

# Sports

## 35-10: Irish eyes not smiling after Cotton Bowl as Ags deal Notre Dame stunning loss



Photo courtesy of Peter Rocha, Bryan-College Station Eagle

Notre Dame's Mark Green fumbles the ball after being hit by a host of Aggies led by Adam Bob. The Aggie defense forced four turnovers against the Fighting Irish in A&M's 35-10 win on Jan. 1.

By Hal L. Hammons  
Assistant Sports Editor

DALLAS — Surprise, surprise, surprise. That was the word for the day Friday at the Cotton Bowl.

Countless times throughout the game, coaching decisions or player performances left fans and experts alike shaking their heads in amazement.

### Analysis

The most obvious one, of course, was the outcome. Texas A&M, 5½-point underdogs before the game, completely dominated Notre Dame in a 35-10 win that was about as close as the score indicates.

For most of the first half, it looked like the Aggie offense was going to have to carry the Aggie defense — a complete reversal of roles for A&M.

The Aggie offense rolled up 174 total yards in the first half alone, while the defense allowed 201 for Notre Dame. The Irish moved the ball almost at will, mounting an opening drive of 59 yards for a touchdown and two other drives of nine plays apiece.

The offense was led by its quarterbacks — a situation common with most teams but extremely unusual for A&M this year. And even more surprising was that two Aggie quarterbacks had outstanding games. All year there had not been an Aggie quarterback who looked outstanding at all in any game, but yet, when it was most important, freshmen Bucky Richardson (named Offensive Most Valuable Player) and Lance Pavlas both surpassed all expectations.

Pavlas, after looking average to poor all year because of his inability to read defenses, was sparkling through the air, completing five of seven passes for 77 yards. Richardson rushed for 96 yards and two touchdowns on 13 carries.

It was amazing how effectively A&M capitalized on Notre Dame turnovers. Except for a late interception by Kip Corrington when the game was no longer in doubt, each led to an Aggie touchdown.

The first may have been the most important. After Notre Dame had driven the length of the field to the Aggie 18-yard line, Irish quarterback Terry Andrysiak made one of his few poor passes into the end zone, where cornerback Alex Morris made a one-handed interception.

After the game, Andrysiak admitted the play was a big mistake.



Photo courtesy of Peter Rocha, Bryan-College Station Eagle

Notre Dame's Heisman Trophy winner Tim Brown talks to an official after he tackled A&M's Warren Barhorst of the 12th-Man Kick-off team. Brown complained that Barhorst tried to steal his Cotton Bowl towel.

The offense was in the wrong formation to run the called play, but instead of calling a time-out, he elected to run the play. Then, forced out of the pocket, he threw into double coverage to tight end Andy Heck. Morris, assigned to the other side of the field, had followed Andrysiak's roll to the left and cut in front of Heck for the interception.

Pavlas then entered the game for the first time and took the Aggies the length of the field for the score and a 14-point turnaround.

Notre Dame turned the ball over on the next play, as Braxton Banks coughed up a controversial fumble of what officials called a completed pass. Replays seemed to indicate

Banks never had possession of the ball.

Richardson and Pavlas combined to take the Aggies 21 yards for another score. Freshman Larry Horton scored from one yard out, plowing over second-team All-America line-backer Ned Bolear.

The third turnover was in the third quarter after Matt Gurley had fumbled on the 1-yard line. An apparent — and, for Notre Dame, much-needed — momentum swing evaporated as Mark Green fumbled the ball on the next play, the second time the Irish began a drive with a fumble.

Pavlas took the team to the one again, where Richardson carried the

ball in for the score. By then the score was 25-10, 3:45 remained in the third quarter, and the Irish were well on their way to being routed.

The insertion of Pavlas in the first place was a big surprise to many. Richardson, although 1-for-7 in passing at that point (The completion was for -4 yards), was moving the team effectively on the ground.

But Pavlas had another surprise for viewers. After showing remarkable ability to misread defenses earlier in the year, he looked poised for the first time all year, picking the Irish defense apart with apparent ease and reminding Aggie fans and coaches that Richardson had not yet sewn up next year's starting job.

## Irish play choices on 1st down helped Ag defense dominate

By Hal L. Hammons  
Assistant Sports Editor

DALLAS — Notre Dame's unexplainable refusal to throw the ball on first down may have been the biggest factor in Texas A&M's 35-10 Cotton Bowl victory in the Cotton Bowl.

### Analysis

The Irish only passed seven times in 17 first down opportunities in the first half. Quarterback Terry Andrysiak completed five of the seven for 93 yards and four first downs.

That amounts to an average of 18.6 yards per first down completion and over 13 yards per first

down pass attempt.

But still Notre Dame insisted on running on first down. The Irish ran 10 times for 17 yards and no first downs. Five yards was the longest of them, and only three netted more than two yards.

The success passing was due to A&M's reluctance to blitz on first down. When the Irish passed on first down, they kept either a back or the tight end in the backfield, resulting in the Irish having six or seven men to block three or four Aggie rushers.

A&M was concerned with stopping the rush to the extent that the pass went largely unchallenged. Heisman Trophy winner Tim Brown was left in single coverage most of the half. Of 105 re-

ceiving yards for Brown in the first half, 77 came on first down passes.

After Notre Dame only got 29 yards on 18 rushes in the first half, Aggie worries about the run were slight enough to risk the first down blitz. This and a double-team on Brown resulted in the Irish getting only 24 yards through the air. Brown did not catch a pass the entire half.

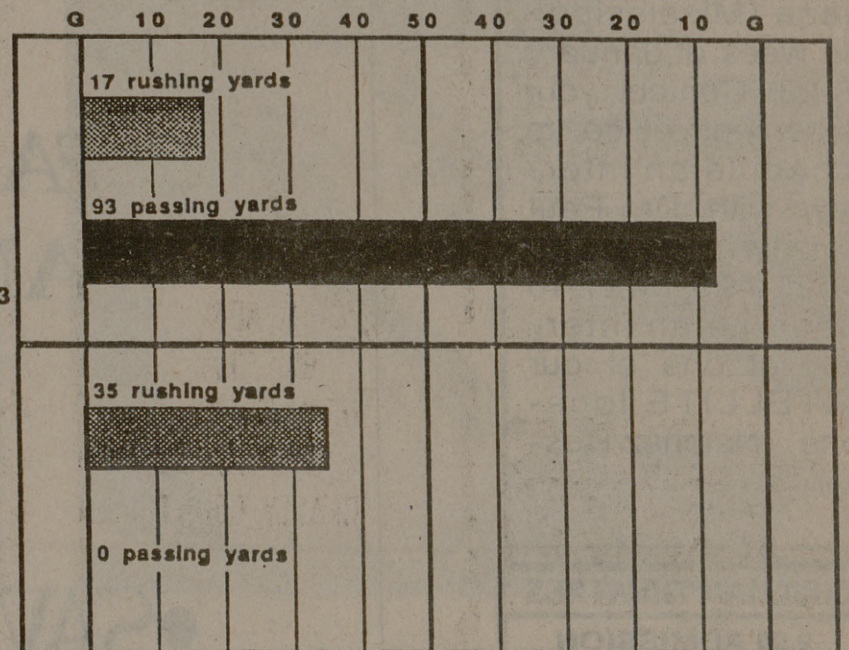
Notre Dame eschewed the first down pass the entire second half, even with the first-down blitzing and a substantial scoring deficit. The first pass thrown by Notre Dame on first down in the second half was with less than five minutes remaining, when A&M led by 25 points.

**FIRST HALF**  
Rushes: 10  
Rushing yardage: 17  
Yards per attempt: 1.7

Passes: 7  
Completions: 5  
Passing yardage: 93  
Yards per attempt: 13.3

**SECOND HALF**  
Rushes: 11  
Rushing yards: 35  
Yards per attempt: 3.2

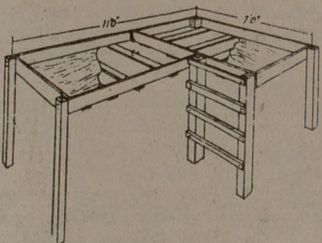
Passes: 1  
Completions: 0  
Passing yards: 0  
Yards per attempt: 0



Battalion Graphic by Sue Krenak

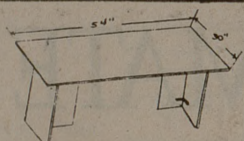
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