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A&M defensive line to be tough in the trenches

By RULY MEDRANO
 Sports Writer of THE BATTALION

First-year Texas A&M defensive line coach Bill Johnson inherited a defensive line for the 1992 season that can be described with two contradictory words—*young*, but *experienced*.

The Aggies return four of their top six defensive linemen from 1991's No. 1 nationally ranked "Wrecking Crew."

Sophomore Sam Adams of Cypress, junior Lance Teichelman of Austin and junior Eric England of Sugarland will constitute the starting defensive front three. Also, junior Kefa Chatham of Waco, whom Johnson called his "1A man," is expected to play early and often.

Adams is the largest of the linemen at 6-4, 282 pounds. But the other three starters average 259 pounds, which is not exceptionally large compared to other Division I squads.

However, the quickness of these four should keep size from being a handicap. The Aggie front line's style is similar to that of the Miami Dolphins' "Killer Bees" of the mid-80s where speed was the key.

"We have an attacking, quick

defensive line," Johnson said. "We make the offense have to move their feet to block us."

England, who is effective playing either in the middle or at an end position, said the defense should not suffer much from the loss of National Football League draft picks Mark Wheeler, Kevin Smith and Quentin Coryatt. He does, however, feel a sense of urgency for the defensive line to execute.

"Even though we won't miss them (Wheeler, Smith and Coryatt) as much as people might think, up front we need to take up more slack," England said.

Teichelman also said the veterans of this year's squad are doing a good job of taking over the leadership role left by the loss of last year's seniors.

"We lost some leaders in Mark, Quentin and Kevin," Teichelman said. "But, (safety) Patrick Bates is doing a good job of it this year."

Last season, the defensive

front worked with a system called a "Six Pack" approach, where Aggie defensive linemen were shuffled in and out often. This season appears to be no different.

Tim Vordenbaumen of San Antonio is expected to see quite a bit of playing time this season, as is junior Brad Cooper of Arlington, who made the switch from offensive to defensive line.

"Vordenbaumen and Cooper haven't played yet, but in the spring they showed us what they can do," Johnson said.

Junior letterman Larry Wallace of Irving and freshman Ervin Briley of Aldine will add depth to the defensive front.

Johnson said if he saw anything in early fall workouts that needs improvement, it's the consistency of the defensive live. While playing an aggressive style of defense, the line may be susceptible to draw plays, traps or screen passes.

Against Stanford however,

nothing the Cardinal offense did was able to cross up the Aggie defense.

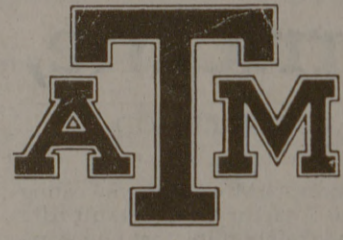
An emotional England led the defensive line while racking up five tackles and three assists. Three of the eight plays England was in on took place in the Stanford backfield and amounted to 15 yards lost by the Cardinal. Adams added three tackles including a quarterback sack.

Not showing up in the statistics sheet was the constant pressure put on Stanford quarterback Steve Stenstrom. Joined by blitzing linebackers, the defensive front consistently hit Stenstrom as he would release passes.

With the Aggie offense sputtering, the defense was able to keep A&M within striking distance. The "Wrecking Crew" allowed the offense to take the lead and the limelight with 4:27 remaining in the game.

The Aggies should hope the slow offensive performance was just a case of first game jitters. But if a team looks to anybody to show up ready to play, it has to be the defense.

It has been said that offense wins fans and defense wins championships. You can't lose if the other team never scores.



Tech, OU look to quarterbacks in season opener

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LUBBOCK, Texas — Oklahoma coach Gary Gibbs and Texas Tech coach Spike Dykes agree that their quarterbacks will likely make or break Thursday night's season opener for both teams.

The 15th-ranked Sooners will put their hopes on junior Cale Gundy, who set school records for passes completed (25) and yards passing (329) in a 48-14 victory against Virginia in last season's Gator Bowl.

Texas Tech will depend on junior Robert Hall, whose quick feet and soft passing touch helped the Red Raiders win five of their last six games in 1991. Many have picked Hall as the top quarterback in the Southwest Conference.

Kickoff for the nationally televised first ever meeting between Texas Tech and Oklahoma is scheduled for 7 p.m. in Lubbock.

"Everything we're doing offensively will be geared around Cale's ability to make the right decisions either in the running game or the passing game," said Gibbs, who is begin-

ning his fourth year as coach at Oklahoma.

"Last year our focus was not our quarterback," added Gibbs, whose team finished 9-3 in 1991. "Our focus was still probably centered around our tailback and fullback game, with Cale being an integral part but not the key component. This year he's the key component."

Dykes says Gundy's performance in the Gator Bowl was like watching a team playing "at recess. They were just throwing the ball up and down the field with no problem."

But Tech's sixth-year coach feels confident he also has a weapon behind center.

"Robert's maturity has been a big part of the team's confidence heading into this year," said Dykes, whose team was 6-5 last year. "He is a big-play man and is a threat to make things happen any time."

Hall set a school record for total offense (481 yards) in Tech's 52-46 season-ending shootout victory against Houston last year.

"Hall's really a guy that can beat you running and throwing," Gibbs said. "He provides

great leadership."

Gibbs and Dykes also agree that their defenses will be tested.


Oklahoma returns only three starters on defense, and four projected starters for Thursday's game are underclassmen.

Gibbs said it's up to seniors like All-Big Eight Conference linebacker Reggie Barnes and star defensive back Darnell Walker to lead the way.

"We talk to our younger players in terms of atmosphere, the opportunity, the new experience," Gibbs said. "We can talk til the cows come home, it's still going to be up to those guys to react and follow the lead of Reggie Barnes, follow the lead of Darnell Walker, and understand we've gotta play with poise and be patient."

Dykes says his defense, which features All-Southwest Conference safety Tracy Saul, is the best he has had at Tech.

"This will be a good test to see where we are," Dykes said. "You don't get a much better look at a high-powered offense than when you're playing Oklahoma."



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