Shaking *the* BUTTERFLIES

Tucker makes it back from ankle injury

By NADJA SABAWALA
Of The Battalion Staff

Kevin Tucker felt sick to his stomach last Saturday morning. He was nervous and couldn't eat breakfast.

But at least it was better than feeling useless.

Tucker, a starting defensive end for Texas A&M last year, played his first game of the season last Saturday against Rice. And though he had butterflies, he said he was hoping his game would take off.

"It felt great to be out there," Tucker said. "It's hard to sit around watching everybody and knowing you could be out there. I felt kind of useless the whole year."

During two-a-days in August, Tucker severely sprained his ankle and missed the first seven games. But the sophomore from Angleton came back Saturday, showing the Aggies —and Owl quarterback Donald Hollas —that he hadn't missed a step.

Tucker broke through the Rice offensive line to sack Hollas twice in A&M's 41-15 win.

"I was on cloud nine," Tucker said. "I worked hard all week on moves and pass rushing and that's what I wanted to do going into the game."

Both of Tucker's sacks came in the second quarter. The Owls were behind 17-12 but had just returned a kick 55 yards, threatening deep in Aggie territory. Hollas, five-of-six on third-down conversions, lined up on the A&M 37 and dropped back to pass. Tucker raced through the line and sacked Hollas for a four-yard loss and forced the Owls to abandon a potential go-ahead touchdown.

Then, with :17 remaining in the half, Rice faced a second-and-10 from their 45-yard line. Trying for a last-second score, Hollas dropped back, but couldn't find an open target. Tucker again charged through and grabbed a retreating Hollas for a 13-yard loss.

"The second (sack) was better," Tucker said. "It was a better hit, a bigger sack. I had time to get there and we needed a sack then. I just wanted two sacks."

The reason he had time to get there, Tucker said, is the rest of the defensive line. Defensive linemen John Miller, Albert Jones, Jayson Black, Lance Teichelman and newcomers Mark Wheeler, Eric England and Kefa Chatham combine with Tucker to make a commanding presence on the field.

"Not one person dominates," Tucker said of the defensive line. "It takes all three of us and we have to pull together.

"That's where people win —up front —and to do that, everybody has to play together. Us, the inside linebackers and outside linebackers. Each one saying, 'I don't know if he's going to do his job.'"

But in Saturday's game, the defensive line did its job, racking up a total 27 tackles. Tucker added a broken pass and Teichelman had an interception in the second quarter that bounced off a Rice player's helmet.

Tucker said the line performed well because the players were alternated with others who had time to rest between series.

"It's always good when you can alternate people and keep them fresh," Tucker said. "Especially on the defensive line because you're in the trenches all the time. If you keep certain people in there all the time they get tired and beat up."

Tucker finished the game with four tackles and the satisfaction that his ankle can withstand game situations.

"It's a little sore," Tucker said, "but I've got to live through that. It's just part of the game."

Tucker said he believes his ankle is close to 100 percent, but he still needs a little work.

"It's still going to take a while to get back in there," he said. "The week before the game they had me out doing all kinds of exercises to get my confidence back. I think, 'If I can play this far, I can do this and I can do that.'"

Anytime you're hurt, Tucker said, you tend to favor the injury. But he's trying to make a full recovery.

"If I hurt it in practice or a game, I favor it then," he said. "I see people on the ground and I try to stay away from them. It might hurt in the long run because you want to make the big plays.

"Some good things happened for me," Tucker said of the game. "I had some good breaks."

But Tucker made big plays against Rice despite the soreness in his ankle. Preparing himself mentally helps during the game, he said. Every Friday night before a game, he sits down and plans for the next day.

"I think about every situation that could happen to me," Tucker said. "I try to think about how I'll play and what I'll do on a certain down and distance."

Two nights from tonight, Tucker again will be sitting, thinking about the next day when the Aggies take on Southern Methodist in Dallas.

Tucker's again probably planning two sacks ... maybe even more. The Mustangs allowed eight sacks in last Saturday's 52-3 loss to Texas.

And Tucker is gaining the confidence and blocks he needs to power his way into the backfield — and quarterbacks.

JAY JANNER/The Battalion

Texas A&M defensive end Kevin Tucker returned from an ankle injury to record two sacks last week in the 41-15 win over Rice.

Hall nominees include Knight, O'Brien

SPRINGFIELD, Mass. (AP) — Bobby Knight and Larry O'Brien, the former NBA commissioner who died last month, were among 12 candidates nominated Tuesday for election to the basketball Hall of Fame.

Hall of Fame president Bob Kurland said the trustees decided that "if an individual is worthy of nomination to this prestigious honor that person's name and qualifications will be submitted to the 24-member honors committee."

"The guts of it is that history should be reported in its true form," Kurland said. "Both these guys are deserving of being recognized under the standards of the Basketball Hall of Fame. I don't know how they are going to come out in the voting by the honors committee, but they are certainly deserving to be nominated. You can't deny history."

To be elected to the hall, nominees need 18 votes from the honors committee in its balloting next spring. Enshrinement ceremonies are scheduled for May 13 in this city, where the game began nearly 100 years ago.

O'Brien, who died on Sept. 27, withdrew his name from consideration last year in protest of the hall's secret elections.

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— Bob Kurland,
president, Basketball Hall of Fame

Knight, the Indiana coach, asked that he not be considered for renomination after he failed to be elected in 1987. At the time, he called it a "slap in the face."

Knight said through a spokesman that he was unaware he was being nominated again and would have no comment.

Renominated as players were Nate Archibald, Dave Cowens, Bob Lanier, John Kerr, Calvin Murphy and Nera White, a women's Amateur Athletic Union star.

In addition to Knight, Jack Hartman, the winningest coach in Kansas State history and Jack Ramsay, one of the most successful coaches in NBA history, were nominated a second time.

O'Brien, whose long political career included being an adviser to President Kennedy and national Democratic Party chairman, said before his death that he had tried unsuccessfully to make the election process public during his two terms as Hall of Fame president.

"I have no quarrel with the Hall of Fame and would consider election a high honor, but I'm a guy who believes in the Democratic process," O'Brien had said.

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