

Sports

Ball-control critical to Ag win over UH

By Doug Walker
Assistant Sports Editor

How do you stop an offense that is averaging 39.3 points and 484.7 yards per game?

Easy. You keep the ball to yourself.

Apparently that is the way the Texas Aggie Head Coach Jackie Sherrill hopes to stop the potent Run-n-Shoot offense of the Houston Cougars.

The emergence of a powerful rushing attack may have come just in time for the Aggies, who take on the Cougars in the Astro-dome Saturday afternoon.

At his weekly press conference Tuesday at Cain Hall, Sherrill said the ability of the Aggie offense to control the ball on time-consuming drives will be one of the keys to the game.

The success of the running attack played a big part in A&M's victory over Texas Tech.

The Aggies kept the feared Raider offense from being a factor in the first half by pressuring quarterback Billy Joe Tolliver and running up more than twenty minutes of possession time.

The extensive use of the wishbone offense allowed quarterback Bucky Richardson to see more playing time.

Sherrill said he believes the team's success depends largely on getting Richardson into the game.

"We'll probably continue to expand with the wishbone," Sherrill said. "It's something we needed to do simply to get Bucky on the field."

"He's a great option quarterback, and we needed to get him on the field to make things happen."

However, Sherrill added that the Aggies have not become exclusively an option team.

He said the offense will remain a multiple attack with the passing game remaining an important element.

"You have to throw the football," Sherrill said. "That's one thing that we haven't done."

"For us to get back and win the way we should be winning we have to throw and catch the football."

The wishbone attack allows the Aggies to utilize the speed of their young running backs without changing the blocking schemes used in their regular offense.

"Our running backs are the kind that we can get the ball to in the open field, and that's a plus," Sherrill said.

"You can run a multiple offense if you keep the blocking schemes the same," he said. "To win the way we ought to be winning, you've got to throw the ball."

"We'll have to throw and catch the football successfully to beat Houston."

Sherrill also praised running back Darren Lewis and said the sophomore is still not completely healthy.

Lewis suffered a bruised shoulder against Tech to go along with the toe he injured against Nebraska in the season opener. Both bother him, but Sherrill said they should not keep Lewis out of the game Saturday.

"Darren is not healthy yet," he said. "He's a legitimate back. One of those backs that comes along every once in a while. I'm glad that we've got him for a couple more years."

Lewis is currently seventh in the nation in individual rushing with an average of 128.7 yards per game.

The only bad news for the offense is that fullback Matt Gurley may have played his last game as an Aggie. After missing the last three games with a knee injury, he re-injured the knee Saturday night and may be out for the season.

Dream the impossible dream Spend a moment in the shoes of Darren Lewis

By Hal L. Hammons
Sports Editor

Profile of the Week Darren Lewis

OK, all you would-be All-Americans out there, all you guys who wish you had that one extra juke move; here's your big chance. For five minutes, be Darren Lewis.

Cast your mind back to Saturday's game against Texas Tech. Put your merely human feet in the soon-to-be-legendary shoes.

Pick a play — any play.

Maybe you'll chose the first play of the third quarter Saturday: You take a pitch wide left; you cut across the grain; you go over, around or just plain through five or six defenders; you turn on the afterburners for a 28-yard gain that is one tackler from a touchdown.

It's the play Coach Jackie Sherrill singled out at Tuesday's press conference: "That's the sign of a great back," he said.

Or perhaps you would prefer a second-and-12 play on the Aggies' third drive of the game. After watching quarterback Chris Osgood throw away (literally) a sure score the drive before, you single-handedly (again, literally) avoid another error. You snag an option pitch two feet behind you with one hand, tuck it in, and turn a six-yard loss and possible turnover into an 11-yard gain.

Both options, of course, give you the extra honor of contributing the key play of a touchdown drive. Of course, you could choose a touchdown plunge of your own for your personal play.

Perhaps then you will be able to understand what happens inside those shoes — how a person can do the things that he, and so few others, can do.

But don't count on it. Lewis himself doesn't know.

"I don't know where it comes

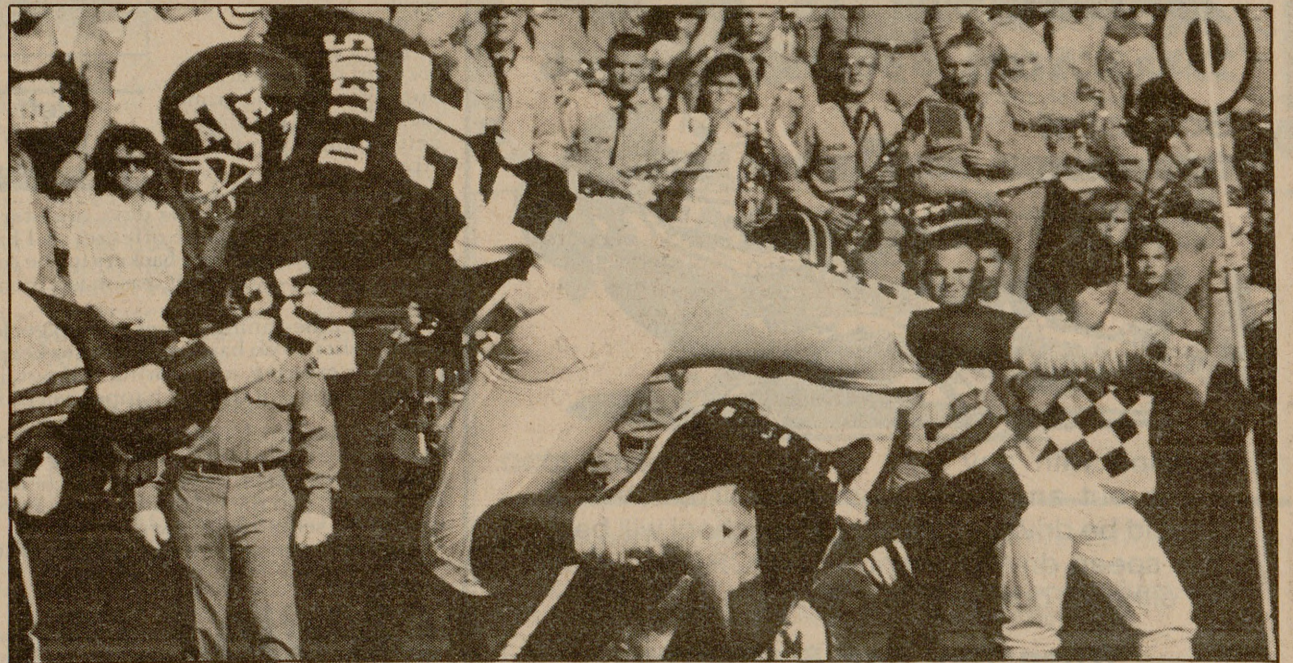


Photo by Jay Janner

It's not too big a leap of logic to see Darren Lewis as a Heisman Trophy winner in a couple of years.

from," he said Tuesday. "It just happens. You're here, and next thing — Boom! — you're there."

Unconscious. Literally. It's not a mere move that occupies Darren Lewis' thoughts on the field. No, from handoff to tackle — or lack thereof — a single thought possesses him.

"What I think about is a touchdown," he said. "Every play. Every time I move closer, I look at the goal line."

Obsessive, perhaps? He doesn't think so. To him it's just a way of telling himself, "You could have been there with one more move. You could have been there with one more burst of speed."

But then, Darren Lewis doesn't seem obsessive about anything. He just glides through the attention and the hype as easily as through a wave of linebackers. No sweat, no strain, no effort.

He probably is the only one in Aggie land who doesn't waste any brain power on speculations of future glory. And the sights are set high, make no mistake. If Lewis "only" makes it to All-America status by the time he graduates, a lot of Aggie fans are going to be disappointed.

When Lewis first came to A&M, all Aggie fans could talk about was that a future Heisman Trophy winner was in the maroon-and-white. His name was Lance Pavlas back then.

Things have changed somewhat.

For all practical purposes back in September of 1987, Pavlas was the only freshman on the team. Randy Simmons was injured. Shane Garrett was a Proposition 48 casualty. No one had even heard of Bucky Richardson.

And Lewis? Well, he was a 4.3 40-yard dash out of Dallas Carter who

made a 470 on his SAT. Period. Sure, he was enrolled and academically eligible to play football — unlike several of his teammates. But that didn't make the headlines.

"It's just one of those things," Lewis said. "A person makes one mistake, and people blow it all out of proportion."

"I'm glad (the SAT questions) are finally over. People from all over were asking me about my scores. This gives me a chance to relax and play football."

It didn't look like he would play much football at all last year. Keith Woodside was returning for his senior year, and Lewis assumed he would be red-shirted and not play at all.

Then came Southern Mississippi.

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