

# The Battalion Sports

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## Murray throws Aggies past lowly Owls, 29-10

by John Wagner  
Battalion Staff

HOUSTON — The Sony Trinitron parked in the corner of the Rice Stadium press box was surrounded by writers — writers standing on their toes, writers stretching their necks — all trying to catch an occasional glimpse of Texas-SMU. The game going on below seemed of secondary importance.

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Indeed, the most-asked question concerning the Texas Aggies' 29-10 defeat of the Owls Saturday was, "What's the score in Dallas?" But the Aggies, who have yet to lose a game with freshman quarterback Kevin Murray at the helm, couldn't have given a pinhead about the Horns and the Ponies. They had their hands full with a Rice squad playing its last home game for head coach Ray Alborn, who has announced his intent to retire at the end of the season, was hoping an emotional Owl team could pull off an upset. The Aggies put those thoughts out of their heads early.

For the second straight week, A&M came out smoking, taking a 14-0 first-quarter lead and shutting the Owls' offense down completely. Rice had just 32 yards of total offense in the first quarter, and added only one more in the second quarter.

But again, the Aggies failed to put together four quarters of solid football. "Just because you're playing a team that's been struggling," A&M coach Jackie Sherrill said, "doesn't mean you can take it easy on them."

And like the Baylor game last Saturday, the Aggies' quick start caused problems. "We thought they (the Owls) were going to lay down and die," said A&M fullback Roger Vick, who led all rushers with 79 yards on 18 carries.

"We jumped on 'em real quick, and I guess we thought we had 'em in the bag," After falling behind on a 3-yard touchdown pass from Murray to Jimmie Hawkins and Vick's 11-yard run up the middle, Rice safety Brian Patterson intercepted a Murray pass and returned it 85 yards down the right sideline for a touchdown, cutting the Aggies' lead to 14-7.

The Aggies came right back, however, with an 11-play, 80-yard drive that ended with Murray throwing a nine-yard scoring pass to sophomore Jeff Nelson. Alan Smith's extra point attempt was no good, and the half ended with A&M leading 20-7.

The first half statistics show how much the Aggies dominated play. A&M had 228 yards at halftime, compared to the Owls' 37. But two interceptions and one lost fumble kept Rice in the game.

"We're just not to a point mentally — because we're so young — to play a team like Rice and not have a letdown," Sherrill said. "We got up by 14 points early and just lost intensity."

The two teams traded field goals in the third quarter to make it 23-10, but the Mur-

ray-to-Nelson connection clicked again in the fourth to round out the scoring. Nelson went over the middle for the 25-yard touchdown catch to make it 29-10. The Aggies then failed on a two-point conversion attempt.

Nelson's two touchdown catches both came on the same route, a play called the 64-Z.

"Both touchdowns were identical," Nelson explained. "We use the play against man-to-man coverage, and on certain situations we knew they would be in man. The coaches did a good job of anticipating their coverage."

Murray finished the afternoon with 280 yards passing and three touchdowns, but also threw four interceptions.

"He's got all the tools, all the attributes," Sherrill said. "We just didn't help him out. When you put that much pressure on a young quarterback, he's going to make mistakes."

A&M's defense came up with another big performance, limiting the Owls to 81 yards of total offense, Rice's lowest offensive output of the season. Owl runners were sacked behind the line 10 times, for a minus-90 yards.

"Our defense played well," Sherrill said, "they just didn't play with much intensity. Of course, that could be due to our early 14-0 lead."

The win pushed the Aggies to 3-3-1 on the year, 2-1-1 in Southwest Conference play. The Owls fell to 1-7, 0-5 in the SWC.



A&M fullback Roger Vick carries the ball against Rice Saturday. Vick led all rushers with 79 yards as A&M beat the Owls, 29-10.

staff photo by Dean Saito

## Young Aggies prove they're ready to feast

by John P. Lopez  
Battalion Staff

HOUSTON — The appetizers are done, the table is set, the champagne is in place and the Aggies are about to sit down for the main course.

Main course?

It comes in three parts.

### Analysis

First, flaming Mustang *a la* 15-12 to Texas. Second, steamed Razorback with a side order of Horned frogs and third, Longhorn steak — tough and just about inedible.

Texas A&M gobbled up its last appetizer Saturday when the Aggies

whipped Rice 29-10 to cap a three-game streak without a loss. And since it's been two years since the Aggies haven't lost in three straight games, perhaps the streak has whet their appetite.

Maybe A&M is still hungry and will want to pig out for the rest of the season — starting with the SMU Mustangs Saturday.

But time will tell if the Aggies can over-indulge enough to pull off a few upsets.

One thing is certain, though. Some of the Aggies may have to be taught proper etiquette and table manners

because they've never been at the table with the big boys and may not exactly know how to act.

You see, freshmen in college football are like youngsters at Thanksgiving — they're supposed to sit at a card table in the kitchen while the grown-ups eat off china in the dining room.

But for A&M, several freshmen or first-year players have contributed greatly to the Aggies' resurgence on the field. And the play of those youngsters will likely spell the difference between feast and famine for A&M during the rest of the Southwest Conference schedule.

On offense, youth has proven to be the rule as eight, count 'em, eight regulars are in their first year in an Aggie uniform. Defensively, A&M is more experienced, but six freshmen dot the two-deep roster.

And although the youth movement on the Aggie team has yielded a mediocre 3-3-1 record this season, A&M has shown improvement every week and has not lost in a month.

The Aggies' win over Rice was a perfect example of how freshmen are helping the Aggies improve:

- Freshman starting quarterback Kevin Murray connected on 25 of 48

passes for 280 yards and three touchdowns.

- First-year tight end Rich Siler was the leading receiver for the Aggies with seven catches for 75 yards.
- Freshman Roger Vick was the leading rusher for A&M with 79 yards — the most by an Aggie all year — on 18 carries.
- First-year defensive back Ken Ford was the leading tackler with seven stops, including one sack.

And the list probably could go on if second- and third-leading rushers, receivers, tacklers or blockers were counted.

The fact is, the Aggies are relying heavily on young, inexperienced players to produce on the field. And although an old cliché says that the best thing about freshmen is their sophomore year, many A&M players would disagree.

Vick put it well after A&M's win over Rice.

"We did what we had to do — we won."

And should the first-year Aggie players continue to do what they have to do, perhaps that champagne on ice will not go to waste.

## Alborn's last home game marred by Aggies' victory

by John Wagner  
Battalion Staff

HOUSTON — Poor Ray Alborn.

The nightmare never ends for the outgoing Rice coach. If it's not one thing, it's a million others. If it's not interceptions, it's fumbles or penalties or freak plays or opponents that play like the Dallas Cowboys — and are twice as big. Not even his last home game as Rice coach went well.

It was supposed to be a joyful homecoming, a big upset and a win for the good guys. Instead, Jackie Sherrill — in his first game in Rice Stadium — beat Alborn, in his last.

Meanie.

Saturday's 29-10 loss to A&M was vintage Rice — and typical Alborn. He paced the sidelines, screamed at officials, threw his headset, and the Owls still lost.

"This has been two years of utter frustration," Alborn said after the game. "I keep asking, 'How can it keep going like this,' but it does."

The Owls were involved in two plays Saturday that could stand as proof positive Alborn and his team are jinxed.

The first was Brian Patterson's second quarter interception of a Kevin Murray pass. Patterson picked off the pass at the Rice 17-yard line, swung upfield to the 30 and was hit.

He fumbled. A&M recovered. Jinx.

The second happened minutes later. The Aggies were threatening again, and Murray hit wide receiver Jimmy Teal with a pass over the middle. Teal was hit.

He fumbled. The ball bounced on the turf and went out-of-bounds untouched, as many an Owl could get his hand on it. Double-jinx.

"We're just not getting any of the bounces," Alborn complained.



staff photo by Dean Saito

Outgoing Rice coach Ray Alborn says he can't understand the Owls' losses.

The Owls have yet to respond with a victory since Alborn announced his resignation, effective the end of the season. But Alborn isn't bitter. In fact, the announcement has lifted a great weight off his shoulders. Instead of worrying about his contract, he can concentrate on trying to win.

"I had envisioned winning this last home game for the seniors," Alborn said, "but it just didn't work out."

"I'm disappointed because I'll miss the association with

the kids, the coaches and some of the other people. I told the kids both before the game and afterwards that I'm proud to be associated with them."

The loss left Alborn's career record at 13-50, 9-36 against Southwest Conference foes. The Owls have three games left, against Arkansas, SMU and Baylor.

The Rice jinx continues. And it will probably remain, long after Alborn is gone.

## Texas' teams Cowboys' streak ends as Raiders win, 40-38

**United Press International**

IRVING — Chris Bahr's fourth field goal of the night, a 26-yarder with 20 seconds remaining, brought the Los Angeles Raiders a wild 40-38 win over Dallas Sunday night and halted the Cowboys' season starting winning streak at seven games.

Los Angeles quarterback Marc Wilson, making his first appearance this season as a starter, threw for three first half touchdowns and completed all five of his passes during the march that led to Bahr's winning field goal.

The Cowboys rallied from a 10-point deficit at the end of third quarter to take a 38-34 advantage with 13:05 to play — the go ahead touchdown coming on Mike Hegman's 7-yard return of a Wilson fumble.

But Bahr ended a 75-yard march with a field goal of 26 yards with 9:40 to go and then kicked a winner after a Dallas march was stopped by an inter-

ception from Los Angeles cornerback Ted Watts.

Wilson, the former first round draft choice from Brigham Young, was named on Wednesday by coach Tom Flores to move in front of Jim Plunkett. Wilson responded by completing 26 of 49 passes for 318 yards and led Los Angeles out of a 38-point second quarter with a 31-24 halftime advantage.

Wilson lobbed a 2-yard scoring pass to Derrick Jensen late in the second quarter after scrambling halfway across the field, threw a 17-yard touchdown to Frank Hawkins with 2:19 left in the first half and then found tight end Todd Christensen with a 1-yard throw on the final play of the half.

Dallas countered with a successful trick play to take the lead in the first quarter — a 15-yard pass from running back Ron Springs to quarterback Danny White and followed by second

quarter scores on a 2-yard run by Springs, a 23-yard field goal by Rafael Septien and a 15-yard throw from White to Butch Johnson.

Dallas scored 14 quick points early in the fourth quarter on a 17-yard throw from White to Doug Donley and Hegman's fumble return.

The Raiders piled up 519 yards to Dallas' 319 while White hit on 19 of 39 passes for 240 yards.

Los Angeles turned the ball over six times, the last of those being a fumble by receiver Dokie Williams at the Dallas 35 that seemed to doom the Raiders' hope for a win. But four plays later, White was intercepted by Watts to set up the winning field goal drive.

But during that march, Wilson hit Williams with two 18-yard passes, completed two more to Christensen and found Marcus Allen with another completion.

The back-and-forth first half was symbolized by the odd turn

of events that allowed the Raiders to take a 31-24 halftime lead.

Of the eight possessions in the second quarter, points were recorded on six of them.

The game was deadlocked at 24-24 when a Dallas go-ahead bid was thwarted with 52 seconds remaining in the half by an Odis McKinney interception at the Raiders' 22-yard line.

Making use of all three of their time outs, Los Angeles moved to the Dallas 30, and with nine seconds left the Raiders lined up for what appeared to be a 47-yard field goal try by Bahr.

But Wilson, holding for the kick, rolled out and tried to throw deep. Wilson, under a heavy rush, threw well short of his target, but Dallas linebacker Dickerson interfered in the end zone to give the Raiders the ball at the 1-yard line.

With just one second left on the clock, the Raiders chose to go for the touchdown and made good on the gamble with Wilson hitting Christensen just inside the goal line.

## Chiefs clip Oilers in overtime, 13-10

**United Press International**

HOUSTON — The revitalized Kansas City Chiefs climbed back into their division race Sunday at the expense of the woefully downtrodden Houston Oilers, who finally found a game they could win and booted it.

Chiefs placekicker Nick Lowery, who had missed a long go-ahead field goal try with 4:22 left to play, came back in overtime in the Astrodome to kick a 41-yard field goal that provided a 13-10 win.

The kick evened the Chiefs' record at the midway point of the season, giving them their third win in four games.

The Oilers, losers of 15 straight games now, had only a 41-yard field goal attempt with four seconds to play in regulation to snap their long-suffering torment. But normally reliable soccer-style placekicker Florian Kempf sliced the kick to the right of the goal posts.

Lowery said after the missed field goal in the fourth quarter he did not get down.

"For some reason I thought I would get another chance," he said. "I wasn't down at all. The offense did its job and gave me a nice easy chip shot."

Kansas City coach John Mackovic said winning the game is an

important step in the development of the team.

"I had thought even before Nick kicked the field goal that if we were to become a great team we had to win games like today's. The fact that we won puts us on the road to that goal. We're a long way from being a championship team, but I think we're on the right track."

Mackovic said a flood of mental mistakes "almost killed us. We just didn't execute."

The Oilers played most of the game without key running back Earl Campbell, who went out 6:32 into the game with a groin muscle pull. But despite that

blow to their offense, they had a solid chance to win a game for the first time this season.

The Chiefs threatened to go ahead 13-10 with 4:22 to play when they drove to a third down and three at the Houston 18-yard line. But an all out Oil blitz trapped quarterback Kenney for a 15-yard loss and Lowery's 52-yard field goal attempt went wide right.

The Chiefs, under first-year coach John Mackovic, now have beaten the Oilers, the New York Giants and the St. Louis Cardinals in the last four weeks and stand 4-4 in the AFC Western Division.