

Sports

Tech QB's story pure Hollywood

Tolliver sets passing record in first start

Associated Press

Billy Joe Tolliver's success story is right out of central casting off the Columbia Pictures' lot in Hollywood.

The plot begins in a small West Texas town of Boyd where Billy Joe, who has a fiction writer's name, is a big man on campus at a tiny Class 2-A high school.

Tolliver is redshirted his freshman year and draws plenty of "pine time" early in the season on the bench as a third-string quarterback. Texas Tech Coach Jerry Moore inserts him into the lineup out of desperation in a lost Texas game and Billy Joe throws a 62-yard completion.

Tolliver earns a start against TCU and promptly throws five touchdown passes for a Southwest Conference record 422 yards, hitting 26 of 43 passes. The SWC record was 417 yards set by SMU's Chuck Hixson against Ohio State in 1968.

Tolliver broke or tied three school records, including most TD passes in a game in the 63-7 victory.

The performance earned him The Associated Press SWC Offensive Player of the Week award.

Arkansas' safety Greg Lasker was The AP's Defensive Player of the Week. In a 20-14 victory over Baylor, Lasker intercepted a pass, broke up two others, and had 10 tackles, three of them solos.

"Coming from Boyd, this is pretty darn exciting," Tolliver said.

Tech gained 699 yards with the 6-foot-1, 190-pound Tolliver at quarterback, a record for a conference game.

Offensive coordinator Tom Wilson said, "Tolliver did some things you just don't see very often. He worked hard for this opportunity and it has paid off for him. He was just great."

Running back Ansel Cole caught three touchdown passes over distances of 20, 19 and 13 yards. Tolliver's other scoring shots went 65 yards to halfback Bouvier Dale and 25 yards to split end Bruce Perkins.

"I was impressed by the way he moved the ball around," Wilson said.



Arkansas quarterback Greg Thomas leaped over and ran through the Texas A&M defense last year en route to a 28-0 Razorback win. Saturday night, the Ags host the Hogs at 6:45 on ESPN.

Aggies, Sherrill to ponder Hogs before Cotton

By PETE HERNDON
Sports Writer

With the Southwest Conference football season winding to a close for Texas A&M, each game is bigger than the last where the Aggies' Cotton Bowl chances are concerned.

Saturday's nationally televised game (6:45 p.m., ESPN) against Arkansas at Kyle Field will be the biggest game of the season for the Ags. The loser can just about kiss its New Year's Day travel plans to Dallas goodbye.

But at Tuesday's news conference, Sherrill wasn't worried about where his team will spend the holiday season, at least not yet.

"That's something I'm not concerned about," Sherrill said, making an analogy. "I love ice cream. And that's like having a table full of ice cream in the back of the room. I can't think about the ice cream. I have to worry about how to get to the table. If you start worrying about those kinds of things, you'll lose sight of what you're trying to accomplish."

One of the things Sherrill wants to accomplish Saturday is staying as far away as possible from Arkansas safety Greg Lasker. After looking at the game films over the last four years, Sherrill had nothing but compliments for the Hog defensive back.

"He, himself, has dominated the games for Arkansas," Sherrill said.

Along with Lasker, Sherrill said the Aggies need to control the Razorbacks' defensive line. Although Arkansas' defensive front isn't big by SWC standards, it makes up for that with speed.

Sherrill said a key matchup will be A&M center Matt Wilson against Arkansas nose guard Tony Chericco.

"Those two players (Chericco and Lasker) we'll have to somehow win half the battles with," he said. "Texas up front is more physical than we are, and they had a hard time hitting people (against Arkansas). Texas did some good things (blocking), but they couldn't do it consistently."

Sherrill said the Hogs' speed nullifies any strength advantage the Ag-

gies might have. "If you put their feet in cement, we would have the physical advantage," he said.

A&M will be hoping that Arkansas' wide receivers will be wearing cement shoes Saturday. James Shibest and Donnie Centers are two of the best in the SWC, giving the Razorbacks "flexbone" that extra punch and the ability to burn the Aggies they've been hurt the most — deep passes.

"Arkansas is content not to make the big play, even though they do," Sherrill said. "Defensively, we're going to have to not give up the big play."

The Aggies have had a week off to prepare for the Razorbacks and Sherrill said they have benefitted from the extra time.

"The week off is a plus in a way, because, otherwise, we could not have played with a healthy team," he said.

Sherrill said offensive tackle Louis Cheek, center Matt Wilson, wide receiver Jeff Nelson, running backs Anthony Toney and Roger Vick, nose guard Sammy O'Brien, safety Domingo Bryant and quarterback Kevin Murray all needed the extra time to recover from minor injuries. Sherrill said there are some negative aspects of having a week off as well.

"The problem you have in an off week is that you lose some of the edge," he said.

Arkansas has the advantage there because it's coming off of the big win against Baylor.

And in a game like this one, Sherrill knows every little advantage counts.

"I kind of wish it would rain," he quipped, referring to the Aggies' ability to draw clouds as well as fans to Kyle Field. "I think our players have got webbed feet."

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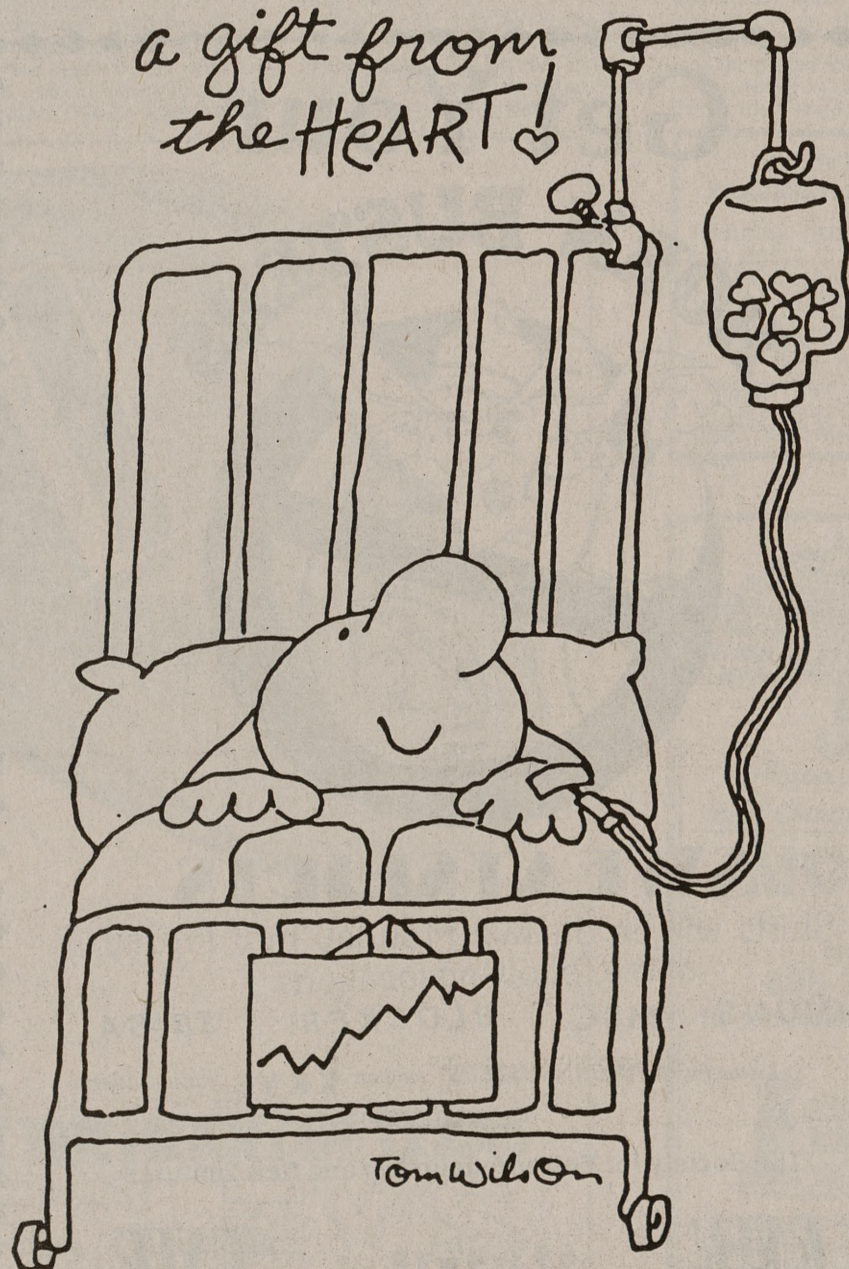
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