

Texas A&M

The Battalion Sports

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Making a name

Freshman TB Keith Woodside trying to become 'somebody'

John P. Lopez

Battalion Staff

Late in the fourth quarter of Texas A&M's 30-7 win over Houston Saturday, No. 32 for the Aggies trotted onto Kyle Field — nobody stood and cheered as the smallish freshman entered the huddle.

A few seconds later, the running back took the ball from quarterback Kevin Murray and swept right. Then, like a blur, he darted back to the left and was off on a 61-yard jaunt to the goal line. Cougar safety Greg Purcell pushed the back out-of-bounds at the Houston 1-yard line, but the mark had already been made.

The Aggie crowd stood and cheered.

And two plays later after the back put an equally sly move on the Cougar defense to score a touchdown, the crowd cheered again. And cheered, and cheered, and cheered.

You see, it's been a long time — two years to be exact — since an Aggie running back has broken for a run of more than 50 yards. And the crowd wanted to know exactly who this runner was with the quick feet and an assortment of moves.

Meet Keith Woodside. And watch him closely, if you can, because many Texas A&M football observers feel that Woodside might become the best Aggie runner since Curtis-Dickey.

But why hasn't there been more media hype and hoopla about Woodside if he's so good? Read on. Woodside has an interesting story to tell.

'I got a lot of crank phone calls. They (people in Louisiana) kept telling me they didn't want me around and they gave me a hard time. They said to pack my bags and go to Texas. There was a lot of pressure.' — Keith Woodside on the reaction to his decision to attend A&M

When Woodside was finishing his football career at Vidalia, La., high school last year, there weren't hundreds of college recruiters hounding him.

In fact, since Vidalia is a small town only a rock's throw away from the Mississippi River, just a few recruiters knew about Woodside's athletic ability.

But what ability Woodside did have.

"Tremendous," Dalton Faircloth, Woodside's high school coach, said of the speedy runner.

And apparently, at least one college alumnus from a southern school thought Woodside's abilities were too good to pass up. So the alumnus took matters into his own hands.

"I had to pass up a lot to come to A&M," Woodside said recently.

Like what? "I was offered \$25,000 to go to another school," he said.

Woodside didn't say who made the offer, but said he didn't like the idea of someone else trying to make a career decision for him.

"They started playing close attention to me and doing things," Woodside said of the alums, "and what it really winds down to is that they wanted to make a decision for me.

"And I didn't want that. They would always go to my house and talk to my grandmother. And I told her, 'They can come and talk to you, but I'm going to make my own decision.'

But, Woodside said, the offers kept coming.

"It was a lot to pass up," he said. "But the way I look at it, if I become successful, I can get any amount of money I want.

"They were dealing in a lot of money. They offered me \$25,000 cash, an automobile, clothes and boots."

The enormous offers might sound far-fetched considering Woodside is a virtual unknown, but his statistics show exactly how good he was in high school. They might even lead one to believe that the 6-0, 190-pounder won't be a no-name for long even though he has seen only limited action this year because of an ankle sprain.

Woodside's abilities surfaced when he was in eighth grade,

Faircloth said, when he scored 22 touchdowns in nine games and raised a few eyebrows around Vidalia.

As a junior in high school, Woodside gained over 1,400 yards and started to hear from people — like the mayor of Vidalia — about, "how I should go to LSU because it's in my home state."

But the big-spending alumni of other schools didn't enter the picture until after Woodside's phenomenal senior year when he gained more than 2,000 yards in 10 games and didn't even play in nine quarters.

"A lot of people are going to find out how good he is down there (SWC)," Faircloth said. "He's so smooth and so fast. Nobody can stop him consistently. He had 300 yards at halftime in two games for us last year."

Obviously, one alumnus knew how good Woodside was in high school and wanted to pay the tailback to attend a particular university.

But Woodside said that, although the money was tempting, accepting it was against his better judgment.

"I just didn't need it," Woodside said. "And I'm glad I didn't take it."

So Woodside said he started to look elsewhere for a school to attend — a perfect opportunity for Texas A&M's Jackie Sherrill to step in.

"Natchez, Miss. is just across the river from Vidalia and that's where Hugh Green is from," Woodside said. "And since coach Sherrill knew Hugh from Pittsburgh, he asked him if there were any players down here that were any good.

"Hugh gave him my name and the next thing I know, coach

(Greg) Davis called me and A&M started recruiting me."

Woodside said that making the decision to attend Texas A&M was easy once he met Sherrill.

"Tony Dorsett is my idol," he said. "And ever since Dorsett was at Pitt, I wanted to play under coach Sherrill. He's the main reason I'm here.

"He was very honest with me from the very beginning. And somehow, coach Sherrill caught on to the offers and the first thing he did was ask me if I could be bought. He told me to never sell myself and I'll always remember that because it made me think about what was going on.

"Coach Sherrill is a good man. If it wasn't for him, I wouldn't have come here."

But even after Woodside signed a letter of intent to attend Texas A&M, his troubles weren't over.

"I got a lot of crank phone calls," Woodside said. "They kept telling me they didn't want me around and they gave me a hard time. They said to pack my bags and go to Texas. There was a lot of pressure."

But things are looking better these days for the fleet-footed runner. And that suits Aggie partisans and Woodside just fine, because if Woodside continues to perform like he did against Houston, he won't be a no-name for long. And earning money will be the last of his worries.

Just ask the source, he'll tell it like it is.

"All I have to say is that Dalton Hilliard (LSU star) was a no-name," Woodside said. "I'm hoping to surprise a lot of people this year."



staff photo by Dean Saito

Aggie tailback Keith Woodside, a freshman from Vidalia, La., is looking to make a name for himself. Woodside rushed seven times for 78 yards against UH Saturday.

Oiler head coach Biles resigns; owner surprised

HOUSTON — Ed Biles, saying he had tired of being a punching bag, resigned Monday as coach of the Houston Oilers — a team that was good enough to make the playoffs three years ago, but which has now lost 13 games in a row.

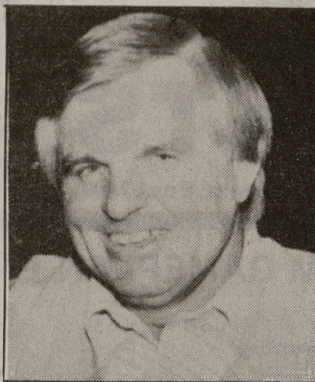
Although no successor was immediately named, a member of the Oilers' staff was expected to take over the team for the remainder of the season.

The Oilers' 13th consecutive loss came Sunday in the Astrodome — a 26-14 setback against Denver. Houston's last win came on Sept. 19, 1982.

Biles himself made the announcement at his regular Monday news conference. In a calm voice he caught his listeners somewhat off guard by saying:

"I have resigned as coach of the Houston Oilers."

"I've been a punching bag," he said. "I've been the eye of the hurricane for 2½ years, the center of all controversy. I felt like I've had enough. You get to the point where you just say, 'who needs it.'"



His current players said almost uniformly that Biles did the best he could with the Oilers. His former quarterback said, meanwhile, that part of the problem was that Biles was not a well-liked person.

"It wasn't that he was tough," said Archie Manning, who was traded along with tight end Dave Casper to Minnesota earlier this season. "It's just that nobody liked him."

"I'd gone to five straight Pro Bowls until Eddie Biles took

over. Then he benched me," said Casper. "He alienated some of the key ballplayers, traded some away and then the whole team lost confidence."

He said he did not recommend anyone as his replacement, but hoped offensive coordinator Kay Dalton and defensive coordinator Chuck Studley would be considered.

Biles, 52, was elevated from defensive coordinator to head coach after owner K.S. "Bud" Adams fired popular O.A. "Bum" Phillips following the 1980 season. Phillips had led the Oilers to the AFC championship game in 1978 and 1979 and Houston made the playoffs again in 1980 only to lose in the wild card game to the Oakland Raiders.

Biles' record was 7-9 in 1981, 1-8 in 1982 and 0-6 so far in 1983.

"In my own mind, I really haven't felt like I failed," Biles said. "I felt like I ran out of time. There's enough fault with what has happened to this team to pass around to a lot of people. I'm just one of them."

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