

# Sports



Photo by JOHN MAKELY

Texas A&M tight end Rod Bernstine (right) eludes a diving Auburn free safety, Tom Powell (left), after one of Bernstine's six catches

during the Aggies' 36-16 Cotton Bowl triumph in Dallas Jan. 1. A&M was ranked in the Associated Press' final poll at No. 6.

## A&M quiets Auburn's Jackson

### Aggies silence critics in Cotton win over Tigers

By CHAREAN WILLIAMS  
Assistant Sports Editor

DALLAS — The 1986 Cotton Bowl Classic "pregame-hype" centered around Auburn running back Bo Jackson.

The national TV commercials featured the Heisman Trophy winner twisting and turning into the end zone, while an ominous voice cried, "When you look for champions, look to CBS Sports!"

But after the New Year's Day clash between Texas A&M and Auburn in Dallas was over, everyone began talking about the other team with the other Jackson.

A&M proved an old adage true in its 36-16 win over Auburn — one player does not a team make.

"Bo (Jackson) has gotten a lot of publicity, but he deserves it," A&M tight end Rod Bernstine said. "We just stuck it in the back of our minds and waited until game day to prove ourselves."

But then that's nothing new for the Aggies, who finished the season 10-2 and ranked No. 6 in the nation by the Associated Press.

"The whole year the other team's been favored," A&M linebacker Dana Batiste said. "We've been the underdog all year long and have had to prove ourselves every week. We're used to it by now. It gives us that little edge."

The Aggies also overcame problems with the NCAA and feuds with the media.

"This team really overcame a lot of adversity," A&M Coach Jackie Sherrill said. "I've been around some great football teams, but this Texas A&M team gave much more of itself and the positive results have shown this year."

Against Auburn, virtually everything A&M touched turned to gold.

In fact, if the Aggie kicking game hadn't taken an early hiatus, it could've been an absolute perfect day for towel-waving Aggie fans, who made up the majority of the 73,137 in attendance.

The Aggies rolled up 478 yards of offense, 292 of which came by way of quarterback Kevin Murray's arm and established a new Cotton Bowl record for passing yardage.

Meanwhile, the Aggies' "no-name" defense was doing its part to ensure A&M its finest moment since 1968 when it upset Alabama in the Cotton Bowl.

Jackson, who was named the game's Most Valuable Player on offense, rushed 129 yards on 31 carries and turned only his fourth catch of the season into a 73-yard gallop into the end zone.

But in the fourth quarter, with the game on the line, the A&M defense stopped Jackson in his tracks.

That turning point came with just less than 13 minutes remaining as Jackson failed to break the plane of the goal line on three tries from the two-yard-line.

On third-and-goal, he was tripped

by A&M noseguard Sammy O'Brien. Then, on fourth-and-goal, Auburn Coach Pat Dye elected to go for the touchdown rather than attempt a 19-yard field goal that would have pulled the Tigers to within 21-19.

"We called a timeout to talk about it," Auburn quarterback Jeff Burger said of the fourth down call. "We discussed three plays — a sweep, an option and a power play."

Dye selected the power play to Jackson — just the play the A&M defense wanted.

"We had our short yardage goal line team in," A&M defensive coordinator R.C. Slocum said. "We figure they'd give it to Bo. In that situation, you just have to play on emotion..."

Which is just what A&M linebacker Basil Jackson did.

Basil Jackson? The Aggies' Jackson, a freshman and non-starter, sent the Heisman Trophy winner sprawling backward.

"The defense we had in the game was designed to stop the running play," he said. "The linebackers are there to read the play, which is what I was able to do. When I saw him (Bo Jackson) coming at me, I knew if I didn't tackle him he had a touchdown."

But the game's defensive MVP was A&M's Domingo Bryant. The Aggies' senior "big play" man had 10 tackles and two pass interceptions.

On offense, there were other "no-names" who came through at crucial

times for the Aggies.

A&M tailback Keith Woodside almost overshadowed Auburn's Jackson.

Woodside rushed for 32 yards on only three carries, one of which was a first quarter 22-yard TD run that gave the Aggies their first lead. He also caught three passes for 88 yards, one a diving nine-yard touchdown catch in the fourth quarter.

Then there was Bernstine, a full-back converted to tight end. He had six catches for 108 yards and scored on a two-point conversion after the Aggies' final touchdown.

And what about A&M walk-on kicker Scott Slater?

All Slater did was make his first collegiate field goal attempt, a 26-yarder in the second quarter, and then added a PAT in the fourth.

"You can't think about the pressure," Slater said. "You have to get out there and think about the kick."

And the rest of the Aggies did a little kicking of their own.

They kicked Jackson and Auburn in the seat of the pants and then, for good measure, slammed a high-five in the media's faces.

"It was obvious from the score and the whole game that it was Texas A&M's day," Dye said. "They had a great plan and they just did what it took to win. Their football team is probably as good as any team in the country."

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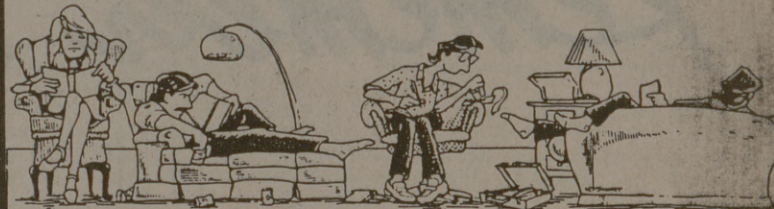


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