



Richard Tijerina
Sports Editor

Ags, Panthers will have their day in the Sun

The Dec. 30 John Hancock Bowl may have changed its name, but it promises no clear favorite for a Sunny day.

At least, on paper. It'll be the first time the two teams have played each other. No. 16 A&M and No. 23 Pittsburgh actually have shared only one thing: Coach Jackie Sherrill. A&M wooed Sherrill away from Pitt in the early 1980s with some big dollar signs. Pitt hasn't been the same program since. A&M is hoping it can be the same — only it wants the same results obtained honestly.

The matchups:
• Quarterback (A&M's Lance Pavlas vs. Pitt's Alex Van Pelt). Pavlas has guided the Aggies to their fourth bowl game in five years by being consistent and making the big play when needed, but Van Pelt has the more impressive numbers.

Pavlas has completed 59 percent of his passes for 1,681. He's averaged 152.8 yards a game and has thrown 10 touchdowns and 12 interceptions. Van Pelt has completed 56 percent of his passes for a whopping 2,527 yards. He averages 229.7 yards a game, and has thrown 15 touchdowns and 11 interceptions.

Van Pelt has the bigger stats, but it's undecided who has the stronger arm. For the most part, Pavlas holds back on the long bomb attempts in a game. Instead, he picks opposing defenses apart with short, accurate and safe pass attempts.

Advantage: Pitt 1, A&M 0.
• Running backs (A&M's Darren Lewis and Robert Wilson vs. Pitt's Curvin Richards and Adam Walker). Richards has rushed for 1,126 yards in 11 games, but he'll face the Southwest See Sunny Day/Page 9

Hot Pursuit



Photo by Jay Janner

A&M's Shane Garrett scores the Aggies' first points in their 23-22 loss to Arkansas Nov. 24. A&M meets Pittsburgh Dec. 30 in the John Hancock Bowl in El Paso, Texas, and Garrett will be the Aggies' top punt return man.

Oilers on brink of title

HOUSTON (AP) — The Houston Oilers aren't looking past Sunday's game against the Cincinnati Bengals, but they are looking ahead to the possibilities.

The Oiler (9-5) could clinch their first outright division title if they can beat Cincinnati on Sunday or Cleveland in the Astrodome Dec. 23.

"We know being division champs is within our grasp, but it doesn't stop in Cincinnati, because we still have the opportunity to win the home field advantage," full-back Alonzo Highsmith said.

The Oilers have the second best record in the AFC behind Denver (10-4). If they finish with the second best record, the Oilers would be guaranteed of hosting at least one playoff game.

"I want to win the division this week so we can get it out of the way," wide receiver Ernest Givins said. "When we win the division, we can concentrate on the last game and earning the home-field advantage."

The Oilers should be prepared for any

situation over the remainder of the season. They've shut out Pittsburgh 27-0 and been shut out 34-0 by Kansas City.

They've lost on the road but they've also won on the road in bad weather, contrary to their road image.

"We've been in every situation possible," Highsmith said. "You don't like to lose games, but you can benefit if you learn from them." See Oilers/Page 9

UH's Pardee named coach in Blue-Gray

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (AP) — Blue-Gray All Star Football Classic lined up Bill Dooley of Wake Forest as Jack Pardee of Houston to coach the South team, while Rich Brooks of Oregon and John Gutekunst of Minnesota will head the North squad.

Charles "Fats" Jones, executive director of the 52nd annual game, announced coaches Tuesday for the Christmas game, which will be broadcast by ABC at 8 a.m.

Dooley, a native of Mobile, will handle the South offense and will be assisted by offensive coordinator, Marty Galbraith.

Dooley has been in college coaching for 23 years at North Carolina, Virginia Tech and Wake Forest, where he assumed the top job in 1987.

His 148 victories rank him among the winningest active college coaches.

Pardee will coach the South defense and will be assisted by Houston's defensive chief, Jim Eddy.

Pardee, who has been a "Coach of the Year" in the National Football League, United States Football League and Southwest Conference, led Houston to a 52-0 record this season and saw quarterback Andre Ware pick up the Heisman Trophy.

Brooks will handle the North offense along with Oregon assistant coach Mike Bellotti, and is making his second appearance at the all-star game, having coached the North in 1986.

Gutekunst, Minnesota coach since December 1985, will lead the North defense with the help of Minnesota defensive coordinator Dick Biddle.

"It has become a tradition for our coaches to bring their top assistants with them," Jones said.

"The pro scouts love the idea because it allows for better overall coordination and gives the linemen more individual instruction and a better chance to learn the system."

Jones said the two teams will be announced later.

The game is sponsored by the Montgomery Lions Club and has raised more than \$2.5 million for humanitarian services.



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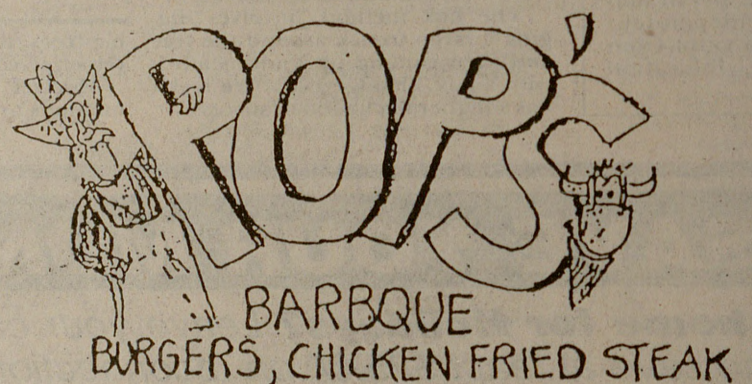
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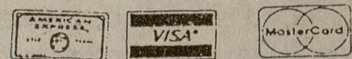
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