

A&M 'offensive' to its opponents

By CHAREAN WILLIAMS
Assistant Sports Editor

When quarterback Kevin Murray reentered Texas A&M's huddle on Sept. 14 against Alabama, the Aggies were almost expected to move the football.

But who could have expected a school-record 702 yards of total offense in single game? Who could have expected A&M offense to be averaging 480 yards a game at this point in the season?

No one, except maybe A&M Coach Jackie Sherrill.

"Offensively, we're not anywhere near where we can be potentially," Sherrill said. "I'm pleased, though (with the Aggies offensive production so far). We've done a lot of good things we set out to do."

Some of those "good things" have come via the arm of Murray.

Murray is currently second in the nation in passing efficiency, even though he split time with Craig Stump in non-conference games against Alabama, Northeast Louisiana and Tulsa.

In the 28-27 win over Texas Tech Saturday, Murray played all but two series of downs.

"I think Murray will be the starter from now on," A&M Offensive Coordinator Lynn Amedee said. "We're not in the position where we're going to bench Stump, though. I don't think Kevin is well enough (after suffering a broken ankle last season) to execute everything right now."

The Aggies' passing game is averaging 243 yards a game, up from 198.8 last season, and the yards per catch has increased from 11.7 to 15 yards a reception.

The receivers who were expected to be one of A&M's offensive weaknesses before the season began, have become one of its strengths.

Flanker Jeff Nelson leads the Southwest Conference in receiving, having pulled in 19 passes for 280 yards.

"They've (the Aggie receivers) done better than we expected them to do as a whole," Amedee said. "They haven't dropped but two passes all season long."

Murray credits the success of A&M's passing attack to the running backs as well.

"When you have a good running game like we do, it opens it up for the passing game," Murray said.

The running game that Murray speaks of is the same one which critics said, prior to the season, lacked speed to get outside.

But the Aggies' backs have surprised everyone.

It's A&M rushing statistics that have shown the biggest improvement over last season. The Aggies are averaging 237 yards a game on the ground thus far, up 123.3 yards from a year ago.

And, for the first time since 1980, an A&M back rushed for over 100 yards in consecutive games. Fullback Roger Vick gained 154 yards in a 45-10 win over Tulsa and had 135-yard game against Tech.

"I give all the credit to the offensive linemen," Vick said. "They've done a terrific job blocking and we (the backs) were able to execute."

The entire A&M offense credits the Aggies resurgence to the offensive line.

Behind the blocking of 6-foot-6 tackle Doug Williams and 6-4 center Matt Wilson, the Aggies have pushed opposing defenses up and down the field, almost at will.

"The offensive line is doing a good job," Sherrill said. "They're blocking the right people at the right time."

However, Williams said the line still has room for improvement.



Photo by JOHN MAKELY

Texas A&M fullback Anthony Toney (above) returns to the lineup against Texas Tech Saturday, after suffering a knee injury a week ago. Despite that, Toney is still the Aggies' second-leading rusher, behind fullback Roger Vick, with 245 yards on 62 carries.

"I don't think we're ahead of schedule, but we're on the right path," Williams said. "Some penalties have killed us, but that's a matter of concentration. Once we get every-

body on the right key, everything will start clicking."

If A&M's offense clicks anymore than it already has, it may be time to ditch them "BYU on the Brazos."

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