

Cougars facing hard times

By SEAN PETTY
Battalion Staff

There was another new television show on Saturday afternoon starring the Houston Cougars called "Hard Times."

The show has been in the making most of the Southwest Conference basketball season as team after team has given the Cougs a hard time. The times have never been harder for the Houston basketball program as they even lost to the 1-9 TCU Horned Frogs.

The co-stars in Saturday's episode were the Texas Aggies who made their second appearance of the year on the Cougs' show and once again, gave them an extremely hard time and another loss.

"I guarantee you, we played as well as we can," said coach and producer of the Cougs' show, Guy Lewis. "We haven't folded our tent and stolen off into the night."

"They're (the Aggies) big and strong and good ball handlers. They were getting a lot of second and third shots today. They are hard to defend above the rim."

Above the rim is where the Cougars' problems have been all season. Lewis would likely trade his red-and-white-checked towel for a tall center who can score and play strong defense. Houston's hard times started early in the year with the loss of two of their big men, Cedric Fears and Darnell Roper.

The Cougs are using 6-5 George Walker at center against the likes of 6-11 Rudy Woods of A&M.

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Yet, it was Walker who led the Cougars in scoring with 16 points and pulled down seven rebounds in the land of the giants under the boards.

"Heck, he's (Walker) been scoring for us all season," Lewis said. "The only reason he's playing center is because we don't have anyone else to put there."

"I just tried to play with them," Walker said of the Aggies' big front line of Woods, Rynn Wright and Vernon Smith. "I think I did a pretty good job. We came out pretty hot today and were really fired up. We just kept pushing in the first half but lost in the second half."

"Today was a real physical game. I had to worry about Rynn on one side and Rudy on the other. Rynn will just out-muscle you and Rudy is so screamin' tall he's almost impossible to defend when he goes to the hoop. There was a lot of action under the boards that the refs didn't see also."

"I think Rudy got frustrated out there today," Walker said of Woods, who had three quick fouls that kept him out most of the first half. "I guess most big men do get frustrated when they play against little guys."

But all the frustration belongs to Cougar seniors Ken Ciolli and Walker. They have seen Houston at its greatest with talent like Otis

Birdsong and others. And now they see this Houston Cougar team with the worst record of any Cougar team since 1960.

"It's a real tough way to go out after three years," said Ciolli as he sat dazed, slumped in his chair slowly taking the tape off his ankles. "People don't remember too far back you know."

"They're into this year and what's happening now. Our past seasons don't mean much right now."

"I'm not gonna go out and jump off a building or anything," said the senior guard from Houston. "It's not the worst thing to happen to a team. Nobody can live on the year before, just look at Kentucky this year. They were national champs last year and I think they are at the bottom of their conference this year or close to it."

"We're just not shooting well. We sure aren't going to go out and scare anyone with our shooting percentage. We are just going to try and win the rest of our games so we can get into the Summit for the SWC tournament."

"Otherwise, they (the rest of the schools in the conference) will be playing in the tournament while we're going to class wondering what's going on," Ciolli said.

The season has been tough mentally and physically for Walker also, who has stepped into the unfamiliar role of center this year.

"It really gets to you man," he

said. "I just try and not let me too much. I'm just not losing as much as we've been this year. I'm used to helping the team win but it's been one big struggle."

"All we have to do from now on is to play like we did today. We have to play them all now on if we want to make Summit."

Although Ciolli and Walker be back, Guy Lewis will must think about Cougar now and in the future.

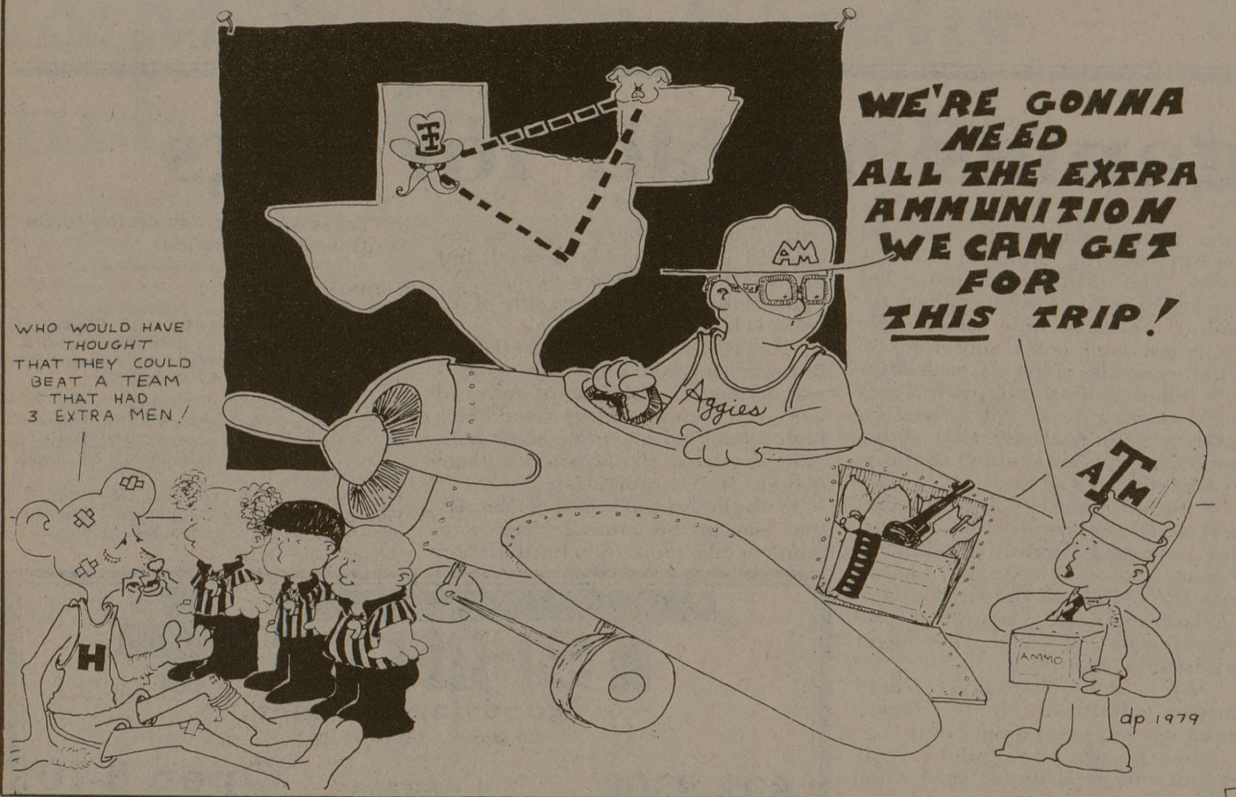
"We still have games," said Lewis. "We can't get on the past. We are looking future."

"I sure would like to see that home court advantage everyone is talking about tournament. I also hope shot at the Summit."

1979 hasn't exactly been of the Cougar. The team started the very first day giving the Cotton Bowl

Dame. And now the Cougar ball team has hit an all-time season by losing three games at Hofheinz Pavilion, 12 losses for the year. The son is not even over.

So there may be an agonizing episode of a "Hard Times" before the finally canceled in March.



Gerulaitis wins Fairfield Classic

United Press International
NORTH LITTLE ROCK, Ark. — Top-seeded Vitas Gerulaitis of Great Neck, N.Y., completed a flawless performance at the Fairfield

Bay Tennis Classic Sunday by winning the final matches in singles and doubles competition. He was the only one of eight seeded players to last to the finals.

and he wrapped up the tournament undefeated.

Gerulaitis beat unseeded Butch Walts of Phoenix in singles 6-2, 6-2, then teamed up with Vladimir Zednik to defeat Australians Phil Dent and Colin Dibley 5-7, 6-3, 7-5.

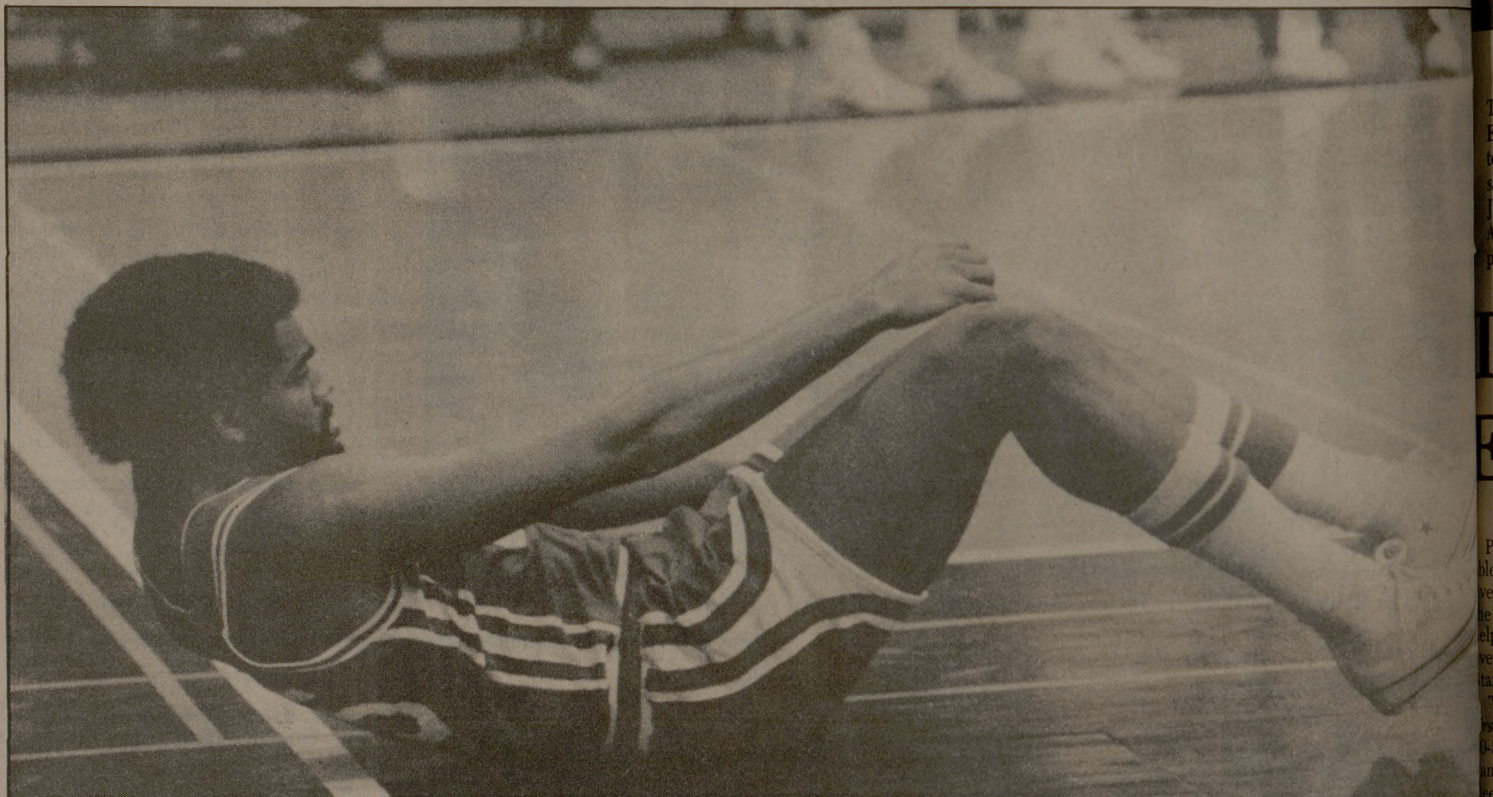
Gerulaitis' total winnings in the \$50,000 tournament were \$11,500. He had predicted a close game with Walts and said he believed Walts wasn't up to par in their final match. Walts agreed, and said he was tired.

"If I could have served and volleyed with full strength, I could have done better, but I wasn't getting that extra step on the ball," he said.

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Houston's George Walker: "I'm just not used to losing as much as we've been losing this year."

Battalion photo by Lee Roy

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