

A&M not underestimating winless Rice

By Doug Walker
Assistant Sports Editor

The winless Rice Owls may appear harmless, but A&M Head Coach Jackie Sherrill said Tuesday he has several concerns about the Owls as Texas A&M prepares to host Rice Saturday afternoon at Kyle Field.

Sherrill expressed his concern at his weekly press conference at Cain Hall.

"Rice is a good football team," Sherrill said. "People may look at that and laugh, but those are people that haven't seen them play."

Rice, 0-5 on the season and holders of the nation's longest losing streak in Division I college football, is winless in its last 12 games and is 0-3 in Southwest Conference play this year.

But in the last three weeks, beginning with a 20-13 loss to Texas, the Owls have been competitive. Rice easily could have won each of the three conference games if not for costly turnovers in crucial situations.

Sherrill said the turning point in Rice's season was when Owl Head Coach Jerry Berndt shifted starting quarterback Donald Hollas to defensive safety and inserted Quentis Roper as the starter at quarterback.

The Aggie defense may be tested by an Owl offense that is coming off a school-record performance against Texas Tech. Rice gained 642 yards total offense and picked up 32 first

downs with a balanced attack led by Roper.

Roper rushed for a career-high 105 yards and passed for 277 more in gaining the fourth-highest yardage total in Rice history.

A&M linebacker Dana Batiste said Tuesday that Rice provides a challenge to A&M in more ways than one.

"It's mentally challenging," the senior from Spring said. "Not only is this game a physical challenge, but it's mentally challenging as well."

Batiste said he is particularly concerned with containing Roper and keeping the intensity of his team up in the coming three weeks.

"Rice does a lot of things well offensively," he said. "That's surprising (for a winless team). We've just got to go in and play our defense and they've got a good offensive line."

"We've just got to contain (Roper) and keep him back in the pocket."

Roper is a challenge to the blitzing Aggie defense because he forces

blitzing linebackers to stay in their positions longer.

"With him you have to stay home longer," Batiste said.

A&M has a week off after hosting Rice and then hosts Louisiana Tech on November 5. A&M could be forgiven for looking ahead to Arkansas on November 12.

"You can lose yourself in weeks like this," Batiste said. "Arkansas is Arkansas and Rice is Rice. We can't kid ourselves and say that Rice is better than they are, but when you start

underestimating someone you usually get caught."

Since Hollas made the switch to defense prior to the Texas game, the Rice defense has looked completely different.

The Owls have shown vast improvement after allowing 41 points and 459.5 yards per game in the first two games. In their three SWC games they have allowed 20.5 points and 340.0 yards per contest.

2-5 Cowboys at critical stage of season

IRVING (AP) — The Dallas Cowboys have come to a no-lose situation with a game against a bitter rival coming up, coach Tom Landry said Tuesday.

"We'll have to win our next three games (against NFC East opposition) to go anywhere this year," Landry said. "Right now our season goal of 9-7 will be difficult to reach but it is still attainable."

The Cowboys have plunged to a 2-5 record, worst start since 1965.

In the next three weeks, they travel to Philadelphia on Sunday, come home to host Phoenix, then go back on the road to meet the New York Giants.

Landry hopes the revenge factor works against the Eagles.

Last October, the Cowboys felt that Philadelphia ran the score up on them in

a 37-20 loss. Quarterback Randall Cunningham faked dropping to one knee with time running out late in the game, then threw a long pass that led to a touchdown with one second left.

Eagles' Coach Buddy Ryan said at the time he was trying to get even with Landry for playing some of his regular players in a strike game earlier in the season.

"We'll let our players look at films of the game last year," Landry said. "They'll remember it. We won't have to remind them much."

Ryan said in a conference telephone call on Tuesday that "I never had any animosity toward Tom Landry. He was the Dallas coach when I was coaching high school football in Gainesville (Texas)."

Ryan said he had a few words "sent from my friends in Dallas" on the Eagles' bulletin board.

"A lot of our fans are still upset from that first (strike) game last year," Ryan said. "Of course, a lot of things upset me. I get upset easy."

Landry said he had a lot of respect for Ryan, but added "My memory is good enough to go back that far (the second game of last year)."

The Cowboys will have a new backup quarterback to face the Eagles with Danny White on the injured reserve list for four to six weeks with ligament damage in his left knee.

Kevin Sweeney moved into the second spot behind Steve Pelluer, who has recovered from the concussion he suffered

in Sunday's 17-7 loss to the Chicago Bears.

"It could be interesting if Sweeney gets in there and he might if our quarterback (Pelluer) doesn't start learning how to slide," Landry said. "It might be refreshing to see Sweeney. The players like him. He did well last year in the replacement games."

Landry will put on another coaching hat this week. He will tutor placekicking specialist Roger Ruzek, who missed two field goal tries against Chicago and is four for 10 this year.

"I'll coach him myself," Landry said. "He's trying to guide the ball. It's like a golf swing, you can't do that and hit the ball. He's got to bounce back."

Lady Aggies fall to UTA in 3 games

The Lady Aggie volleyball team fell 15-4, 15-10, 15-2 to the University of Texas-Arlington last night in Arlington. A&M jumped out to a 6-0 lead in the first game but quickly fell to the disadvantage for the night.

The Lady Aggies briefly regained composure in the second game, but were swept back in to control the final game.

"We were intimidated," Coach Givens said. "They were very good, but I don't know who could have beaten them tonight."

UTA amassed 51 kills with 11 errors to A&M's 28 kills and 14 errors. "It was like running into the chasm massacre," Givens said.

Cheri Steensma chipped in 11 kills with a .320 hitting percentage, and Lisa Gonzales had 5 kills and a .300 percentage.

"Our passing broke down forcing our offense," he said. "They had a quick offense that we were not prepared for."

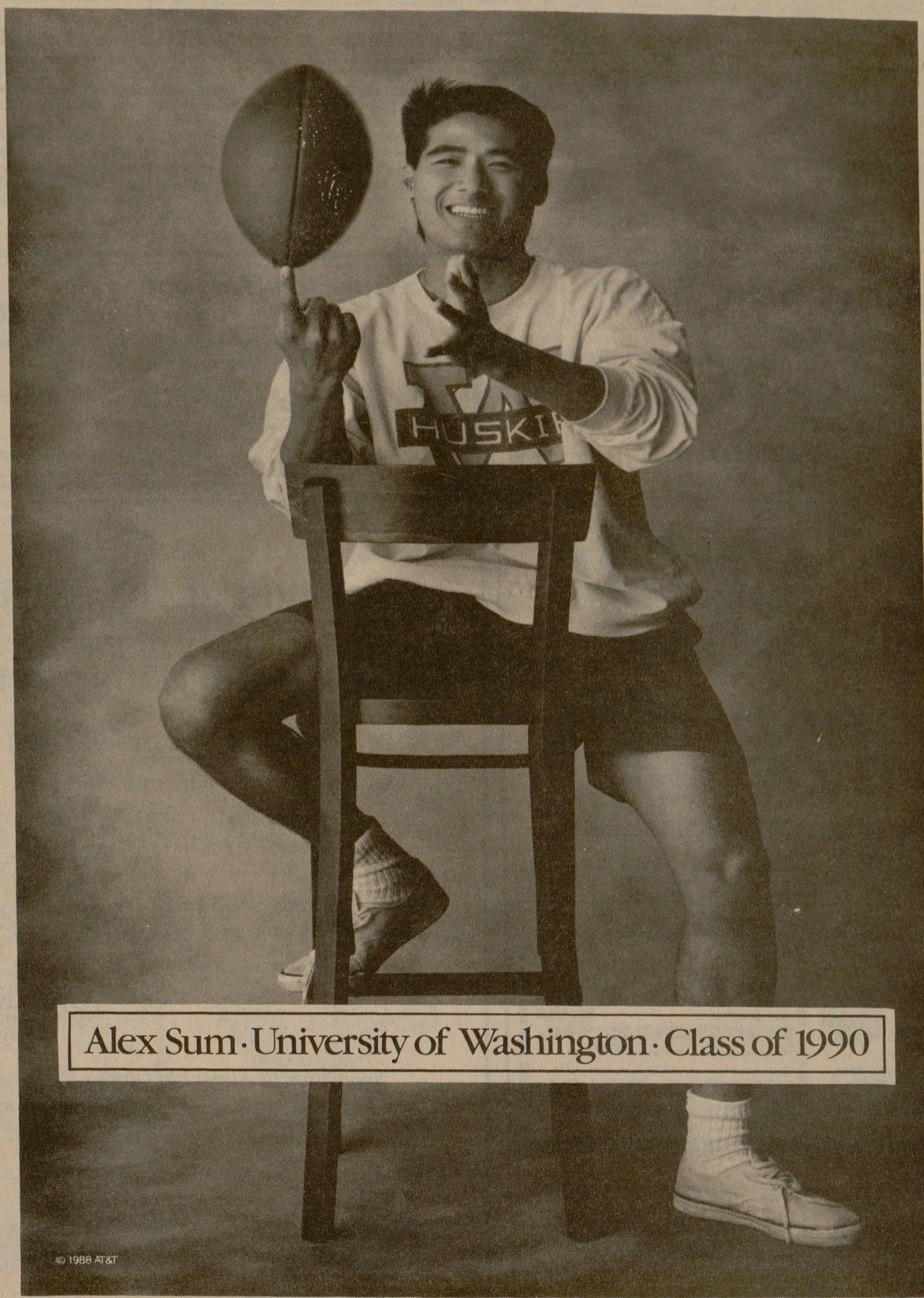
Givens said the Lady Aggies must regroup before facing their next opponent.

"We have got a lot of work to do in a short time," he said. "We did not compete well tonight."

He said that the way the Lady Aggies played helped UTA look good.

The Lady Aggies return to conference action Friday night at 7:30 p.m. against Rice in G. Rollie White Coliseum.

“I wasn't rubbing it in—I just wanted Eddie to know the score of last night's game.”

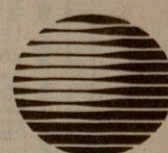


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