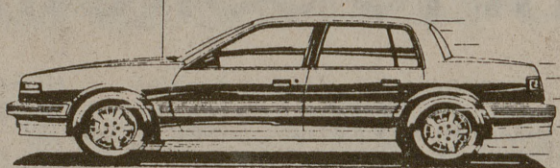


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Sports

Crucial SWC game on tap for 'Jekyll and Hyde' team

By Doug Hall

Assistant Sports Editor

Before the college football season even began, Saturday's Texas A&M vs. Arkansas showdown was expected to be the Southwest Conference game of the year.

At stake for the winner, went the common thought, would be a trip to Cotton Bowl and a Top 10 ranking.

Even for the loser the stakes looked promising. In all likelihood, the two teams would enter the game with no more than one loss. A defeat therefore, probably would not knock the loser out of the Top 20 or a hunt for a promising bowl bid.

Interestingly enough, the game has materialized to be a classic conference matchup — but not in the same sense that many had expected.

The 6-2 Aggies currently are ranked No. 19 while the 7-2 Razorbacks are No. 20. Neither team will move into the top 10 with a victory, but the loser will surely drop out.

Even for the winner of the 2 p.m. game, a Cotton Bowl bid is not locked up. A third loss for either team, however, is a sure way to win a trip to a minor bowl. And the Aggies still have two tough games remaining.

Arkansas started the season with strong victories over Mississippi and Tulsa, despite having to rotate quarterbacks Greg Thomas and Quinn Grovey. Thomas has not been completely healthy all season and Grovey went down during last week's Baylor game.

Head Coach Ken Hatfield had the optimism flowing in the hills despite an untested secondary and a limited offensive scheme. The pessimists returned however after Jimmy Johnson's Miami Hurricanes

trounced the Razorbacks 51-7.

Since then, the season has been up and down for Hatfield. The Hogs bounced back to defeat the improving Texas Christian team and an unpredictable Texas Tech squad.

Then, in the midst of recovery, the Hogs lost a heartbreaker to Texas 16-14 and have struggled in victories over Baylor and Houston.

Hatfield is drawing the wrath of Razorback supporters who haven't gone to the Cotton Bowl since 1975. Never mind the fact that this is only his fourth year at the Arkansas helm.

Similarly, the Aggies have had a Dr.-Jekyll-and-Mr.-Hyde season.

For the second consecutive season, the Aggies opened up with a loss to Louisiana State. This year, however, the loss broke a 14-game home winning streak. Additionally, the LSU game showed Aggie fans that 1987 would not be a walk in the park.

When quarterback Craig Stump failed to get the Aggies moving, Head Coach Jackie Sherrill promptly inserted red-shirt freshman Lance Pavlas, instigating a quarterback shuffle that now includes freshman Bucky Richardson.

The Aggies bounced back from the 17-3 LSU loss with an impressive win over Washington and (former?) Heisman candidate Chris Chandler. After extending their record to 2-1 with a win over Southern Mississippi, the Aggies traveled west to meet the Red Raiders.

Once again though, the Aggies appeared in their Mr. Hyde outfit and traveled back from Lubbock owning an unimpressive 2-2 record. And although Sherrill's Aggies have won four consecutive games, the offense has continued to disappear on

a regular basis and even the defense has been riddled on occasions.

But all that is in the past. Saturday's game gives the Hogs inside track to the conference championship.

So who will win? Well, it depends on which version of the teams show up in Kyle Field.

If A&M is able to throw effectively, it can score big against the Razorback defense. The Hogs neutralized Kevin Murray by using a two-three-man rush that allowed guard Tony Chericco to float the line of scrimmage.

This year, however, the Aggie quarterback shuffle undoes limited Arkansas' ability to pressure the game. Both Stump and Pavlas can drop back and throw while Richardson is better known running the option.

If the Aggies are unsuccessful through the air, the Hogs should be able to stuff the rushing attack.

Defensively, the Aggies had trouble in the past defense the wishbone (Arkansas owns a 21-3 series record). But with Arkansas' quarterbacks at less than full strength, it remains to be seen whether the Hogs can move the especially against A&M's defense.

So look for the game to come down to turnovers and special play, an area in which A&M has excelled lately.

But more importantly, look for an exciting game because no one knows what kind of season both teams had, playing for a chance at the conference championship is all that counts.

Forgotten backup fullback led Ags to victory over Hogs

By Tim Stanfield
Sports Writer

When Texas A&M and Arkansas lined up against each other in early November 1974, most experts figured that the winner would host the 1975 Cotton Bowl.

That was especially true for the Aggies, who were unbeaten in SWC play at that point.

However, injuries to key backfield members had reduced the effectiveness of Coach Emory Bellard's wishbone offense, particularly at fullback.

Due to those problems, senior Jerry Honore drew the starting assignment at fullback against the Hogs, even though Bellard felt that he didn't have the needed quickness to be effective.

Honore's situation mirrored that of the entire A&M squad, which had had only one winning season since 1958 (in 1967, finishing 6-4).

Already the squad had posted six wins and was rated high in the weekly top 10 polls in both wire services.

But the Hogs came into Kyle Field ready for a fight, since as the series had become physically tough with the Aggies holding their own for a change.

For the first time since the late 1950's, A&M had defeated Arkansas two times in a row (in 1971 and 1972, by scores of 17-9 and 10-7).

In fact the scores for the two games prior to the 1974 contest ended up with almost the exact same scores as did the 1985-86 games. (In 1973 A&M lost 14-10, just as it did in 1986 and the Ags won 10-6 in 1985.)

Honore was another in the Aggies' long line of outstanding football players recruited from Louisiana (he came from Lake Charles) and was in coach Gene Stallings' final class of freshmen.

Just as Jimmy Hawkins was somewhat neglected after coach Jackie Sherrill recruited his first class in 1983, in 1972 Honore found himself playing behind fullbacks Alvin Bowers, Bucky Sams, and swingman Ronnie Hubby.

By the time the Aggies took the field against coach Frank Broyles' Hogs, Bowers was long gone from the team, Sams was hurt, and Hubby was soon to be called upon to fill in for halfback Skip Walker.

Walker left the game with four minutes left in the first period, and Honore's date with destiny began.

Reserve tight end David Greener recovered Floyd Hogan's fumble at the Hog nine late in the period, setting the table for the Ags' initial touchdown.

"Mr. Who!" carried the ball three straight times, the final thrust good for one yard and a touchdown.

Though he would later add to his point totals, Honore noted that this one was special.

"That one excited me to no end because it was the first one I'd scored in my varsity career," he said.

Place-kicker Randy Haddox added a school-record 57 yard goal in the second period, and the Aggies took a 10-7 lead into the third period.

A&M backfield members continued to fall in the third period, with Shipman, Honore, halfback Hartman and freshman halfback David Craig in the lineup.

Arkansas kicker Steve Little's yard field goal tied the score, 14-14 to play, but only for a few plays. Continuing his Cinderella performance, Honore became man of the hour, as from his own yard line, he burst up the middle, twisted away from a pair of would-be tacklers, and outdistanced the rest of the Porkers as he raced 60 yards to the south end zone for the winning touchdown.

Haddox added a late field goal and the final score was Texas A&M 20, Arkansas 10.

Honore had rushed for 131 yards on 19 carries after having brought a career total of 29 yards on six carries into the game.

Bellard was effusive in his praise for Honore, noting that "He came and did an outstanding job. I don't know what we'd have done without the crazy son of a gun."

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