

This year's game at Rice won't be an easy win for Ags



Alan Lehmann
Sports Writer

The Rice Owls will upset the Aggies this weekend.

Just kidding. I wanted to get your attention. A&M will win, but it'll be closer than the 17 points the boys in Vegas are giving the Owls.

What? A struggle from the mighty Owls? The same Owls who are 1-5-1 on the season after losing to powerhouses like Tulane and Southwestern Louisiana? The same team who couldn't do better than the Wake Forest?

Yes, I know it's hard to believe. In fact, my neighbor and I were arguing about it last night during Letterman.

"Hey, 'Mr. Sports Authority,' who'll win the game Saturday?" I asked between belches.

I put my Schaefer Lite on the coffee table before replying. I timed it perfectly, waiting for him to take a sip of his before saying, "Rice is gonna blow us away."

It was fun to watch the beer shoot out of his nose as he stood up to yell at me.

"No, just kidding," I said as he scurried to clean up the mess.

After he calmed down, I told him that A&M will win, but it wouldn't be a blowout. True, Rice hasn't looked sharp this year, but the Southwest Louisiana game didn't count. Donald Hollas, the Owls' quarterback and all-around Mr. Offense, got knocked out of the game early.

"Rice has played some good football this year," I said. "They were beating Texas, in Austin, until that freshman teapip quarterback scored a touchdown late in the game. Even with the replay, I'm not sure that he got in the endzone."

"Well, A&M is still a better team," he said.

Of course, there was no reason to argue

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Rice hoping for a flat A&M team

No. 21 Ags want to catch right bus

By Clay Rasmussen

Of The Battalion Staff

Texas A&M is 5-2 in 1989. Rice is 1-5-1. Winning Saturday's game should be about as easy for the Aggies as showing up for the bus ride to Houston.

At least, that's what Rice Coach Fred Goldsmith says.

"Tell A&M to be on time to catch that bus," Goldsmith said in a telephone interview Thursday. "If they can get Aaron Wallace, Darren Lewis, Robert Wilson and a few others on that bus, then everything should be all right for them."

Although Rice hasn't had a strong showing this year (1-3 in SWC play), the Owls have improved their performance dramati-

Texas A&M at Rice

- Site: Rice Stadium (70,000 cap.)
- Kickoff: 2 p.m.
- Ranking: A&M (21st), Rice (—)
- Records: A&M (5-2), Rice (1-5-1)
- TV/Radio: The game will not be televised live; KTAM (AM 1240)

cally. In fact, they've improved well enough to contend with Wake Forest, Texas Christian and Texas.

And coming off two physically and emotionally exhausting victories against Houston and Baylor, A&M Coach R.C. Slocum can't afford to take Rice lightly.

"Rice is a much better team than it has been in a while," Slocum said. "I'm more concerned about them than I have been for a long, long time."

"They went into Austin and led the Longhorns all day, but weren't lucky enough to win that game. They're not getting blown away anymore."

No, the Owls are competitive once more, providing all kinds of scares for Southwest Conference teams.

Rice opened the season by ending their 18-game losing streak, blowing by SMU 35-6.

But, to have a chance to contend with A&M, Rice first must hope that the Aggies



Photo by Jay Janner

Linebacker Aaron Wallace puts the wraps on Rice quarterback Quantis Roper in last year's 24-10 Aggie win at Kyle Field. The Aggies travel to Rice this Saturday, and Wallace will be looking to break A&M's all-time sack record by wrapping up new Owl quarterback Donald Hollas.

come into Houston flat.

An offense similar to the one that produced 44 points against TCU and 31 from Southern Mississippi would devastate the Owls' defense.

And going into a game flat is not that

unique for the Aggies, especially away from home. A&M has lost all its games on the road after big victories.

The Aggies silenced LSU only to have Washington throw water on A&M's fire. Texas Tech did the same three weeks later.

Still, Goldsmith said the Aggies won't be flat enough to make a difference.

"I'm sure coming off (the punishing games with Houston and Baylor) is not going to help them, but the Aggies are going to have a lot drained out of them before it would help us," Goldsmith said.

Rice's defense also will have to contain A&M quarterback Lance Pavlas to win, something Baylor was unable to do last week.

"It all comes down to stopping Pavlas and his passing ability," Goldsmith said. "He terrorized Baylor last week."

Still, Goldsmith sounds like a coach who has a monumental task ahead of him.

"I think the Aggies pose one heck of a problem," Goldsmith said. "We've got to play much more physical than ever before to match the Aggies' intensity."

The Owls have found an offensive scheme that takes advantage of their lack of size and tries to neutralize aggressive, attacking defenses.

"They're doing things that keep defenses from ganging up and overpowering them," Slocum said. "They pass the ball, spread you out and keep you off balance."

Goldsmith feels the Aggies must shut down his passing offense to win.

"The big thing for A&M to do to win is to stop my passing game," Goldsmith said.

"They're going to have to get to Hollas and play a mistake-free game."

But, the Aggies have just what it takes to stop anyone's passing game. With linebackers Aaron Wallace, William Thomas, Jeroy Robinson and Trent Lewis, A&M has become infamous for its blitzing.

"We've got to protect Hollas," Goldsmith stressed. "The Aggies have shown week after week that they're the best blitzing team around."

If the Aggies are to stay in contention with Texas and Arkansas in the conference race, it's crucial that they take seriously not only the game with Rice, but also SMU.

Although Slocum and his coaches realize what can happen to a team that doesn't take an opponent that's 1-5 seriously, he worries about whether his players know.

"Being favored or being an underdog never affects coaching," Slocum said. "If you spend any time observing things that are happening around the country, you realize that it doesn't really matter."

"If we could ever educate our players to that, I think you'd see much more consistency on the team."

And consistency is just what the Aggies need if they are to win their remaining four games.

From the director of "A Nightmare on Elm Street" and "The Serpent and the Rainbow."

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