

Lamar Lasos Aggies in Opener

Beaumont, Texas-The Aggies traveled to Beaumont, Texas to face Division I-AA opponent Lamar University for the opening game of the 2013 season. Lamar won 75-0.

The 7pm game time saw a crowd of over 8,000 as the Aggies prepared to take on one of its most challenging games of the season. The Cardinals jumped out on top of the Aggies early and never looked back. Lamar opened the game with an eight-play drive that covered 75 yards in two minutes, capped off by a 13-yard touchdown reception by Kevin Johnson, thrown by quarterback Caleb Berry.

The Aggies opening possession lasted all of two minutes, but a fumble on the fifth play of the drive set up the Cardinals' offense on the Aggies 34-yard line. The Cardinals needed five plays to go the distance, scoring on a 13-yard rushing touchdown from running back Kad Harrington. The Aggies would then fumble their ensuing kickoff and again set up the Cardinals with excellent field position. Berry would again find an open receiver for his second touchdown pass of the game making the score 21-0 with just under nine minutes to go in the 1st quarter. The Aggies could not get their offense jump started on their next two possessions as they punted them both away. Lamar would come back to score one more touchdown in the opening quarter as Berry again found a Cardinal receiver for his third touchdown pass of the game, making the score 28-0. After a punt from the offense, the Aggies defense came alive just before the end of the 1st quarter as sophomore safety Xazier Murry forced a fumble and recovered on the 50 yard line.

Both teams opened the 2nd quarter with punts after 3-and-outs, and the Aggie defense continued to fight as they forced Lamar to kick a field goal, which resulted in a 42-yard miss. However, Aggies quarterback Caleb Holbrook's pass was intercepted on the following drive and the Cardinals drove 71-yards in eight plays as Berry found his fourth different receiver for a 22-yard touchdown strike. The score ballooned to a 56-0 deficit for the Aggies by halftime.

The second half opened with the Aggies offense catching fire as sophomore receiver Ricky Backstrom caught a pass from Holbrook, and running backs Chris McClendon and Justin Fogle followed with three consecutive runs of eight or more yards. The Cardinals, however, responded with a sack a couple plays later, which forced the Aggies to punt the ball away. The Cardinals ended the 3rd quarter with nine points, and were held to 10 in the 4th.

Leading the defense for the Aggies were Murry, who finished with nine tackles and a fumble recovery, and junior safety Dominique Johnson, also with nine tackles, who showed great playmaker ability on defense and special teams. Linebacker Isaia Vimoto and freshman defensive end Allen Maxime were both in on seven and six tackles, respectively.

For the offense, McClendon led with 58 yards on 14 carries followed by Holbrook who finished with 31 yards on 10 carries. Also proving to be a valuable asset for the Aggies was senior punter Tony Mendoza who netted 330 yards on eight punts (41.2ypp), with his longest punt covering 60 yards.

Aggies head football coach Russell Gaskamp commented: "our kids missed a good opportunity to play well against a good opponent. It doesn't matter what level of competition you play against, if you turn the ball over six times and don't defend the run game, you're not going win." Gaskamp added, "the score does not reflect what kind of team we are going to have this year; our kids will bounce back and show that this week.

The Aggies are scheduled for their first home game of the season on Saturday, Sept. 7 as they take on Sterling College. Game time is set for 7 p.m.

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Justine Gaskamp

OPSU