

## Ag question marks multiply with Tech loss

By TRAVIS TINGLE  
Assistant Sports Editor

As the last few minutes of the Texas Tech game dwindled away, Texas A&M heard the cries of "Poor Aggies" from an opposing team's fans for the first time this season. The way A&M is playing right now, it probably won't be the last time either.

The chant, which doesn't usually mean much of anything, was more than a fair evaluation of Jackie Sherrill's third career loss to the rebuilding Red Raiders.

Tech expected a closer game. The media expected a closer game. Everyone expected a closer game. So what went wrong?

"The big plays were the difference in the ball game," Sherrill said. "They (Texas Tech) made the big plays. We did not."

Twenty unanswered points by Tech in the fourth quarter proves Sherrill's point, but there's more to the Ags' 30-12 loss than just a blemish on the record.

In all of A&M's previous three victories, Sherrill blamed A&M's inconsistency on the three stooges of football — miscues, penalties and turnovers.

With only one fumble and an interception against Tech, it's evident that the Ags' problems lie elsewhere.

Perhaps poor tackling is to blame. A&M linebacker Johnny Holland thinks so.

"It was just a case of a lot of missed tackles," Holland said. "We (inside linebackers) were blitzing and (Texas Tech's) Timmy Smith would bounce to the outside. We needed to wrap him up instead of shooting right at him."

Smith ripped the Aggie defense for 139 yards rushing, with most of it coming on just runs of 52 and 43 yards. Behind Smith's rushing, Tech bled the Ags' defense for 203 yards on the ground.

Considering Tech mustered a mere -13 yards in a 18-9 loss to Baylor last week, the Aggie defense remains an unsolved mystery.

During the rain-drenched third quarter, the Ags needed to make their move — they didn't. Everyone who left their umbrella in the car remembers well those agonizing 15 minutes of football.

The Ags found themselves down 10-6, but passed the ball only once during the entire third quarter. Neither team was willing to give up field position and wanted to avoid a momentum-shifting turnover at all cost.

Tech could afford to keep its offense into limbo for the third quarter — A&M could not.

To Tech, the rain showers worked just as effectively as hiding the football under their jerseys for 15 minutes. The Ags could not afford to concede the third quarter, yet they helped Tech drain time off the clock by not passing.

A&M quarterback Craig Stump explained the Ags' strategy.

"At that point, we needed to take care of the ball," Stump said. "A turnover there would have given them a big advantage. It (the rain) was coming down so hard. It would have been hard to throw."

A&M's lack of third quarter offensive diversity hurt them in the fourth quarter when the game escaped the Ags' for good.

Trailing 17-9, the Aggies settled for a 35 yard Alan Smith field goal after failing on third and 12 situation from the Tech 18 yard line.

That was the big play that killed the Aggies.

From that point on, Tech proceeded to paint the town, or in this case Kyle Field red — the Ags provided the Wagner Power Painters.

"We felt at the time that we had a chance to win the game," Sherrill said. "After we kicked the field goal (making the score 17-12), we were in the right position. We were just never in a position to make a big play."

The Ags were in scoring position inside the 20 yard line several times during the course of the game. Each time, the Aggies bogged down and played dead.

Stump gave no excuses for the offenses' lackluster exhibition.

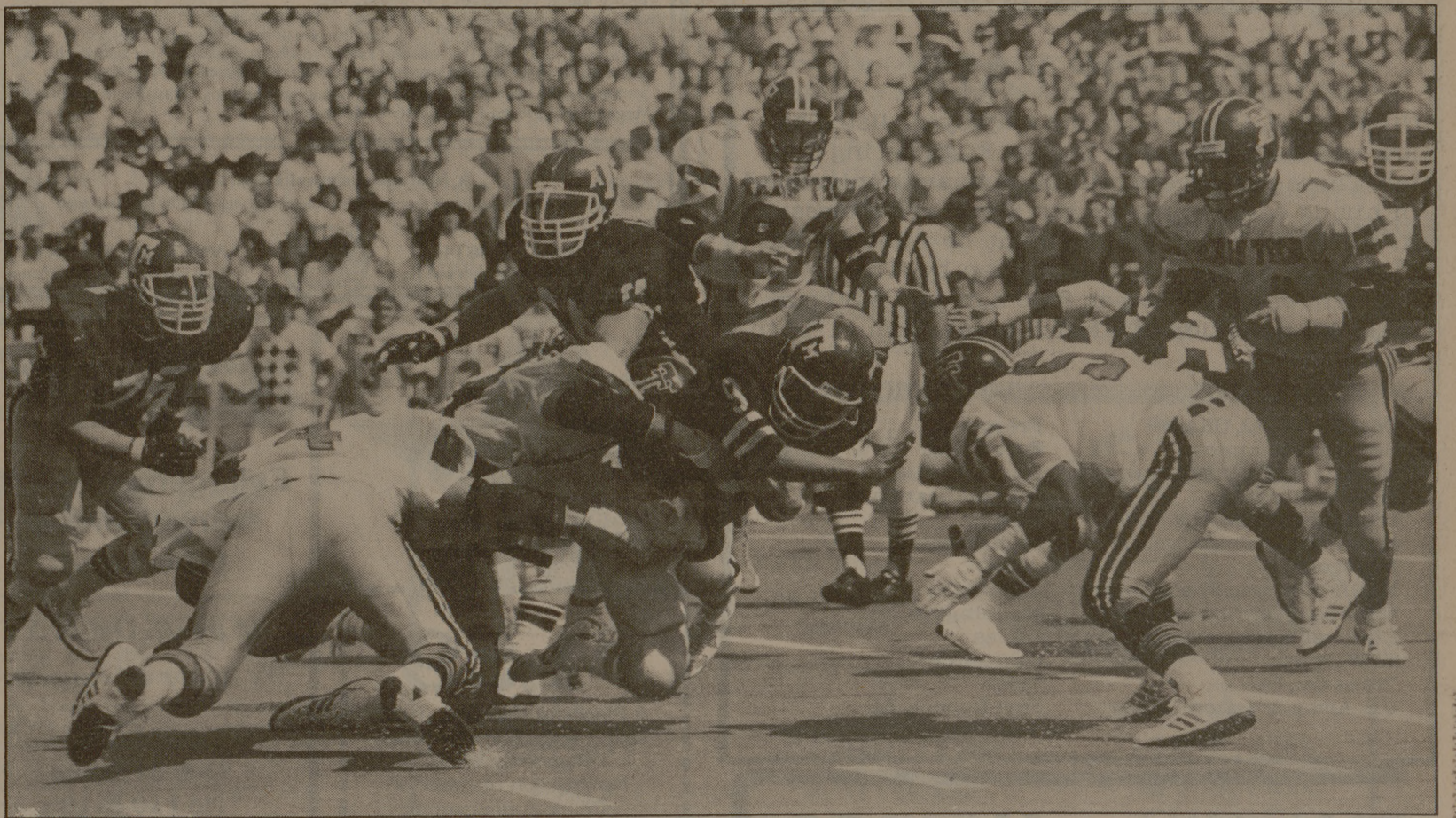


Photo by FRANK IRWIN

Texas A&M quarterback Craig Stump (9) is sandwiched between Texas Tech defenders Brad Hastings (44) and Merv Scurlark (5)

during the Aggies 30-12 loss to the Red Raiders on a wet Kyle Field Saturday afternoon.

"They (Texas Tech) played the defense we had practiced on all week," Stump said. "We knew they had a good defense coming into the game. They have the No. 1 defense in the conference. A lot of times, we had things going and we just hurt ourselves. I can't think of any one

play in particular that hurt us though.

"I now we're going to bounce back from this. We're going to win some more games. We just need to cut out the mistakes. Individually, it doesn't matter how I played. If we lose, we lose."

The Ags' luck finally ran out against Tech. But with Houston, Baylor, Rice, SMU, Arkansas, TCU and Texas remaining on the schedule, the prospects of a Cotton Bowl season may have been literally washed away with the rains that pounded College Station Saturday.

A&M's hopes of a starting off the SWC race on a winning note were dashed once again in front of 51,365 fans at Kyle Field.

Most of them asking that seemingly never-ending question:

"What's wrong with the Aggies?"

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