

Aggies look to make most of CFP debut

COLLEGE STATION, Texas (AP) — Texas A&M coach Mike Elko had to take a moment to compose himself when he was asked if this season was championship or bust or if his Aggies were simply happy to reach the College Football Playoff for the first time as they prepared for Saturday’s game against Miami.

“I’m trying to be nice,” Elko said.

Then he continued. “I don’t know that you define it that way,” he said. “We’re in year two. We’re trying to establish a championship type of program. We haven’t won a championship around here since 1939, so that’s a lot of busts if that’s the only marker. I think we’re obviously in this thing to compete for a national championship for sure. We believe... we’re one of the teams that’s capable of going out there and winning it, but I don’t know that you define seasons like that.”

Like the Aggies, the Hurricanes are in the playoff for the first time though their championship drought is much shorter than Texas A&M’s. Miami has won five national titles with the most recent one coming in 2001.

Seventh-seeded Texas A&M (11-1) knew it would get a spot in the playoff well ahead of the bracket announcement on Dec. 7 after losing its only game in the regular-season finale to rival Texas. For the Hurricanes, there was a lot more

consternation, especially considering that they didn’t get a spot last season despite an identical 10-2 record.

The No. 10 seed Hurricanes got the last at-large spot over Notre Dame thanks to their 27-24 win over the Fighting Irish in the season opener.

Miami quarterback Carson Beck, who is in his first season with the team after a transfer from Georgia, said making the playoff “means everything.”

“This is what I came here for. ... There’s been a lot of adversity that we’ve had to face as a team, that I’ve had to face individually. In that moment to see The U come up on the TV, I obviously was extremely excited, and ready for the opportunity,” he said. “This team is excited to compete.”

The only common opponent between these teams is the Fighting Irish, who Texas A&M beat 41-40 on Sept. 13 for Notre Dame’s only other loss this season.

The Aggies have pointed to that victory as a key moment in the season that helped build their confidence. It’s a confidence that wasn’t shaken despite the loss to Texas.

“It was a rough loss, and you hate to lose that game, but we’ve got hopefully four more games left,” right tackle Dametrious Crownover said. “We can’t afford the time to sit and sulk. We had our time off to sit and sulk about it, and now we’ve got to go win a national championship.”

The winner advances to the Cotton Bowl to play No. 2 seed Ohio State on Dec. 31.

Miami on the road

The Hurricanes will have to buck a 20-year trend if they’re going to extend their season.

Going back to November 1905, the Hurricanes are 0-13 when they travel outside of Miami to play a team ranked 10th or better in the AP Top 25. In 10 of those games, Miami wound up losing by at least 13 points.

The Hurricanes are 1-0 against Top 10 teams this season; they beat then-No. 6 Notre Dame in Week 1 at home.

Coach Mario Cristobal called Kyle Field one of the best environments in sports and knows his team will have to be focused to deal with a crowd that’s certain to exceed 100,000.

“It comes down to your preparation because at the end of the day, this is going to come down to the 22 that are on the field, that are actually executing against each other, and execution is at a premium,” he said.

Moss back?

Texas A&M star running back Le’Veon Moss has missed the last six games with an ankle injury and is listed as questionable for the game. He had 70 carries for 389 yards and six touchdowns in six games this season, highlighted by career-high 139 yards in a win over Auburn.

If he can’t go, Texas A&M will continue to rely on Rueben Owens II to power the running game. He leads the team with 618 yards rushing but has managed just 76 yards combined in his last two games.

Toney watch

Miami wide receiver Malachi Toney needs 30 yards to post the eighth 1,000-yard receiving season in school history. The second-team All-American as a freshman, has had 25 catches for 272 yards in his last two games alone.

Not gone yet

Texas A&M offensive coordinator Collin Klein and defensive coordinator Jay Bateman have both taken jobs at other schools in recent weeks but will remain with the Aggies throughout their playoff run. Klein was named Kansas State’s coach following the retirement of Chris Klieman and Jay Bateman was hired as Kentucky’s defensive coordinator.

Though both men will be with the team for the postseason and Klein will continue to call plays, their successors will also be helping out after Elko filled both positions with coaches already on staff. Lyle Hemphill was promoted from associate head coach for defense to defensive coordinator and Holmon Wiggins, who was the co-offensive coordinator and wide receivers coach, was elevated to offensive coordinator.

► Steelers

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Cook’s corner

Left tackle has been a problematic spot for Pittsburgh, which lost starter Broderick Jones to injured reserve with a neck injury last month. Veteran Andrus Peat filled in and promptly went into the concussion protocol in a victory over Baltimore.

Enter Dylan Cook, who bounced between the practice squad and the active roster in Tampa Bay and then Pittsburgh for most of the last four years. He held his own during his first career start on Monday night against Miami.

Cook may start again in Detroit, where he could have to tangle with Lions star edge rusher Aidan Hutchinson, whom Rodgers called a “game-wrecker.”

Looking for defensive backs

Rodgers is coming off a pristine, two-touchdown performance against Miami. If the Lions are going to stop him, they will need help from a motley crew of defensive backs. Two of Detroit’s starters — S Brian Branch (Achilles) and CB Terrion Arnold (cornerback) — are on injured reserve and S Kerby Joseph (knee) is still working his way back. One of their top reserves, CB Amik Robertson, is dealing with a hand injury.

“There are some schematic things we will do a bit differently that we think will help,” Campbell said. “It isn’t going to be easy, but it should help significantly.”

NFL GLANCE

Thursday’s Games

Seattle 38, L.A. Rams 37, OT

Saturday’s Games

Philadelphia at Washington, 5 p.m.

Green Bay at Chicago, 8:20 p.m.

Sunday’s Games

Buffalo at Cleveland, 1 p.m.

Cincinnati at Miami, 1 p.m.

Kansas City at Tennessee, 1 p.m.

L.A. Chargers at Dallas, 1 p.m.

Minnesota at N.Y. Giants, 1 p.m.

N.Y. Jets at New Orleans, 1 p.m.

Tampa Bay at Carolina, 1 p.m.

Atlanta at Arizona, 4:05 p.m.

Jacksonville at Denver, 4:05 p.m.

Las Vegas at Houston, 4:25 p.m.

Pittsburgh at Detroit, 4:25 p.m.

New England at Baltimore, 8:20 p.m.

Monday’s Games

San Francisco at Indianapolis, 8:15 p.m.

NHL GLANCE

Thursday’s Games

Washington 4, Toronto 0

Ottawa 4, Pittsburgh 0

Montreal 4, Chicago 1

Edmonton 3, Boston 1

Minnesota 5, Columbus 2

Los Angeles 2, Tampa Bay 1

Buffalo 5, Philadelphia 3

N.Y. Rangers 2, St. Louis 1, OT

Calgary 4, Seattle 2

Dallas 5, San Jose 3

Friday’s Games

Vancouver 4, N.Y. Islanders 1

Florida 4, Carolina 3, SO

New Jersey at Utah, late

Winnipeg at Colorado, late

Dallas at Anaheim, late

Saturday’s Games

Detroit at Washington, 12:30 p.m.

Philadelphia at N.Y. Rangers, 12:30 p.m.

Chicago at Ottawa, 3 p.m.

Edmonton at Minnesota, 3 p.m.

N.Y. Islanders at Buffalo, 5 p.m.

St. Louis at Florida, 6 p.m.

Carolina at Tampa Bay, 7 p.m.

Pittsburgh at Montreal, 7 p.m.

Toronto at Nashville, 7 p.m.

Vancouver at Boston, 7 p.m.

Columbus at Anaheim, 10 p.m.

Seattle at San Jose, 10 p.m.

Vegas at Calgary, 10 p.m.

Sunday’s Games

Washington at Detroit, 1 p.m.

Colorado at Minnesota, 6 p.m.

Buffalo at New Jersey, 7 p.m.

Montreal at Pittsburgh, 7 p.m.

N.Y. Rangers at Nashville, 7 p.m.

Ottawa at Boston, 7 p.m.

Toronto at Dallas, 7 p.m.

Winnipeg at Utah, 7 p.m.

Vegas at Edmonton, 8 p.m.

SPORTS SCENE

SATURDAY, DEC. 20

BOYS BASKETBALL

Clarion-Limestone at Oil City (noon)

Saegertown at Rocky Grove (6 p.m.)

GIRLS BASKETBALL

Union/A-C Valley at Moniteau (6 p.m.)

Titusville at Corry Tournament

SCHOLASTIC WRESTLING

Cranberry at King of the Mountain Tournament (10 a.m.)

Franklin at Sharpville Tournament (9 a.m.)

Redbank Valley Duals (9 a.m.)

MONDAY, DEC. 22

BOYS BASKETBALL

Oil City at Meadville (6 p.m.)

North Clarion at Keystone (6 p.m.)

GIRLS BASKETBALL

Hickory at Franklin (6 p.m.)

Cambridge Springs at Oil City (6 p.m.)

Forest Area at Union/A-C Valley (6 p.m.)

Slippery Rock at Cochranton (6 p.m.)

Grove City at Mapletwood (6 p.m.)

SCHOLASTIC WRESTLING

Titusville at Harbor Creek (6 p.m.)

TUESDAY, DEC. 23

BOYS BASKETBALL

Rocky Grove at Clarion (6 p.m.)

A-C Valley at Cranberry (8 p.m.)

Forest Area at North Clarion (6 p.m.)

Cochranton at Greenville (6 p.m.)

Titusville at Mapletwood (6 p.m.)

GIRLS BASKETBALL

Lakeview at Cranberry (6:30 p.m.)

Clarion at Clarion-Limestone (6 p.m.)

Johnsburg at Keystone (6 p.m.)

Union City at Titusville (6 p.m.)

SCHOLASTIC WRESTLING

at Franklin

FRANKLIN 65, MAPLEWOOD 9

107 — Seth Hollerman (F) won by forfeit.

114 — Noah Riddle (F) won by forfeit.

121 — Aiden Myers (F) pinned Trenton Thompson.

1:54.

127 — Chase Graham (F) won by forfeit.

133 — Jeremiah Wickstrom (M) dec. Austin Hart.

17-16.

139 — Brian Hart (F) won by forfeit.

145 — Orvis Davis (F) won by forfeit.

152 — Avery Thomas (F) won by forfeit.

160 — Ethan Hart (F) pinned Isaac Lesuer, :52.

172 — Corbin Clark (F) won by forfeit.

189 — Colton Smith (M) pinned Carter Hutchinson.

3:07.

215 — Gary Kiselka (F) tech. fall Chase MacQuarrie.

16-0.

285 — Kaden Kiselka (F) won by forfeit.

at Cochranton

COMMODORE PERRY 40, COCHRANTON 29

107 — No bout.

114 — Reid English (CP) won by forfeit.

121 — Drew Gilarno (CP) major dec. Abraham Ly.

19-11.

127 — Blaze Gigler (C) pinned Owen Reynolds, :40.

133 — Hoyt Lazzar (CP) pinned Cole Schmitt, 1:40.

139 — Milo Heigley (CP) won by forfeit.

145 — Austin Boozer (C) pinned Mason Anderson.

1-13.

152 — Brayden Williams (C) pinned Daimien Beiter.

4:56.

160 — Shane Yeager (CP) pinned Bryce Hart, 5:22.

172 — Garrett Irwin (C) pinned Noah Miller-Frye.

1:55.

189 — Cash Morrell (C) tech. fall Konrad Drew, 21-4.

215 — Jacob Barcheck (CP) pinned Brandon Newbury.

1:07.

285 — Matthew Chess (CP) pinned Emmitt Summerlin.

4-28.

COLLEGE BOWL GAMES

Dec. 13

Celebration Bowl

Atlanta

SC State 40, Prairie View A&M 38, 4 OT

LA Bowl

Inglewood, Calif.

Washington 38, Boise State 10

Dec. 16

Salute to Veterans Bowl

Montgomery, Ala.

Jacksonville State 17, Troy 13

Dec. 17

Cure Bowl

Orlando, Fla.

Old Dominion 24, South Florida 10

68 Ventures Bowl

Mobile, Ala.

Delaware 20, Louisiana-Lafayette 13

Dec. 18

Xbox Bowl

Frisco, Texas

Arkansas State 34, Missouri State 28

Dec. 19

Myrtle Beach Bowl

Conway, S.C.

Western Michigan 41, Kennesaw State 6

Gasparilla Bowl

Tampa, Fla.

NC State 31, Memphis 7

College Football Playoff

First Round

No. 11 Alabama (10-3) at No. 8 Oklahoma (10-2), 8 p.m. (ESPN/ABC)

Dec. 20

College Football Playoff

First Round

No. 10 Miami (Fla.) (10-2) at No. 7 Texas A&M (11-1), noon (ESPN/ABC)

No. 17 Tulane (11-2) at No. 6 Mississippi (11-1), 3:30 p.m. (TNT/HBO Max)

No. 19 James Madison (12-1) at No. 5 Oregon (11-1), 7:30 p.m. (TNT/HBO Max)

Dec. 22

Famous Idaho Potato Bowl

Boise, Idaho

Utah St. vs. Washington St., 2 p.m. (ESPN)

Dec. 23

Boca Raton Bowl

Boca Raton, Fla.

Louisville vs. Toledo, 2 p.m. (ESPN)

New Orleans Bowl

New Orleans

Western Kentucky vs. Southern Miss, 5:30 p.m. (ESPN)

Dec. 26

GameAbove Sports Bowl

Detroit, Mich.

Central Michigan vs. Northwestern, 1 p.m. (ESPN)

Rate Bowl

Phoenix

New Mexico vs. Minnesota, 4:30 p.m. (ESPN)

First Responder Bowl

Dallas, Texas

FIU vs. UTSA, 8 p.m. (ESPN)

Dec. 27

Military Bowl

Annapolis, Md.

Pittsburgh vs. East Carolina, 11 a.m. (ESPN)

Pinstripe Bowl

Bronx, N.Y.

Clemson vs. Penn St., noon (ABC)

Fenway Bowl

Boston

UConn vs. Army, 2:15 p.m. (ESPN)

Pop-Tarts Bowl

Orlando, Fla.

No. 12 BYU vs. No. 24 Georgia Tech, 3:30 p.m. (ABC)

Arizona Bowl

Tucson, Ariz.

Fresno St. vs. Miami (OH), 4:30 p.m. (CW Network)

New Mexico Bowl

Albuquerque

No. 23 North Texas vs. San Diego St., 5:45 p.m. (ESPN)

Dec. 31

Gator Bowl

Jacksonville, Fla.

No. 25 Missouri vs. NO. 20 Virginia, 7:30 p.m. (ABC)

Texas Bowl

Houston

LSU vs. No. 21 Houston, 9:15 p.m. (ESPN)

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