

# Sports

## Conservative offense leads to Aggies' downfall

Hogs' Cotton hopes still alive as Arkansas prevails 14-10

By Ken Sury  
Sports Editor

The game could have been called "The Battle of Pork Chop Hill." But for seventh-ranked Texas A&M, it was more like Napoleon's Waterloo.

No. 17 Arkansas used its stubborn defense and powerful rushing offense to gain a 14-10 victory and keep its Cotton Bowl hopes alive.

### Analysis

A&M, which holds a half-game lead in the Southwest Conference race, can clinch a tie for the title by defeating Texas Christian this Saturday.

Had A&M won, it would have virtually assured itself of a trip to the Cotton Bowl. But quarterback Kevin Murray and the offense that established itself as a "team of destiny" with incredible comebacks over Baylor and SMU couldn't find the magic in Little Rock's War Memorial Stadium.

"I felt like we had them right where we wanted them," Murray said.

For a while, it appeared A&M, now 7-2 overall and 5-1 in the conference, had just about everything going its way. Minnesota had stunned No. 2 Michigan 20-17, Notre Dame was ahead of Penn State (an Irish win supposedly would have brought No. 1 Miami to the Cotton Bowl), and A&M had a first down at the Arkansas 14-yard line with one minute left in the game.

After a two-yard run by fullback Roger Vick and a pass break-up by Arkansas' Erik Whitted, A&M faced a third-and-8. Wide receiver Shea Walker was two yards into the end zone and wide open as he worked toward the middle, but Murray threw the ball high and behind Walker.

Then on the Aggies' last desperation attempt with 38 seconds left, Murray was flushed out of the pocket and tried to hit Vick in the right front corner of the end zone. The pass went high, was tipped by

Arkansas' Odis Lloyd, and Vick got a hand on it.

But he couldn't hold on and the football sailed to and then off tight end Rod Bernstine's fingertips. Even if Bernstine had been able to catch the ball, his momentum and the Razorback defenders were moving him out of bounds.

"I should have caught the ball," Vick said. "It was a nice throw. The defensive back jumped in front of me, but anything that hits your hands you should catch."

But it was only on the Aggies' final drive that A&M's offense looked anything like that high-powered machine spectators saw in previous games.

A&M offensive coordinator Lynn Amedee said before the season began that the Aggies would have a pass-first offense. But A&M didn't display that philosophy throughout the first three quarters. The Aggies looked more like the Razorbacks' run-oriented flex-bone offense.

And that worked for A&M after Arkansas scored the first touchdown of the game on strong running and a good mixture of pass plays. The Aggies promptly returned the favor on an 11-play, 80-yard touchdown drive that elapsed seven minutes and five seconds off the clock.

Keith Woodside caught a 7-yard Murray strike for the score. Woodside caught all five passes on the drive, en route to his 12-catch performance, one shy of the A&M single-game record held by Ken McLean and Barney Harris.

But A&M was too conservative after that. On its last drive of the first half, A&M continuously sent Vick, who had 28 carries for 117 yards, into the Arkansas line instead of trying a deep pass play.

A&M, with time running out in the half, had to settle for a Scott Slater 48-yard field-goal attempt, which was moved back five yards due to an illegal procedure call. But Slater, who was looking to make his

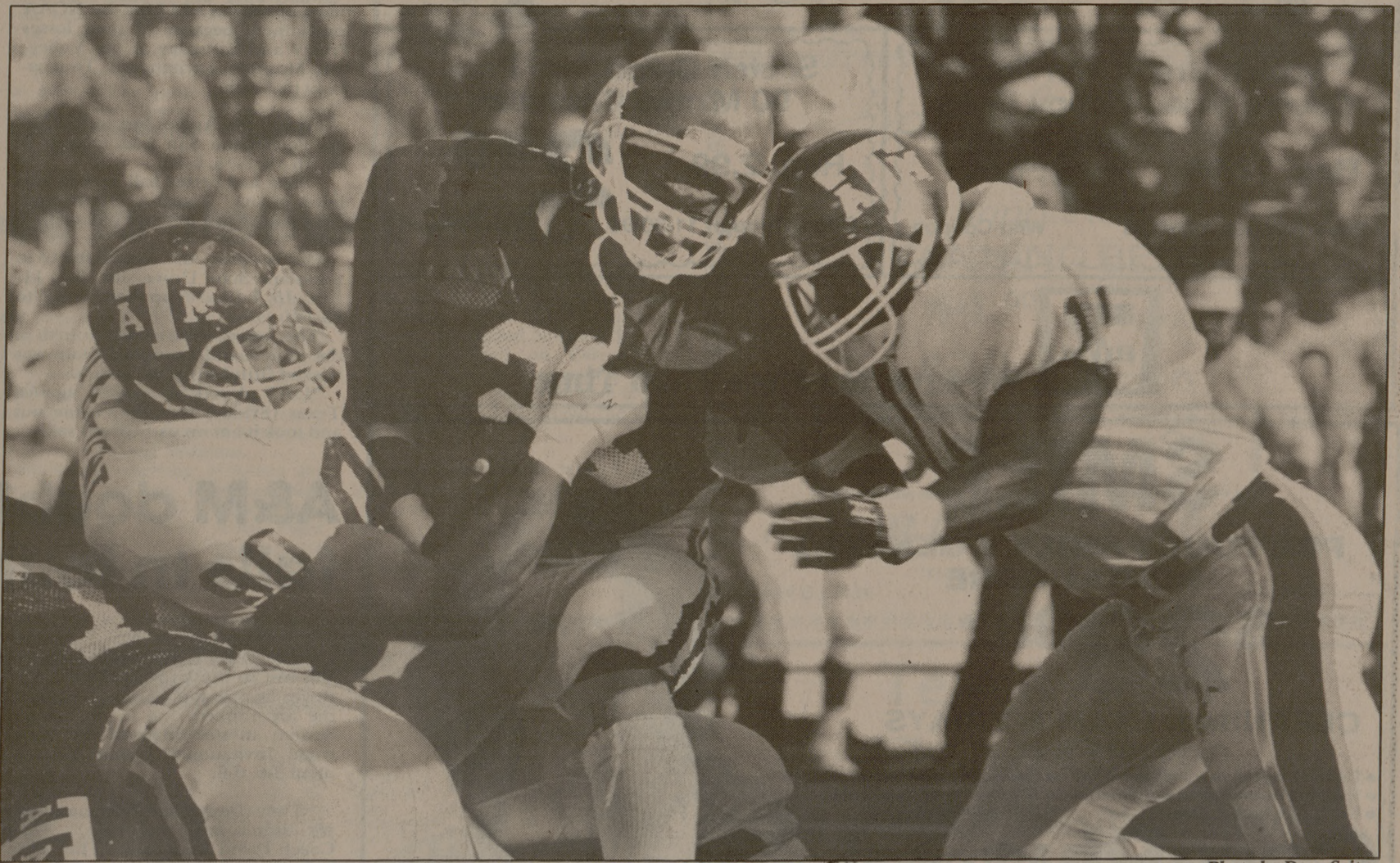


Photo by Dean Saito

A&M defenders Sammy O'Brient (90) and Johnny Holland (11) stop Arkansas' Sammy Van Dyke for no gain on the sec-

ond play of the seventh-ranked Aggies' 14-10 loss to the Razorbacks Saturday at War Memorial Stadium in Little Rock.

13th consecutive field goal, missed. After the game, Amedee was asked about A&M's conservative approach.

"We tried to keep the ball underneath as much as we could," Amedee said. "I think we felt field goal (on the last first-half drive) because of the (lack of) timeouts. That's something we don't usually do."

Coach Jackie Sherrill said Arkansas kept A&M from throwing deep.

"They were dropping eight and nine people off the line of scrimmage," Sherrill said. "We had plenty of chances, but we didn't catch the ball at critical times."

The most critical catch of the game was a questionable interception by Razorback Nathaniel White on a third-and-5 play in the third period. Murray was throwing a quick

pass to Bernstine, but the ball slipped out of his hand and White dove for the ball. Television replays were inconclusive, but Murray said he felt there wasn't any question.

"Clearly to me, it hit the ground," the junior quarterback said. The interception ended a streak of 159 passes without a theft for Murray, who completed 21 of 35 passes for 180 yards on the game. Murray also

became fourth on the SWC's all-time pass completion list with 489 and he now has 6,000 career passing yards for fifth on the list.

"I feel like the best team didn't win," he said.

But the team that played better for the whole game did. Arkansas used its flex-bone well, keeping the

See Aggies, page 11

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