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Murray overcomes troubles to become one of the best

By Homer Jacobs
Assistant Sports Editor
Call him the Comeback Kid. Texas A&M quarterback Kevin Murray has made a habit of overcoming just about everything that's been thrown at him.

Viewpoint

Injuries. Allegations. 17-0 deficits. You name it . . . Murray has whipped it.

When Murray had his ankle bent over backward while diving for the end zone in 1984 against Arkansas State, many thought his playing days were over. Murray had other ideas.

Even though his ankle still is held together with pins, and his 4.4 speed in the 40-yard dash has slipped a bit, Murray is on the verge of a record-breaking season.

With one more touchdown pass, Murray will become the all-time leading Southwest Conference quarterback in that category with 41.

And he still has another year left of eligibility.

would not let the media affect his play.

He was right.

In leading A&M to a 36-16 victory over Auburn, Murray adeptly threw for a Cotton Bowl record 292 yards, besting the likes of Roger Staubach and Joe Theismann, who are considered Cotton Bowl immortals.

Even though Murray was unjustly denied the Most Valuable Player award in that game, he was propelled onto the national scene as a Heisman Trophy hopeful for 1986.

Expectations were high this season for Murray and the Aggies. When A&M stumbled against Louisiana State, the criticism of his abilities resurfaced and the national recognition submerged.

A&M coach Jackie Sherrill says the expectation factor is the cause of Murray's "no respect" stigma.

"If the first game of the year (LSU) had been different, then Kevin would be getting a lot of recognition," Sherrill said. "But it wasn't."

"So consequently we didn't beat LSU because Kevin didn't play well."

"Well, that's not true at all. Kevin played well."

"It was that we didn't play well around him."

Then came the game that all Aggies had been waiting for all year — the game when Murray would come back and unleash on some team.

And how appropriate that the game was against Baylor, the last



A&M quarterback Kevin Murray

After the injury problems, came the hoopla last year by WFAA-TV in Dallas about his alleged illegal car lease.

The untimely allegations occurred just before the Aggies made their first Cotton Bowl appearance in 17 years.

Murray said he was a fighter and

team that put a dent in Murray's in 1985.

Murray performed Heisman-marching a team 80 yards for the winning touchdown in the waning moments of a game against a Baylor team. The performance earned him The Associated Press SWC Offensive Player of the Week.

Simply put, Murray is the quarterback west of Miami.

If, by chance, A&M reaches the Cotton Bowl and draws the Miami Hurricanes as an opponent, wouldn't that be a matchup?

I can just see the Cotton Bowl marquee.

Now showing: "Vinny Testaverde and the Comeback Kid."

Sherrill: Ags close to expectations

By Ken Sury
Sports Editor

Everybody has expectations. While Texas A&M coach Jackie Sherrill sees his team beginning to meet his expectations, Rice football coach Jerry Berndt has been disappointed.

At Sherrill's press conference Tuesday, Sherrill said the biggest improvement for the Aggies in its 31-30 win Saturday over Baylor was the consistent play by the front line on offense and defense.

He said the offensive line did a good job in protecting quarterback Kevin Murray. He also said the group of left end Rod Saddler, right end Jay Muller and nose guard Sammy O'Brien definitely played physical football.

But Sherrill said the team can't dwell on last week's success.

"Well, of course that's behind us. Everybody's asking the same question, 'Can you keep them mentally up?' I think our football team is one that's been around. . . . Each week is a different challenge, a different ball game."

"Sometimes the big games are overrated and you get all tied up into it because you end up playing your opponent instead of playing yourselves. It doesn't do us any good to play our opponent if we're not executing (plays properly)."

For Berndt, the Owls, now 2-4, didn't play the kind of game he wanted as his team had seven turnovers in their 49-21 loss to Texas Tech. The teams were tied 21-21 after three quarters before Tech began its scoring binge to bury Rice.

"I'm disappointed," he said. "I felt we'd be farther along at this point."

And I'm not just talking about wins and losses.

"But you don't develop a football team by emphasizing the regular things."

Berndt said although he believes A&M is vastly superior to Rice, the players know it, the Owls can't play with a defeatist attitude.

"You have to talk a winner," Berndt said. "We're not going to College Station just to play. We're going up to try to win."

Aggie Notes . . . Sherrill's A&M offensive tackle Marshall will not play Saturday due to a knee injury. Listed as starters for the game are reserve tackle backs Matt Gurley and Ira Valenzuela with ankle injuries and safety Kip Corrington, who has ankle and an injured elbow.

Brothers play for A&M, Baylor

Berry family has divided loyalties

COLLEGE STATION (AP) — In 1983, Baylor tied Texas A&M 13-13 in Waco, and among the 40,000 at the game, probably the only fans who went home happy were the Powell Berrys of Abilene.

Their son Greg was a linebacker for the Aggies and another son, Ray, was a linebacker for Baylor.

Saturday, the Berrys, along with 23 other relatives, mostly former Aggies, sat in Kyle Field watching another Baylor-A&M confrontation and again, it was hard for them to show their emotions.

Ray Berry is still linebacking for Baylor, while his brother, Dean, is a member of the A&M 12th man team used on kickoffs.

The Berry clan once again had to swallow their Aggie pride and not yell for one team. The only way some could see the game was to get tickets from Baylor and sit on the Bears' side of the stadium. It's not as easy to root for the Aggies there.

Grandparents' L.A. and Hazel Berry of Snyder got to sit on the winning side because Dean got their tickets.

It probably wasn't easy for Ray to get the other tickets, knowing how deep the Aggie blood flows in the family.

Yet, his father, Powell Berry, secretly hoped the Aggies' Scott Slater would miss the extra point with 3:48 left.

"That would have been perfect for us," Powell said, but Slater made it and the Aggies won, 31-30, making the partisan crowd of over 74,000 happy.

"My brother (Phil) went to Texas Tech and of course, Ray is at Baylor. Otherwise, most members of the family on my side and my wife's side went to A&M," Powell said.

The relatives came from Snyder, Fort Worth, Houston, Liberty, Corpus Christi and of course, Abilene.

"Being an Aggie, I had to stand and sing the Aggie War Hymn, but I also sang the Baylor fight song, too," Powell said.

The most popular relative was Tim Mebane of Snyder, whose shirt had "Ray Berry, Baylor University" written in green on the back and "Dean, Texas A&M," on front. Others wanted one.

Frankly, Ray's mother is glad the brothers won't be playing against each other any more although Dean has one more year. Ray doesn't.

"We yelled for Dean when he was in there on the kickoffs and we



Baylor senior linebacker Ray Berry (57) has two big ties to A&M football. Older brother Greg played linebacker at A&M from 1983 to 1983 and other brother Dean is on the 12th Man kickoff team.

yelled for Ray when he was playing," she said. "It's been an exciting week for us, mainly because we were going to see friends and relatives."

When Ray was in high school at Abilene Cooper, he was recruited by then A&M coach Tom Wilson. But, Wilson was fired and when Jackie Sherrill came in, Berry was not as high on the list.

By the time Ray's name came up, the Aggies were out of scholarships.

Powell Berry grew up at Snyder and one of his classmates was the sister of Baylor coach Grant Teaff. Powell also knew the Teaff family.

Teaff recruited Ray and won a player he now regards as the second best linebacker he's ever coached. No. 1 is Mike Singletary, now with the Chicago Bears in the NFL.

Ironically, Greg's wife Carrie graduated from Baylor and no doubt, she had a strong feeling for Ray on Saturday. Deep down inside, so did all the relatives.

"I didn't know much about Baylor until Ray went there, but I'm highly pleased with the treatment he's received," Powell says.

It looks now that Dean will be only member of the boys who wear a Cotton Bowl championship ring. He won one last year on Saturday's win, A&M took a big step in returning to the New Year's Day.

But Dean never flaunts it before Ray or older brother who was at the game Saturday.

"I could never do that," said. "They're the reason I'm here. I watched them play years and decided to go out."

"I'm glad we won, but it bleeds for Ray. He played out. Every day this week, a different person would ask me 'heard from my brother?'"

Ray and his uncle Phil were Aggies, but they're still family reunions. Blood runs in this family, even if it's not all on the same side.

And Powell showed his pride Saturday. His shirt had "A&M maroon and the Baylor" in it.

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