Today is D-Day for the state's football team. If the Big Five collectively is going to keep its unbeaten record intact, it must take care of business on its home turf. The Gophers are being challenged by Texas A&M, which is rated the No. 7 team in the country and might be better than that.

Darrell Royal of Texas, who is not long enough to see eye to eye with the Aggies, rates the Gophers as "one of the four or five best teams in the country.

Certainly A&M has a lot of weapons. Fossil oil, George Woodard rambled for three touchdowns and 150 yards last week against Kansas. The interesting thing about Woodard is that he weighs more than any member of the Tech squad, somewhere in the vicinity of 280, which is a nice neighborhood for any fullback.

A&M also has running back Curtis Dickey, who is a 9.4 sprinter but who weighs 222 pounds. Dickey averaged better than nine yards per carry against Kansas.

Obviously, nobody can ignore Tony Franklin, the bare-footed kicker who set the Division I record last year when he booted 65 and 64-yard field goals in the same game.

But the man who makes the Aggies go, and is the player Coach Emory Bellard could least afford to lose, is quarterback David Walker. A senior, Walker directed the Aggies to 299 points in their last eight games, all of them wins. That's an average of better than 37 points per outing.

Behind Walker, A&M has a couple of promising freshmen, but neither is deemed ready yet to direct the potent Aggie wishbone, which grinds out yardage relentlessly.

Tech has the home field advantage, and in this case it may be exactly that. This is the only game all year that A&M will play on grass. The Southwest Conference fields are all artificial turf.

The Hokies are talking a good game, and the players seem intent on pulling off the upset. The Aggies are a well-oiled machine, however, and will not go down without a fight.

The porcupine effect is obvious. If the Hokies can take advantage of the Aggies' weaknesses, they might just pull off the upset.

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Brill

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As asked whether Michigan's defense was suspect, Duke scout Mo Forte said, "Nobody knows, because the offense always has the ball." That applies to A&M as well. The Aggies seldom throw, although last year they did burn Tech on screen passes.

Because the Aggies have games with Texas Tech and Michigan upcoming, they figure to play it tight to the vest again, offensively. Publicist Spec Gammon says the Aggies have a weakness against Kansas State and St. Louis (28-14) before winning by 14.

Ever since Sharpe replaced Charlie Coffey at Tech, the coach insisted that a team could not play the ball and still pass. The past two seasons, the Hokies have operated a basic ground attack.

But it figures that if Tech has any designs on upsetting No. 7, it is going to have to throw the ball and the Hokies have a new weapon in freshman wide receiver Ron Zollicoffer.

Since the students aren't in school yet, this won't be a sellout, but the crowd will top 35,000 and may go beyond 35,000. It will be the only nonconference A&M participates in this year.

As for the rest of the Big Five:

There is no hope for Virginia in the blazing afternoon sun at Texas. The Longhorns poured it on against Boston College and there is no reason to think they will do otherwise against UVA. Texas 45, Virginia 0.

Richmond plays at North Carolina, and the Tar Heels should rediscove their offense after being grounded at Kentucky. Carolina 31, Richmond 7.

William & Mary travels to wounded Pitt, where the Panthers are growing since losing quarterback Matt Cavanaugh as well as a game to Notre Dame. Even without Cavanaugh, Pitt 35, W&M 7.

VMI has a good chance to win at Army. The Cadets aren't in the same class as the other Big Five foes of the day. VMI must shut down Army's air arm. Army 28, VMI 20.