



# Akers deserves compassion during UT's troubled times

By Ken Sury  
Sports Editor

I feel sorry for Fred Akers. Really. Here's a man who's getting dumped on by most of the free world, with the exception of University of Texas Athletic Director DeLoss Dodds, Akers' family, and mascot Bevo, which is too stupid to know anything.

### Viewpoint

Akers is experiencing one of the toughest seasons a head football coach can face. His Longhorns, long known as a national powerhouse, are 2-2 in Southwest Conference play and 3-4 overall. Alumni and fans have called for his firing ever since Texas A&M hammered Texas 42-10 for last year's SWC championship.

To make matters worse, UT lost to former assistant coach David McWilliams' Texas Tech squad 23-21 last week. That defeat only made fans and alumni cry "Fire Fred" even louder.

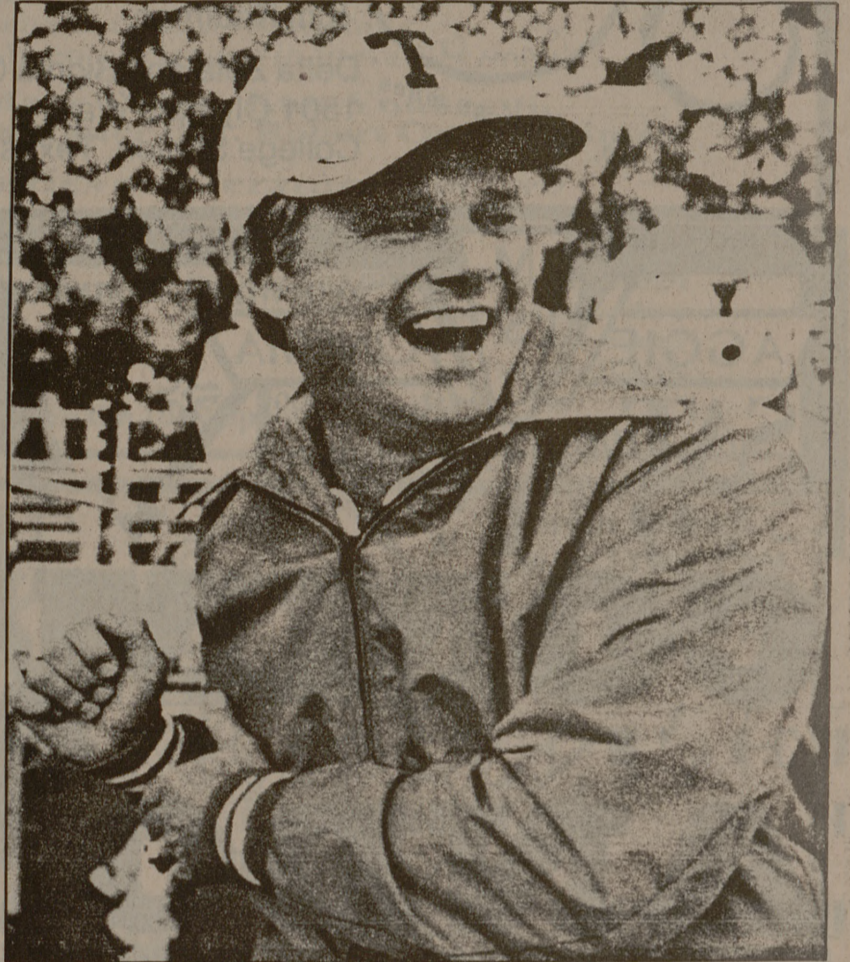
It's really sad when someone who has led a team to a bowl game every year since 1977 and owns an 81-25 record with the school can't get any respect from the school's alumni, fans or students.

That shows how fickle fans who are used to supporting a winning team can be. It also proves something A&M Coach Jackie Sherrill said before the season began: Success in the SWC is going to the Cotton Bowl, anything else is second-rate.

However, being the best in the SWC is not an easy feat. There simply are too many evenly matched teams in the conference. Look how close A&M's wins this year have been with its toughest opponents: 31-30 over Baylor and 39-35 over SMU. That's tough competition.

Today, it's more difficult to build a powerhouse in the SWC through recruiting. There are only so many star athletes to pick from, and with nine conference schools (don't forget Oklahoma and Louisiana schools) bidding for the best Texas has to offer, the blue-chip talent gets evened out across the conference.

Blame A&M for part of Texas' recruiting woes this year. Since most recruits want to go to a winning program, which A&M showed it has by winning the Cotton Bowl, the Aggies



UT Coach Fred Akers hasn't had much to smile about this year. His Longhorns are in trouble and his job is on the line.

grabbed blue-chip athletes who may have gone to Texas.

But that's part of recruiting, and Akers knows that. Too bad UT alumni couldn't be as enlightened.

Every coach should be entitled to one bad year. Injuries, bad breaks, and other problems out of the coach's control can be just enough to keep a top-caliber team from winning the games it's supposed to.

The most disturbing aspect of this anti-Fred hype is the dirt Aggies are kicking on Akers.

Every time I see a car with a "Keep Fred" bumper sticker on it, I think how much UT fans must have laughed at A&M when Sherrill's teams were struggling just to be a

.500 team. "Some million-dollar coach," they sneered.

Now that A&M is a national power, are our memories too short to recall when our alumni and students grumbled about Sherrill's lack of success?

And what if A&M falls slightly next year? Will we grumble again? Let's hope not.

That Akers will be out as UT head coach by the end of this year is pretty much a foregone conclusion. The only thing that might save his neck is a win over the Aggies. But even that may not be enough.

So wherever you go Fred, best of luck.

# McWilliams remembers Royal as influential mentor and coach

HOUSTON (AP) — When Texas Tech football coach David McWilliams came into town to speak before the Touchdown Club of Houston, he warmed when he was asked about the influence Darrell Royal had on him.

McWilliams was a 6-foot, 195-pound starting center and tri-captain on Royal's University of Texas team that won the national championship and later became an assistant coach under Royal.

"The first thing was the fact of having discipline. You have to be a disciplined individual in order to be successful. He (Royal) stressed academics, and that was important to me," said McWilliams, who earned all-SWC academic honors.

"From a coaching standpoint, I learned from Coach Royal that you take the personnel you've got and then you do whatever you think it takes to win. He was able to do it by running the ball. We (Texas) were able to control the ball and run it," McWilliams said.

"I talked to him before I went to Lubbock (Tech), and I said it looks like we are more of a personnel-wise, throwing-type team. He (Royal) said,

*"I just got a feeling where I never wanted to give up because I had so much pride and believed in him. When you get pride in someone, it's hard to make them quit."*

— Texas Tech Coach David McWilliams

"Look, you take that personnel and you do whatever it takes."

What kind of motivator was Royal?

"Just the way he treated me, the fairness, and the things that he expected of me — and I knew he expected of me — I wanted to play for him," McWilliams said.

"I wasn't going out and playing for David McWilliams. I wanted to play — and I wanted to win — for Darrell Royal because I was so proud of the things he had done for me, I didn't want to let him down. I mean,

really, it was just a feeling of pride. He treated us as first-class people, and then he demanded and expected of us to be first-class players.

"I just got a feeling where I never wanted to give up because I had so much pride and believed in him. When you get pride in someone, it's hard to make them quit."

McWilliams was a sophomore in 1961 when Royal's Longhorns put together a 10-1 record. In 1962, Texas finished 9-1-1, and in McWilliams' senior year, the No. 1 Horns went 11-0.

An athlete has his own memories of each game. In one of the Longhorns' greatest victories, their Jan. 1, 1963 Cotton Bowl 28-6 win over No. 2 Navy and Heisman Trophy winner Roger Staubach, McWilliams recalls: "In that game, I have to be personal.

"My mother died four days before that game. She had never been sick a day in her life. She had a stroke that morning, and Coach Royal got me up there in time before she died but she never regained consciousness.

"It was really an emotional type game for me, more so than the game itself. All I can remember was wanting to play well because of her."

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