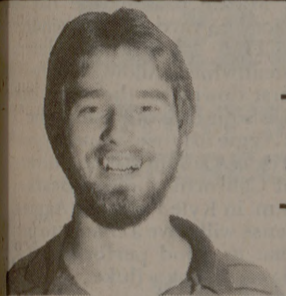
and coach Ruel makes it fun. I think we're all just average, run of the mill guys."

Average guys that say they're ready to take on any defensive line that gets in their way.

"We needed the size and strength just to keep up with guys like Michael Carter (SMU lineman)," Darwin said. "And now that we have it, we all feel a lot better with each other and have confidence in ourselves."

"I don't know how good we're going to be, but we all think we're going to be a lot better than before."

The offensive line will have a chance to prove itself Saturday



john wagner

### Sherrill counting on freshmen class

TCU'S JIM WACKER — who's becoming quite adept at surprising people — pulled another shocker out of his bag of tricks Friday. The first-year head coach told reporters on the Southwest Conference media tour that his team wants to win, and they want to start now.

"I don't believe in rebuilding," said Wacker, who may find himself convinced of that necessity come November. Turning a 5-8 team in 1982 into a contender is a job not even the overenthusiastic Wacker, owner of two straight NCAA Division II championships at Southwest Texas State, can pull off.

Former TCU coach F.A. Dry's insistence on recruiting junior college transfers left Wacker with a sophomore class of 11 — not exactly the kind of depth necessary to win in the SWC.

On the other hand, Texas A&M's Jackie Sherrill is a firm believer in rebuilding — or just building — from the Astroturf

up. Sherrill has made it clear he is developing an athletic program, not a football team. The idea is that the system is more important than a one-shot chance at the Cotton Bowl. If the program is good, the wins will come eventually.

**BUT NOT EVEN** Sherrill can escape the inevitable. And he's about to challenge one of the many unwritten laws of college football — freshmen shouldn't play.

When the ink finally dried on Signing Day '83, Sherrill and his staff had rounded up a recruiting class that many called one of the best in the nation. But it was not until they hit the field that Sherrill realized just how good his freshmen can be.

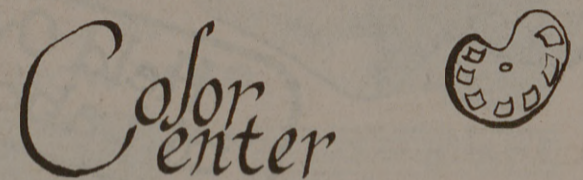
A lack of depth at running back and in the defensive secondary is giving many of A&M's "rookies" the chance to strut their stuff immediately. The effort they've shown has not been wasted.

"The freshman class we brought in is as good as we thought it'd be — maybe even better," says Sherrill.

"We could redshirt all these players, but I'm not gonna redshirt a freshman who can come in and help our football team."

**UNFORTUNATELY FOR THE** Aggies, Sherrill can't redshirt all his freshmen. There are too many holes to fill, and not enough people to fill them. Of the 26 freshmen who reported in the fall, only eight are certain to be redshirted, and another three are still in question. That leaves 15 freshmen on the roster. Rest assured they'll all see playing time.

See FRESHMEN page 16



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## Professional Career Planning in Agriculture day

Wednesday, September 14, 1983

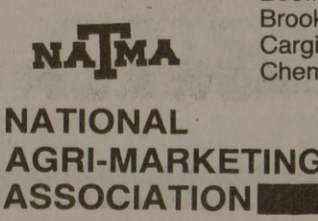
PCPA Day allows all students to visit with company representatives in their booths about job opportunities, employment requirements, and course selection toward obtaining employment. Wednesday, Sept. 14th 9-11:30 and 1:30 to 5:00 — Second floor MSC

Tickets for the evening barbeque at the Brazos Center will be on sale in MSC Hallway, September 5-12.

Senior and internship interviews with companies on September 15 and 16. Sign up starts August 29 in the Career Placement Center.

Companies interested in discussing your future in Agriculture:

- Agricultural Workers Mutual Auto Insurance Co.
- Agri-Industries
- Agrow Credit Corporation
- Allied Feeds, Inc.
- Alpha Gamma Rho
- American Brahman Breeders Assoc.
- American Cyanamid
- Bank of America
- Beefmaster Breeders Universal
- Brookhaven Country Club
- Cargill Nutrena Feed Division
- Chemlawn Corporation
- Ciba-Geigy
- Dairymen, Inc.
- Dow Chemical USA
- Elanco Products Company
- EXCEL Corporation
- Farm Credit Banks of Texas
- Foodmaker, Inc.
- Funk Seeds International
- Granada Corporation
- H. E. Butt Grocery Company
- Holly Farms Poultry of Texas, Inc.
- IBP, Inc.
- Loomix, Inc.
- Luby's Cafeterias, Inc.
- Monsanto Company
- Moorman Manufacturing Company
- MSD-AGVET, Division of Merck & Co.
- National Farm Life Insurance Company
- North Haven Gardens
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- Ralston Purina Company
- Servi-Tech, Inc.
- Sillon Brangus Ranch
- Standard Meat Company
- Texas Agricultural Extension Service
- Texas and International Brangus Breeders Association
- Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association
- Texas Electric Cooperatives, Inc.
- Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
- Texas Real Estate Research Center
- UrbanAgra Corporation
- U. S. Army Engineer District
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