

# Sports

## Aggies Cotton-bound once again

### A&M trips UT 3rd time to win conference title

By Ken Sury  
Sports Editor

So the game didn't have the excitement of the past two Texas A&M-Texas matchups. So the game didn't have a high-scoring performance by the A&M offense. So the game wasn't a sellout.

So what? A&M just did what was necessary to win its second consecutive Southwest Conference crown and return to the Cotton Bowl. And in doing so, Coach Jackie Sherrill's Aggies became the first SWC team since Arkansas in 1964 to 1966 to beat Texas three games in a row. On Saturday, Sherrill was named to coach the West All-Stars in the Hula Bowl Jan. 10, 1987.

The 16-3 victory also could have been the final straw that cost Fred Akers his job as UT head coach. Miami had called for his dismissal throughout the season and about the only thing that may have saved his job was a big victory over the Aggies.

But that didn't happen either and Akers was fired Saturday. A&M, 9-2, now heads into a New Year's Day showdown with Ohio State, 8-3, looking to defend last year's Cotton Bowl win.

For the first half, the game looked frighteningly similar to the A&M-Arkansas contest. Both offenses had moved the football fairly well, but had just a 3-3 score to show for the effort.

Texas fans thought they had the makings of an upset when Jeff Ward kicked a 39-yard field goal with 2:01 left in the first half. Oranges were tossed onto the field to signify that if UT won, it would send the Aggies to the Orange Bowl.

But that was the last of the scoring for Texas that night and it was A&M that would taste the sweetness of the Cotton Bowl. Because the game was played on Thanksgiving night, let's count what

the Aggies had to be thankful for:

- The running of fullback Roger Vick. Vick rolled up a career-best 167 yards on 41 carries and enabled the Aggies to use a lot of time off the clock and keep the ball away from the Longhorns. As Sherrill said after the game, "(Vick's) our horse, and we kept riding that horse and he kept running."

- A timely roughing-the-kicker penalty on UT's Tex Mercer. Mercer knocked down punter Todd Tschantz on A&M's first possession of the second half. The Aggies got the ball back and marched into the end zone for their only touchdown.

- Rod Harris' diving catch for the Aggies' touchdown. Harris was wide open as he cut across the middle of the end zone. Quarterback Kevin Murray's throw was low and wide, but Harris made a spectacular diving catch. "I was kind of shocked about getting open," Harris said. "But I knew I caught it."

- The kicking of Scott Slater. Although Slater missed his first and last 48-yard field goal tries, the junior walkon made three field goals and kicked the extra point to give him a SWC record 100 total points on the season.

Slater's three field goals gave him 21 for the season, breaking the record of 19 by Arkansas' Bruce Lahay and Steve Little and UT's Ward.

"If we didn't win, (getting the record) wouldn't have felt as good," Slater said. "I know someone else will come and break the record. But it's something that's nice to say I had."

Senior wide receiver Shea Walker, who set a new A&M record in the game with 1,411 yards in career reception yardage, summed up the Aggies' feelings about returning to the Cotton Bowl.

"The Cotton Bowl goes to the No. 1 team in the conference," Walker said, "... and that's us."

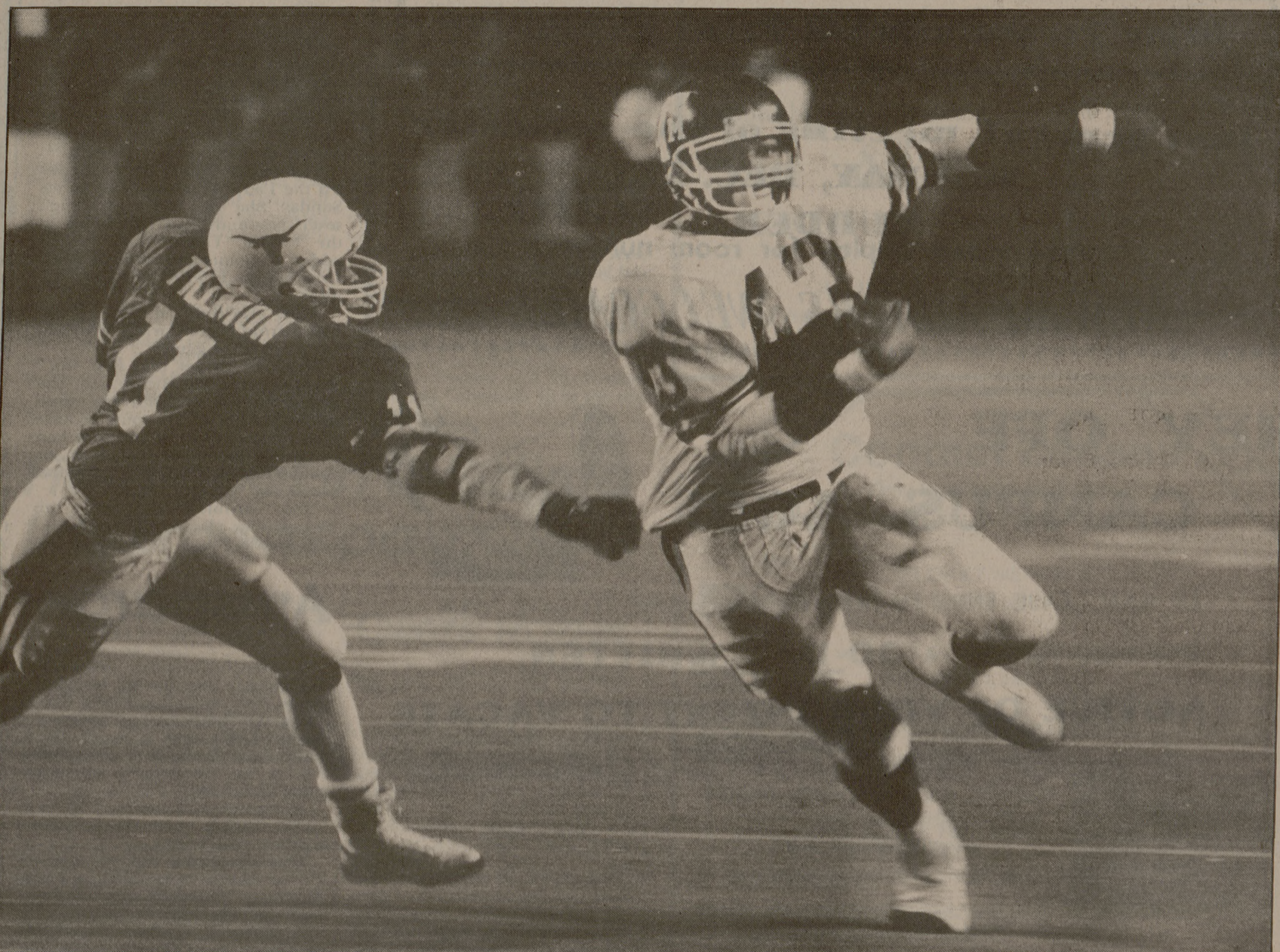


Photo by Bill Hughes

A&M fullback Roger Vick evades UT's Tony Tillmon during the Aggies' 16-3 victory over the Longhorns on Thanksgiving evening. Vick finished the game with a career-high 167 yards

on 41 carries as the Aggies clinched the Southwest Conference championship and a berth in the Cotton Bowl for the second consecutive year.

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