

SPORTS

Ags leery of Tide defensive line

By PETE HERNDON
Sports Writer

Most of Texas A&M's preparation for its opener against Alabama Saturday concerns just one thing — counteracting the strength of the Crimson Tide's defense.

Having spent the last five years as the head coach at Oregon State, the Aggies' new offensive line coach, Joe Avezzano, knows all about big games and big defensive lines.

"It's going to be a real challenge to control the (Alabama) line," Avezzano said. "(Tide nose tackle Curt) Jarvis and (tackle Jon) Hand are both exceptional athletes and, at the other (tackle) position, (Brent) Sowell is good."

Enter Avezzano's revamped Aggie offensive line, featuring two returning starters, Doug Williams and Randy Dausin, and three newcomers.

It's those five guys who'll have the chore of keeping Tide All-

American linebacker Cornelius Bennett from giving A&M no choice of quarterbacks next weekend.

In Alabama's season-opening 20-16 win over Georgia, Bennett looked like a clone of the New York Giants' Lawrence Taylor. Only nine of Georgia's 16 points against Alabama were scored by the offense.

"There's few teams that can match up physically with Bennett," Avezzano said. "He's going

to make a lot of things happen." Freshman guard Trace McGuire hopes those "things" don't happen in the A&M backfield Saturday.

"Bennett is real quick," said McGuire, referring to the linebacker's 4.6 speed in the 40-yard dash. "We're going to have to concentrate on dropping out of there quick on passing plays to pick him up."

McGuire said the Aggies' line has set three goals for the "Bama game — no quarterback sacks, no turnovers and allow the rushing game to average four yards a carry.

"If we can do all that," McGuire said smiling, "the people in Aggieland will be celebrating Saturday night. They (Alabama) are not going to be as shaky as us. They've already gotten the first game jitters out of the way.

"But if we (the offensive linemen) do make a mistake, we should be able to overcome it. Our defense will work for us."

Sophomore center Matt Wilson said the Aggies will subscribe to a kind of Vince Lombardi school of thought to control the line of scrimmage.

"We're going to intimidate them," Wilson said. "We're bigger and stronger than they are. We should dominate the line.

"This game means a lot to us. We're going to be on national television (ESPN will telecast the game at 6:45 p.m.) and, if we win, we get ranked."

Wilson said the television coverage and the chance of a national ranking weren't the only motivation for the Aggies.

"They wrote us a nice little letter, telling us how much they were looking forward to playing us in their own back yard," he said. "I think they may be getting a little cocky."

Avezzano said his players have the potential to be a good offensive line, but "only time will tell" how well they produce.

"From last spring to this point," Avezzano said, "the physical aspect has really improved. Mentally, they've got a lot of character.

"We need a game like Alabama to see exactly where we're at."



Photo by ANTHONY S. CASPER

Texas A&M offensive line coach Joe Avezzano (above) — "It's going to be a real challenge to control the (Alabama) line. We need a game like Alabama to see exactly where we're at."

Pokes prove to err is 'Skins, to win is divine

Associated Press

IRVING — Dallas' determined defense intercepted Joe Theismann five times Monday night and Cowboy quarterback Danny White and placekicker Rafael Septien made Washington pay for its mistakes with a 44-14 National Football League victory over the Redskins.

White, wearing a flak jacket for the first time in his career, directed a 98-yard scoring drive and combined on a 55-yard scoring strike with Mike Renfro, while Septien kicked field goals of 53, 39, and 43 yards.

Cornerback Victor Scott completed the humiliation of Theismann on his 36th birthday by plucking off a pass and returning it 26 yards for a touchdown to build Dallas' lead to 30 points midway of the fourth quarter.

Washington reserve quarterback Jay Schroeder didn't fare any better than Theismann, serving up a 21-yard touchdown interception return to Dennis Thurman with 2:50 left in the game.

The Cowboys' victory over their hated National Football Conference Eastern Division rival snapped a three-game losing streak to the Redskins.

Mike Downs, Everson Walls, Ron Fellows and Bill Bates also intercepted Theismann while Dexter Clinkscale recovered a fumble coughed up by Washington running back George Rogers.

Dallas converted Washington errors into 27 points. The Cowboys put Washington away with a 13-point third quarter on two Septien field goals and a nine-yard touchdown run by Tony Dorsett following Fellows' interception and 29-yard return.

The besieged Theismann connected on a 19-yard touchdown pass to tight end Clint Didier late in the fourth quarter.

It was the worst defeat inflicted on Washington since Pittsburgh downed the Redskins 38-7 in 1979. It was Dallas' biggest victory in the 51-game series with the Redskins since a 34-0 victory in 1970.

White, recently named team captain, wore the flak jacket to protect ribs injured in the preseason. White, who hadn't played a game in three weeks, completed 13 of 32 passes for 208 yards and no interceptions.

Theismann, meanwhile, completed 15 of 35 passes for 206 yards.

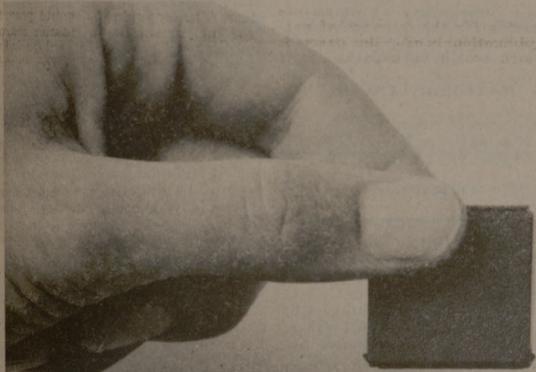
Dallas built a 10-0 lead on Septien's 53-yard field goal, matching the longest of his career, and Timmy Newsome's one-yard scoring run that capped an 18-play, 98-yard drive.

There was a controversial call just before Newsome's touchdown plunge. He caught a 16-yard pass from White but fumbled at the one. The Redskins recovered but the officials ruled Newsome was down, although instant replays left some question.

The Redskins responded to Dallas' first touchdown by going 77 yards in 10 plays with John Riggins bulging across from a yard out.

Dallas got the ball with 1:38 to play in the half and scored again on two plays for a 17-7 lead.

After a White pass to Renfro gained six yards, Renfro hoodwinked Washington rookie Barry Wilburn into biting on a fake sideline route. The slow-footed Cowboy wide receiver instead ran a deep post route, caught the ball on the Skin 20 and plodded untouched into the end zone.



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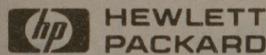
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