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Sports



Texas A&M linebacker Johnny Holland (11), who leads the Aggies in tackles, and safety Wayne Asberry trip up Tulsa halfback Gordon

Brown. A&M is ranked third in the Southwest Conference in rushing defense, allowing only an average of 181.3 yards a game.

A&M looking to break Tech hex

By PETE HERNDON
Sports Writer

For Texas A&M, the time has finally come to start the real football season — Southwest Conference style.

A&M opens SWC play this Saturday at 7 p.m. in Lubbock's Jones Stadium against Texas Tech. The game gives the Aggies their first true shot at avenging some of the disappointments of 1984's mediocre 6-5 season.

Last season, Tech touched off A&M's mid-season slide, when the Red Raiders jumped all over the Aggies, 30-12.

A&M had to start an inexperienced quarterback, Craig Stump, in that game to replace Kevin "The Franchise" Murray, after Murray broke his ankle in the previous game against Arkansas State. Stump got his first collegiate start, but that, and the fact A&M played poorly against a weak early schedule, left the Aggies' confidence in sad shape — and it showed against Tech.

However, this year, the Tech game should be different.

Stump has experience, Murray is healthy and A&M Coach Jackie Sherrill is taking full advantage of that situation and using both quarterbacks.

"It's not any different than having two running backs or two offensive linemen that are good at what they do," Sherrill said. "Even last year, people saw us play more than one quarterback (before Murray's injury)."

"The philosophy (of playing two quarterbacks) in the general public's eye has changed. Matt Cavanaugh (while at Pittsburgh) played less than

a freshman played and he made All-American his senior year. You look at BYU and (Robbie) Boscoe, they don't play him every down. There are quarterbacks everywhere in the country who split time — and that includes Baylor and Texas."

The philosophy seems to work, since the Aggies have the fourth best offense in the nation thanks to a 702-yard performance against Tulsa last Saturday.

With A&M coming off of two straight victories and Tech coming off a 31-0 thumping at the hand of Baylor, the momentum in this year's meeting should belong to the Aggies.

But, next to the Aggies, Tech is probably the most unpredictable team in the SWC.

Somewhere out in tumbleweed-infested West Texas, the Red Raiders sleep through the football season like well-fed rattlesnakes, not really causing any problems. But, occasionally, they strike unsuspecting passers-by.

Just ask the Aggies. They've been bitten the last three years.

And like rattlesnakes, the most deadly Red Raider is also the smallest.

At 5-foot-3 and 128-pounds, Tech's freshman wide receiver Tyrone "Smurf" Thurman may not be much for Hulk Hogan to worry about, but the A&M defense will have to take notice.

Thurman became the "clutch" receiver, in the Red Raiders' 21-17 win over Tulsa, when he grabbed the game-winning touchdown pass with 20 seconds left in the game. He is also 14th in the nation in punt returns, averaging 12.7 yards a carry.



Texas A&M split end Jeff Nelson (8) leads the Aggies in receiving with 15 catches for 225 yards thus far this season. Above, Nelson hauls-in a TD pass, despite coverage by Tulsa cornerback Michael Greer (40). A&M plays Texas Tech in Lubbock Saturday at 7 p.m.

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