

Sports

Inept offense plagues Aggies in season opener

By Loyd Brumfield
Sports Editor

You almost have to laugh at Texas A&M's 1-5 record in season opener since Coach Jackie Sherrill's arrival in 1982.

Except it's just not funny.

Once again the Aggies started the season on an embarrassing note. As a result, they suffered a 17-3 defeat at the hands of a Louisiana State team that, at least on Kyle Field last Saturday, appeared to be a team that was overrated.

Analysis

You get the feeling that A&M could have handled the Tigers easily if it had been at least half-way prepared. And it could have done it with a young team, to boot.

Instead we get the same dreary story of penalties, mistakes and offensive confusion that adds up to a dismal debut.

Wouldn't it be nice if A&M could skip the season opener and start the season off with the second game? Maybe it could keep its national championship hopes alive that way.

The Aggies didn't even complete a pass until six minutes into the second quarter. Actually, they completed one earlier but it went to the wrong team. In fact, not one pass was even attempted until the last minute of the first quarter. Moreover, it took A&M almost 14 minutes into the first quarter to get its first down. To be fair, it should be noted that A&M only had the ball out minutes and 19 seconds.

The Aggies started the 1987 campaign using a stuffy, conservative offense that the Tigers devoured. It ran on first down, run on second down, pass on third and punt on fourth.

"I think we ought to start throwing the ball more often on first down, which is what we usually do," quarterback Craig Stump said. "We had some penalties that really hurt us. . . you can't make excuses."

A&M finally opened things up late in the third quarter when Stump completed 3-of-5 passes in engineering the Aggies' best drive of the day. A sack and penalty, which resulted in a 18-yard loss, killed the drive and the Aggies had to settle for

a 41-yard Scott Slater field goal for their only score of the game.

Later in the fourth quarter, Sherrill inserted freshman sensation Lance Pavlas instead of Stump just when it seemed the fifth-year senior was finally getting untracked.

"We were going to put Craig back in, but we didn't," Sherrill said. "It's a hindsight thing. Stump wasn't there. I'm standing there and Stump wasn't there."

Stump said, "I can't answer why I didn't go back in. I figured Lance was going to stay in. I heard my name called, but it was too late."

Stump only managed a 5-of-10 passing performance with two interceptions, but he fared better than Pavlas, who only completed 3-of-9. Pavlas' arm certainly didn't lack strength, however. He almost looked like Kevin Murray the way he rifled passes to his receivers. Overall, Pavlas had a rude welcome to college football, though.

"I could see in his (Pavlas') face that he was scared," LSU defensive end Clint James said. "Every time I got in his face, he panicked."

Aggie fans had next to nothing to cheer about offensively throughout the game. Stump looked patient and poised in the pocket throughout the game, but the suffocating LSU pass rush made him hurry his throws.

A&M running back Keith Woodside had a less-than-spectacular senior debut, rushing for only 38 yards on nine carries. He did catch five passes for 46 yards, however.

A&M's Rod Harris, perhaps the finest receiver in the conference, fared even worse as he went the entire game without catching a pass.

Junior running back Melvin Collins was impressive, gaining 46 yards on eight attempts to lead the Aggies in rushing. Freshman running back Darren Lewis also showed signs that he would be a power to be reckoned with by gaining 36 yards on 6 carries. Freshman receiver Percy Waddle only caught two passes, one of which was good for 25 yards (and a fumble), but he, too looked impressive.

If there was a bright spot for the Aggies, it was on defense. After it

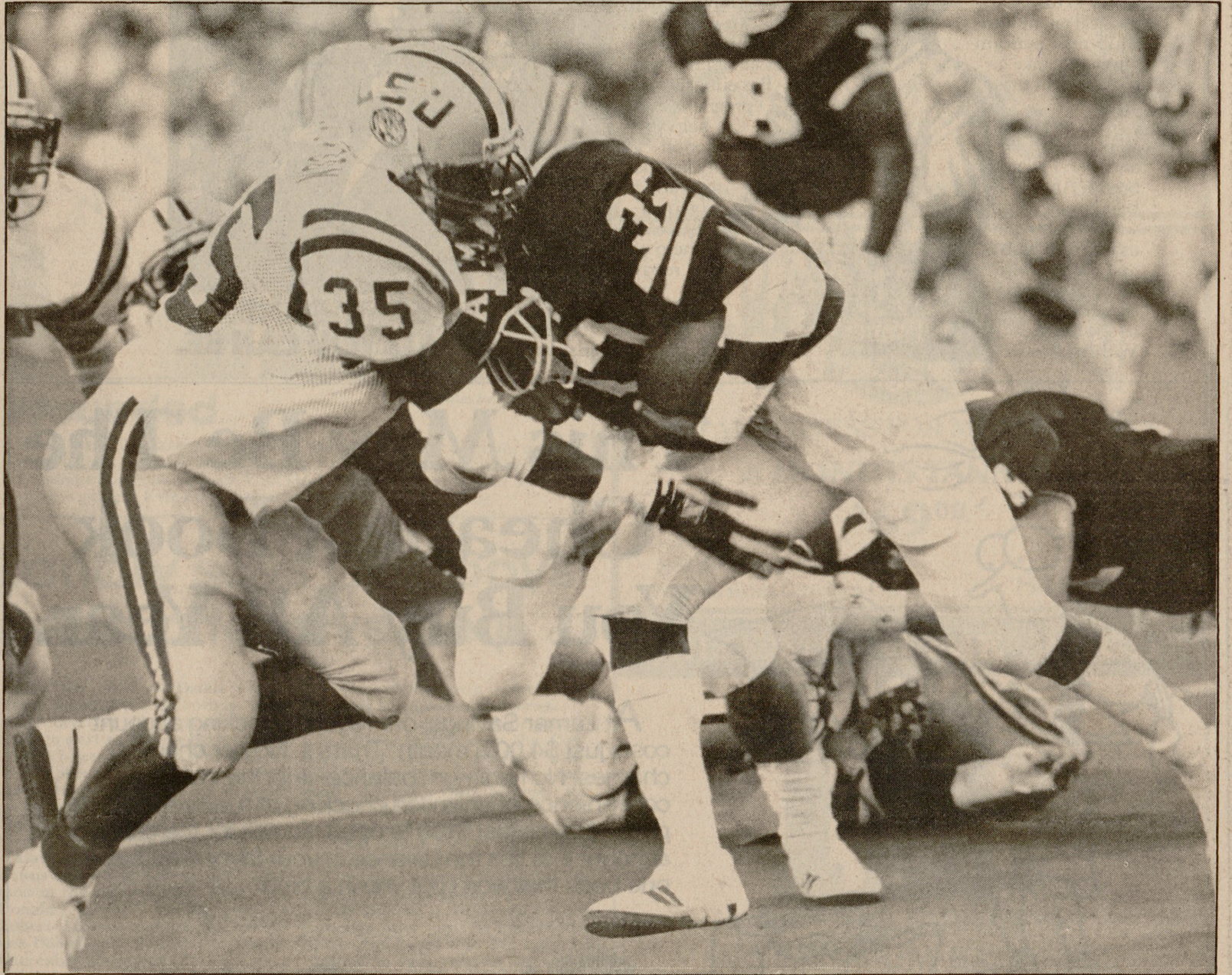
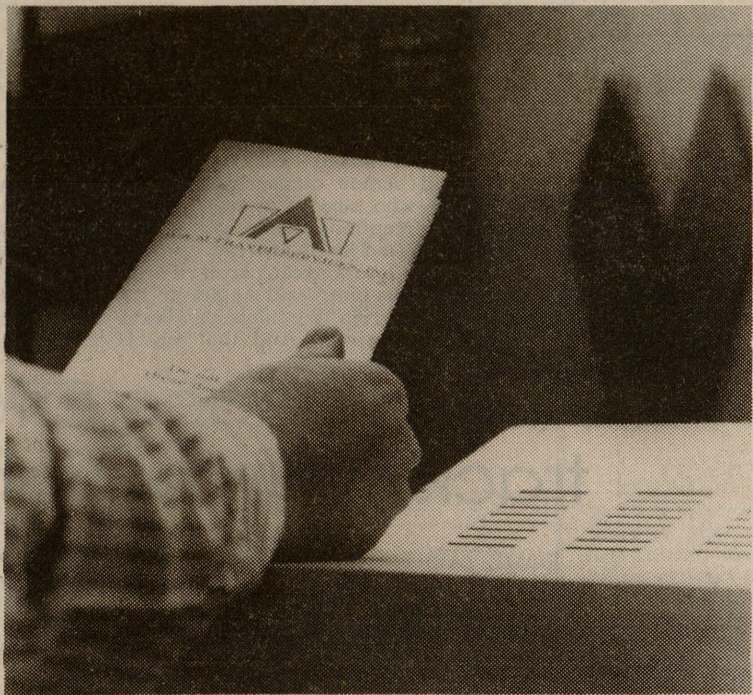


Photo by Jay Janner

Louisiana State safety Greg Jackson stops Texas A&M tailback Keith Woodside for no gain on the play following A&M's only first-quarter first down. Woodside was held to 38 yards rushing and 46 receiving as the Tigers defeated the Aggies 17-3.

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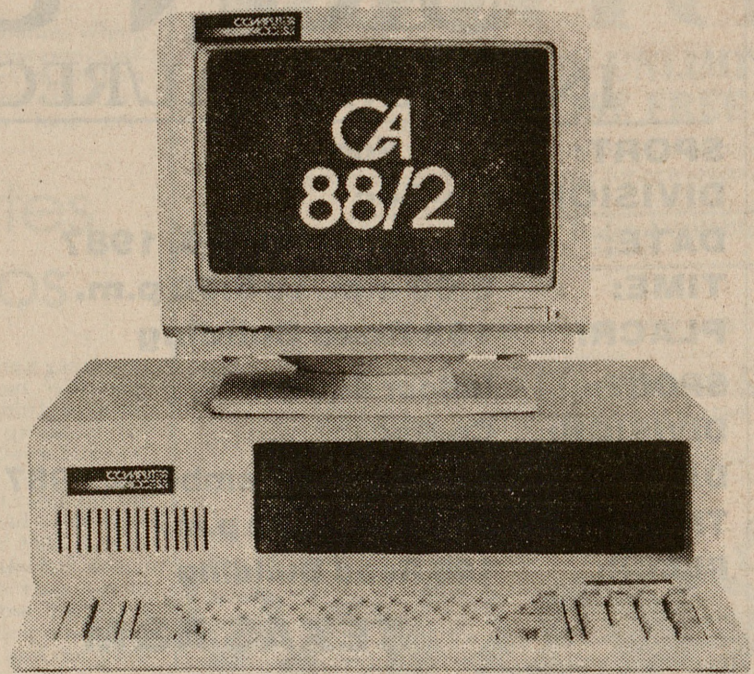
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