

Bruising defense led Aggs past Hogs in '76

Hayes, Aggies avenged humiliating defeat in last A&M win at Arkansas

Two games, played in successive seasons (1975 and 1976) in Little Rock, Ark., between Texas A&M and the University of Arkansas.

Coach Emory Bellard vs. Coach Frank Broyles each time.

The winning team scored 31 points in both games, and the losers were nearly the same (six the first time, 10 the second).

Lester Hayes started at strong safety for Texas A&M in 1975 and moved over to free safety one year later. Hayes had a direct impact on each game — the first a moment of agony for Aggies everywhere, the other a moment to be savored forever.

Late in the second quarter of the 1975 contest, Hayes and free safety Jackie Williams collided while trying to defend a pass from Arkansas quarterback Scott Bull. Porker wide receiver Teddy Barnes caught the ball for a game-breaking touchdown.

The 28-year pass put the Hogs on the

scoreboard first, and they catapulted to a stunning 31-6 victory over the previously-undefeated Aggies.

Yet, in no way was Hayes alone to blame for the loss, inasmuch as he intercepted a pass and recovered a fumble, each of which gave the Aggies scoring opportunities.

In the locker room following the game, Hayes sat motionless, refusing to speak to either the media, coaches or even his teammates.

"I think we were all in a state of shock," former A&M All-American linebacker Ed Simonini said Tuesday night. "That loss was quite devastating for all of us. You don't remember what you say or recall it later."

That loss ended any chance of a national championship for the Aggies who, 16 days later, ended their 1975 season with another humiliating defeat (20-0) to Southern California in the Liberty Bowl in Memphis.

Fast-forward almost a year. Return to

Tim Stanfield
Flashback

War Memorial Stadium. (The reason A&M went to Arkansas again was that Houston joined the Southwest Conference in 1976, forcing each SWC team to play one team on the road two years in a row, as well as another one at home in succession. Baylor visited Kyle Field in 1975 and 1976.)

While it was cold when the Aggs took a beating, it was even colder when they trounced the Hogs 31-10 in 1976. Late in that game, for one of the few times in recent A&M football history, it snowed.

Hayes and company didn't notice, for they gave Arkansas its first SWC loss of the season, sending the Hogs on the path to a 5-5-1 season, after which Broyles retired from coaching.

After Arkansas took an early 3-0 lead,

the Aggies came back with a long march of their own, ending when Curtis Dickey scored on a 3-yard run.

On the first play after the ensuing kickoff, Hog quarterback Ron Calcagni was swarmed by Aggie defenders and tossed a pass up for grabs. Hayes picked it off at his own 41 yard line and returned it 18 yards to the Hog 41.

After he was tackled, Hayes jumped up and threw his right fist up in the air at the Arkansas fans. He held the fist high over his head almost all the way to the A&M bench.

From there A&M scored the game-breaking touchdown in two plays. After fullback George Woodard rushed for two yards, quarterback David Walker handed off to Dickey on what appeared to be a sweep around the right side of the Aggie offensive line.

However, Dickey stopped suddenly and tossed a perfect pass to wide receiver Randall Teate at the Hog 7 yard line. Teate was all alone when he caught the

ball and strolled into the end zone untouched 63 seconds after Dickey himself had scored a touchdown.

The Aggies went wild, while the huddled Hog masses, which included most of the 47,000 in attendance, became as quiet as if the stadium were empty.

Teate was buried under a pile of teammates in the end zone, the same one in which Barnes had scored almost a year earlier.

Tony Franklin kicked the extra point, and things quickly got worse for the freezing fans. Franklin added a 32-yard field goal (from the same hash mark and 10 yards farther out than his 1975 miss), making the score 17-3.

It didn't stay that way very long. Completing one of the greatest quarters in A&M football history, the frenzied

Texas A&M vs. Arkansas

- When: Saturday, 1 p.m.
- Where: Razorback Stadium, Fayetteville, Ark.
- Weather: Highs in the low 60s, 60 percent chance of rain.
- Aggies: Last week A&M beat Louisiana Tech 56-17 at Kyle Field.
- Razorbacks: Arkansas beat Baylor 33-3 last week in Waco.
- Records: A&M is 5-3 (4-0 in SWC). Arkansas is 9-0 (6-0).
- Rankings: Arkansas is ranked No. 11 by both the Associated Press and United Press International. A&M is unranked.
- Media: The game can be heard locally on Aggie Radio Network-affiliate WTAW-AM with Dave South on play-by-play and Jay Howard on commentary.

It's not just a football game — the real show's in the seats

Well, by the time you read this I'll be well on my way to the land of the enemy. I've never been to a football game in Arkansas — it's going to be tough to live up to its billing in terms of awesomeness and obnoxiousness.

Of course, I've seen Arkansas fans before, but in the friendly confines of Kyle Field or G. Rollie White Coliseum, or in the supposedly neutral Reunion Arena at the Southwest Conference basketball tournament.

Not in their natural habitat.

I'm not worried, though. I've been to Baton Rouge, La. It can't possibly be worse than that.

Some sports arenas prohibit fans from bringing their own refreshments. Some ban hard containers. But Tiger Stadium is the only place I've ever been where I got the impression that alcoholic beverages — in glass bottles if possible — were actually required for anyone wanting to get in.

And I survived that experience. Of course, the Cajuns probably weren't of the mind to beat up on Aggies that much since the LSU football team had done it all evening.

Texas A&M might actually beat the Razorbacks, and that could lead to a dangerous situation. Luckily I'll be in the relatively safe confines of the press box, where there are only one or two more undergrads than there are in the town. On Memorial Day, the town of 50,000 (in the guise of impartial sports writers) instead of 150,000 (in the guise of rational human beings).

Actually, I have a lot of respect for Arkansas fans. They give new meaning to the phrase



Hal L. Hammons
Sports Editor

"home field advantage." Of course, don't tell Miami that.

They're the best sports fans in the Southwest Conference — I can't imagine anyone seriously doubting that. Aggies might be a little better during football season, but the rest of the year they're in hibernation.

The Hogs are in perpetual heat. Twelve months a year.

Arkansas fans are just about the only interesting thing about the basketball tournament. It's amazing to watch the arena fill up with screaming maniacs in red shirts and weird hats. The SWC has quit trying to be equal in allotment of tickets — Arkansas is about the only school that actually sells the tickets they get, so they get more sent to them. Perfectly fair. If an Aggie doesn't want to go, there's no reason why an Arkansas season-ticket holder shouldn't.

OK, the "Soooooooooooey PIGS" stuff is kind

of obnoxious. But it is rather impressive crowd participation. And the entire group does it — not just the students like in Aggieland. And it's a whole lot better than that "Sic 'em Bears" stuff Baylor does.

And the Hog Wild Band is positively a scream. I think everyone at the tournament, regardless of affiliation, looks forward to when they play their version of the "William Tell Overture" — better known as the Lone Ranger theme.

That crazy director runs all around the court, and sometimes the stands, whipping the crowd into a frenzy, making it back to the band just in time to direct the crowd with a resounding "A — R — K — A — N — S (boom, boom) A-S!"

That's a basketball crowd. One like we in Texas only see on television.

Of course they're not particularly intelligent fans, especially when it comes to sports other than football. But then, that's never really been the strong suit of Arkansas. After all, there are third world countries with literacy rates that can top Arkansas' imposing 74 percent mark. They may be No. 11 in football, but everyone agrees they're No. 1 in illiteracy.

And a brain isn't a qualification for being a fan. In fact, it can be a hindrance. Witness the U. of Texas — an admittedly strong academic school that is somewhat lacking in school spirit to the same extent that Yasser Arafat is somewhat lacking in razor blades.

My brother goes to UT, and I grew up in

Austin, so I've seen the apathy first-hand. Paul is constantly complaining about how the fans trickle in throughout the first quarter, pour out as time runs out, and don't come in the first place as the losses accumulate.

Of course, the baseball team packs 'em in like sardines. Of course, the baseball team wins. Losing programs, like basketball, can't draw fans for spit.

Sound familiar?

But at least Texas fans come — to some degree. There are some schools around who seem to need Superglue to keep the fans in their seats.

The schools on either side of Highway 6 are the obvious examples.

Baylor has never impressed me, I might as well just come out and admit it right away. But last year's game against the Aggies took the cake.

If you'll recall, the Aggies blew out the Bears in the second half after a nip-and-tuck battle for 24 minutes. But with 10 minutes to go the Bears were still in the game, only down by about 17.

Of course, about two-thirds of the people on the student side wouldn't have known that. They were already gone.

Imagine how they must be packing 'em in this year, what with that jammin' 0-5 SWC record.

It's worse on the east side. The city of Houston is noted for its lack of support for its sports teams; I guess it would be strange if Rice and Houston didn't follow suit.

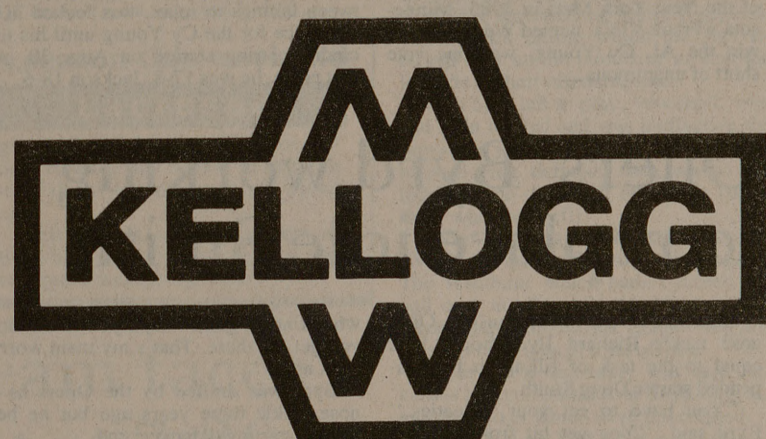
We all know about how Owl fans show up toward the end of the second quarter and leave right after they see the Marching Owl Band do their stuff at halftime. And that can be understood: the Owls have been perennial losers for quite some time now. And as much as we would like to talk like Jackie Sherrill about supporting the home team no matter what the record or opponent (what a joke), it is to be expected that fan turnout would be pretty low for a program like that.

Houston is tougher to understand. The football program has been good most of the time. But still the Aggies consistently outnumber the Cougars in their own stadium.

Some excuse can be made by understanding the city itself. The campus is in a crime-prone part of town, and consequently there is little or no campus activity. Football would be a great excuse to make some, since Robertson Stadium is a fine facility right there on the school grounds.

Yet the school officials insist on having games in the Astrodome — quite likely the worst facility ever erected for watching football.

So many fans boycott the games. Why not? Why pay \$20 to sit in a crummy seat and \$3 to park your car? And of course, the \$100 surcharge on season tickets that the university tacked on the already-outrageous prices didn't help. They're still trying to recover from that.



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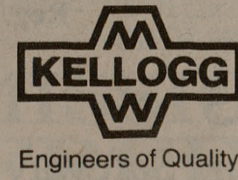
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