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Sports

Sherrill says Aggs in good shape

By Ken Sury
Sports Editor

The weather was great Monday inside.

And inside the Texas A&M Physiology Research and Conditioning Lab was just fine as the Southwest Conference press tour made its annual stop at A&M.

But weather — good weather — had A&M Football Coach Jackie Sherrill pleased as he began his discussion of the 1986 Aggies.

"The weather has cooperated very well," Sherrill said, "meaning that we haven't had a lot of those 100(degree)-plus days. . . . So what that allowed us to do is hit more, practice longer and go through a period of conditioning."

"There's only so much conditioning you can do at 100-plus degree temperatures every day and the body gets fatigued."

Sherrill said the players returned in good condition, and added that the two-a-day workouts and scrimmages which the team completed last week went well.

"The players are kind of fitting together right now," he said. "We're trying to fill the gaps, fill the holes. From now on, we're trying to improve on the things we've done well and eliminate some of the things we've not done well."

The Aggies did lose one player during two-a-days. Layne Pollock, who was to be the Aggies' backup noseguard, hurt his knee on an inside drill last week and had to undergo reconstruction surgery. Pollock will be lost for the year.

To make up for the loss of Pollock, Sherrill said sophomore O'Neill Gilbert was moved from defensive end to noseguard to back up Sammy O'Brient.

Sherrill said the front defensive seven will be a strong spot for A&M this fall, especially at the linebacker



A&M Football Coach Jackie Sherrill discusses his team's outlook at Monday's SWC press tour conference. The Aggies are busy preparing for their season opening game against LSU Sept. 13.

Photo by Tom Owen

positions, but a young secondary will be a concern.

Offensively, Sherrill said the Aggies have good experience at the skill positions (quarterback, running backs and receivers), although they could use one or two more receivers and running backs. The biggest worry at the time on the offensive line is finding a replacement for Doug Williams at right tackle.

When asked if he felt the Aggies or any team could dominate the

SWC, Sherrill replied, "Not this conference. Those days are gone. There's too many good players."

Sherrill said the wealth of talent throughout the SWC will keep the Aggies from taking any team too lightly. With a lot of teams gunning for the Aggies and a tougher schedule this year, Sherrill said it will be tough to repeat as SWC champions.

And even with the talk of a possible national championship, Sherrill said his players are not the type to let that hype go to their heads.

"We have too many players who are overachievers," Sherrill said. "It doesn't matter what happens next year."

"The players are going to work hard. They know what sacrifice they have to make — know the price they have to pay (to be successful)."

Aggie Notes . . . The A&M office said that their all-time student and general public for the Sept. 13 game at LSU sold out.

A&M offensive machine gears for '86

By Homer Jacobs
Assistant Sports Editor

Kevin Murray looked intense.

You could almost see LSU game films rolling in the whites of his eyes. Talk of a national championship or Heisman hype didn't figure in Murray's mind. It was "Taking Care of Business," Act II.

Murray's attitude was typical to that of the Texas A&M offensive players who spoke to media representatives at the annual Southwest Conference press tour Monday.

Pledging to take the season one snap at a time, the Aggie offensive arsenal expects to be even more potent than last year's SWC record-setting group.

A&M Football Coach Jackie Sherrill said the Aggie players in the skilled positions could line up and play today — especially Murray.

"Kevin Murray is throwing the ball better now than ever before," Sherrill said.

According to Sherrill and Aggie players, Murray has gotten stronger and even put more 'zip' on the ball.

A&M Offensive Coordinator Lynn Amedee said Murray's greatest progression as a quarterback has come in his ability to read different defenses.

"In two-a-days, he (Murray) threw the ball as well as I've seen anyone throw in a long time," Amedee said. Amedee and Sherrill have worked

with the likes of Dan Marino, Matt Cavanaugh, David Woodley and Archie Manning in previous coaching campaigns.

Sherrill said if the Aggie offensive machine is to crank up and cruise to Dallas again in January, the team needs a little help from its bulldozer — Marshall Land.

The senior right tackle that weighs in at about 350 pounds has seen only limited action (17 snaps), so he's the real question mark in an offensive line that lost three starters from the 1985 squad.

With an inexperienced Land and backup in Frank Case, the Aggies are hoping a solid inside tandem of Matt Wilson at center, Trace Mc-

Guire at left guard and Jerry Farris at right guard will lead to success for the offensive unit. Junior Linebacker Cheek will occupy the left tackle for the Aggies.

Last year A&M had a full staff of running backs as the two most talented in Roger Vick and Anthony Toney chewed up most of the rushing yardage.

With Toney gone, look for a young back to join Vick.

Keith Woodside, coming off an impressive Cotton Bowl performance, will be the Aggies' best

See A&M offense, page 7

Aggie defense boasts 'magnificent 7'

By Danny Myers
Sports Writer

The Texas A&M defense was the stingiest in the Southwest Conference in 1985, and it plans to be even less generous in 1986.

Right outside linebacker Todd Howard said the Aggies have a goal of giving up an average of only 250 yards per game, compared to their league-leading 281.9 yards per game last season.

"Our front seven is probably one of the best in the nation," consensus All-America linebacker Johnny Holland said at the SWC press tour conference Monday.

The down linemen are stronger than they were last year and the line-

backers are playing more intelligently, he said.

The top six tacklers on the '85 squad — linebackers Larry Kelm, Holland, Howard, defensive ends Jay Muller, Rod Saddler and noseguard Sammy O'Brient — return to the defensive line.

Head Coach Jackie Sherrill had nothing but praise for his front seven, which now includes left outside linebacker John Roper, who had seven tackles in the Cotton Bowl.

A lot of praise went out to Holland.

"I think Johnny (Holland) has been the best linebacker in the league for the last two years," he said.

"What's amazing about Johnny is his size. He's bigger now than he's ever been. For the last two years, when Holland hit somebody he stopped them," Sherrill said. "This year he's going to stand up offensive guards and offensive linemen."

Kelm, who broke his arm in spring training earlier this year, is back to full strength, Sherrill said, while Howard and Roper have had impressive practices.

Sherrill said he expects solid play from O'Brient, who was the most improved player during spring training this year in addition to good two-a-day practices.

Saddler, a preseason first-team All-America pick by Playboy, said

he's much stronger than he was last season.

Sherrill also said he expects play from Muller, who had a season-high 19 tackles against Arkansas last season.

The weakness of the A&M defense is its lack of depth at the secondary positions, Sherrill said. Kip Corrinton, the most experienced player in the secondary, played in recent scrimmages because of strained hamstrings.

Alex Morris, who saw limited action backing up Domingo Bryant last season, has excellent speed (4.4 in

See A&M defense, page 7

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