

Stump: No allusions of greatness

By JEFF GRAUNKE
Sports Writer

You'd think that after coming off the bench, completing two touchdown passes, and revitalizing a sagging Texas A&M offense during the second half of the Iowa State game that backup quarterback Craig Stump might have allusions of grandeur — not on your life.

Even with all the praise from the press, Stump modestly responds: "No, I'm still the back up quarterback. It hasn't changed."

Through all of this attention, Stump has remained quite subdued about his performance. He didn't know what role he was going to play in the game, until A&M Head Coach Jackie Sherrill called on him in the third quarter.

"I felt that I had prepared well enough," Stump said. "It was just a matter of executing and hoping I'd do the best I could do."

Execute is a bit of an understatement.

Stump accounted for a dozen of the Aggies 38 points on two key drives. Tight end Duncan Webb hooked up with Stump for a five yard touchdown pass and, on the next drive, split end Greg Dillon caught a 29 yard pass from Stump for another score.

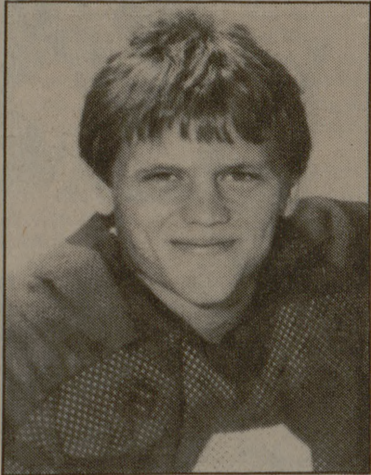
In addition to those two touchdown passes, Stump also converted six out of six third down situations into first downs when the Ags needed them desperately.

Stump is young. This is his first season in uniform because he was redshirted last as a freshman. Stump believes that experience helped him tremendously.

"There's a lot more to learn here and being a redshirt really helped me learn the (A&M football) system," he said. "It almost takes that long (a year) just to learn it."

Sherrill agrees, saying Stump isn't quite ready to step become the starter.

"Stump is a young kid," Sherrill said. "He's got a long way to go."



A&M's Craig Stump

Sherrill's got a point. Stump's had difficulty holding on to the ball several times during the ISU game. Fortunately for Stump and the Aggies, he was able to fall on it. Otherwise, Stump might have become the villain instead of the hero.

During his first year, Stump operated the scout team, which runs the opponents plays against the Ags' defense in practice. This season his role has basically been the same as it was last year with one major exception — this season he can play. That's his No. 1 reason for being here.

"I'm young and as a back up quarterback I have to go out and be prepared in case something does happen," he said. "I have to go out there and keep the team on track and see there's not a let down."

Coaching has definitely been a factor in Stump's success.

"I like them (coaching staff) a lot," he said. "They've helped me come a long way as far as making me work out with weights and they teach me a lot knowledge-wise."

The A&M coaches also played a big part in getting Stump to even sign with the Aggies.

"I got a lot of letters (from other



Texas A&M reserve quarterback Craig Stump (9) executes the option play during the third quarter against Iowa State last Saturday.

Aggie running back Anthony Toney (25) prepares to take the handoff from Stump, while a Cyclone eyes their moves.

Photo by DEAN SAITO

universities). It was real close," Stump admits.

Stump's popularity among major colleges was a result of his credentials, including All-State, All-District and a member on the Dallas Times-Herald's Blue Chip List.

Notre Dame, Louisiana State and Alabama were just some of the schools that were actively recruiting Stump. He visited Notre Dame and LSU, but he chose A&M because of "Coach Sherrill and the type of offense they (Aggies) play."

"I felt that A&M was up and coming," he said.

When asked about motivation on the field, Stump responded: "Well it just overcomes you. Whatever your thoughts are, they're all going to-

wards what's going on right now."

"There's a lot of tradition here and that had a lot to do with it (signing with A&M)," he said. "I like the people here, and I like the players here. I want to play here, but, of course, the degree comes first."

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