

# on the spot

## versial head coach and athletic director

gest booster Texas A&M has, it very well might be true.

He didn't know what he was getting into when he came from Pitt. About all he knew about the school itself was what he had seen on summer coaching trips back in the late 1960s. And that wasn't much.

He says he just saw an opportunity that he didn't want to miss — putting a program that was on a downward turn into overdrive by taking charge as head coach as well as athletic director.

The dual position appealed to him — perhaps just because it gave him more things to do.

The first words Sherrill uses to describe himself are, "Active, very active."

That's always been his way, he says. Even as a boy growing up.

"You name it — I did it," he says. "Throwing papers, setting pins in a bowling alley, working on the farm."

He remembers being a grade-school kid "riding a ramp" at the county fair. That involved riding a motorcycle at speeds high enough to reach the top of an inclined circular track, where the rider would try to snatch a handkerchief from someone at the top.

Too dangerous for his sons Justin and Braxton, 7 and 5. At least that's what Dad says. But Dad did it as a kid.

And he is still active as a 44-year-old adult. Bighorn sheep and antelope trophies are mounted in his office, attesting to his love of hunting. He's an avid golfer. He campaigned actively for George Bush before this month's presidential election.

But his perpetual-motion lifestyle is most clearly seen in his work with the team. At practice he can be seen playing the mother hen over his assistant coaches, constantly moving from offense to defense to offense. Now he's looking at the offensive line. Now he's inspecting the secondary. Now he's

checking out the quarterbacks. If you don't keep an eye on him all the time you'll lose him.

He doesn't really say much. He usually just stands to the side with his chin resting in his hand, just observing and taking notes, letting his assistants yell at the players for him.

He is just the conductor, he says, letting each section leader take care of his own area of expertise.

His coaching philosophy is not difficult to understand: As he says at least once at every press conference, "Put the hats on the right people."

But then, he's not difficult to understand. He says he's the same person he was back at the county fair. Always looking for something to do, something to work on, something to accomplish. Just going about his business.

His methods of doing business have angered some people. Jim Wacker raised a big fuss about A&M running up the score on his Texas Christian team. And he wasn't the only one.

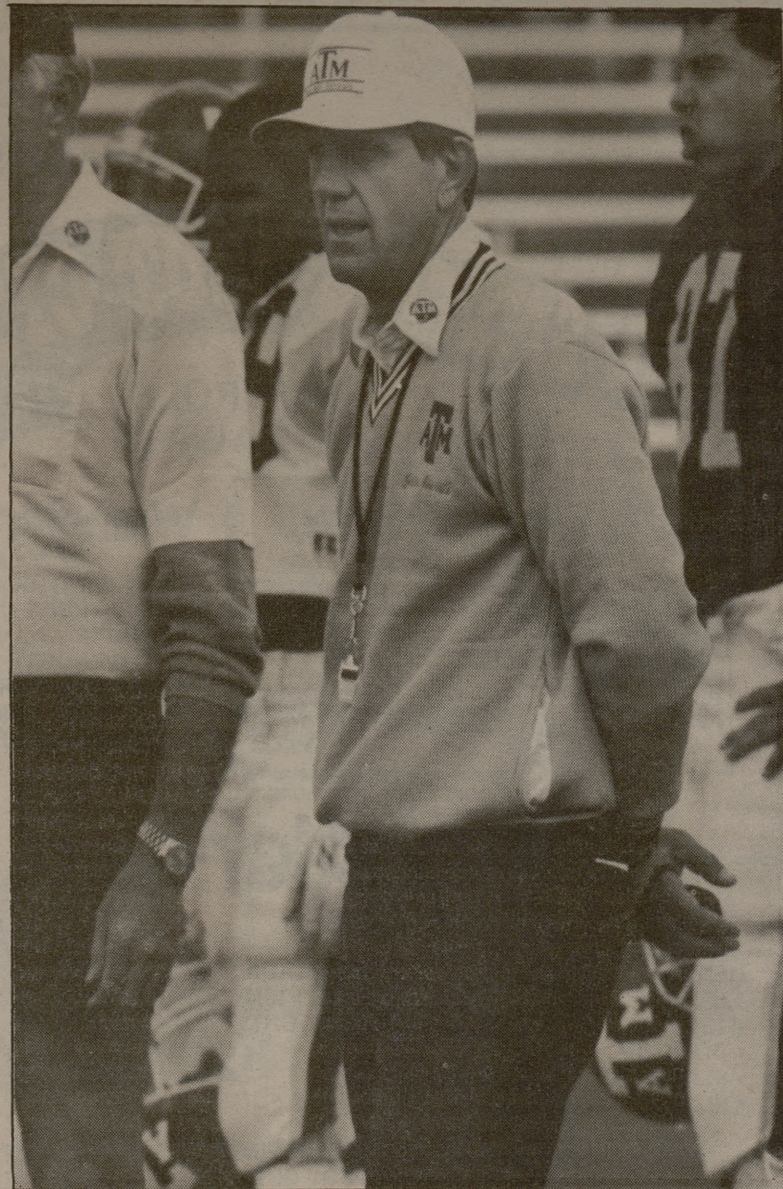
But it didn't seem to faze Sherrill. This year against Rice, with about a minute to go and ahead by two touchdowns, he sent Lance Pavlas into the game and started throwing for the endzone.

His explanation: "We wanted to work on the passing game. We tried to get him into the game earlier but we didn't. That was my fault."

Not much of an apology. But he didn't think one was necessary. He was just doing what was best in his eyes for the team. And he didn't seem to care what it might look like to someone else.

That may be one of the reasons he is hard to warm up to. He's all business, no PR, when it comes to the game.

And the media will have to deal with that.



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