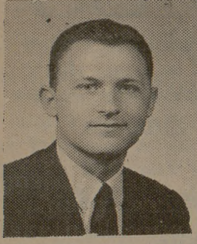


**Sports Desk**



**Ags Thrive On Pressure**

by John Platzer

As each game of the Southwest Conference basketball race is checked off the calendar, steady nerves sink deeper and deeper into the column of fleeting memories at Aggie-land.

Following the latest one point overtime romp past Texas, it has reached the stage where Aggies are demanding a one-and-one opportunity on anything that is free.

If Billy Bob Barnett, Ronnie Peret, Mike Heitmeyer, Sonny Benefield, Harry Bostic, Steve Niles, Bill Cooksey, Chuck Smith and crew had served under General George Armstrong Custer, it would have been the Indians who would have lost by a "hair" at the Little Big Horn. Instead they are serving under General Shelby Metcalf and it is their SWC opponents who have been scalped seven times in eight outings.

This has been good enough to propel the Aggies into undisputed first place in the conference one game past the midway point. As could be expected, however, two teams (Southern Methodist and Baylor) continue to keep the pressure on A&M one notch behind with identical 5-2 marks.

A&M began its heart stopping habit of extremely close games early in the season when they lost a 75-74 decision to Stephen F. Austin after leading by as many as 18 points in the second half. They then hit their stride over the Christmas holidays with back-to-back two point victories over University of Pacific (77-75) and Wyoming (83-81) for the consolation championship of the prestigious All College Tournament in Oklahoma City.

By the time conference play rolled around, the Aggies had mastered their art and wasted no time in proving it by racing past Texas Tech 85-84 in the opener.

The Aggies enjoyed a "laugher" in their next outing as they ran up a 73-68 score on the Arkansas Razorbacks. It was no time at all before the Aggies were back in the groove, however, with a 76-75 overtime victory over SMU and a last second 72-71 verdict over Texas Christian.

After an embarrassingly easy 65-57 win over Texas, A&M had the tables turned on them briefly in Waco suffering a 66-65 defeat at the hands of Baylor. Coach Metcalf's cagers became wasteful in their next game against Rice as they scored 7 more points than needed in a 90-82 win. Aggie fans were glad to see their team return to the game plan Tuesday night with the 70-69 overtime rout of Texas.

A top secret dispatch from the White House (intercepted by the Battalion Wednesday) reveals that the Aggies are currently leading the pack (by one vote, of course) for the much coveted "Conservationist-of-the-Year award." Considering that on their way to compiling a 12-6 record for the year thus far the Aggies have singled the nets for exactly 1388 points while holding their opponents to only 1388 points, it is obvious that the honor is well deserved. Supreme confidence has been the main factor that has allowed the Aggies to keep their cool while all about them players are losing theirs. The Aggie cagers don't "think" they are going to come through in the clutch situations, they "know" they are.

Many writers in the country call the current UCLA basketball squad the greatest ever assembled and say that no team has a chance of defeating the Bruins this season. Given the right situation, however, they would be no match for the Aggies.

If in a game between the two schools, UCLA had the ball and a one point lead with 10 seconds remaining another victory for the Aggies would be all but assured.

**A&M Gymnasts Fall To Strong Bearcats**

The Texas A&M Gymnastics team tasted competition for the second time this year Friday night in G. Rollie White Coliseum as they fell to Sam Houston's older and more experienced gymnasts, 103.65 to 99.36.

A&M's weak events were the free exercise and the side horse. Shannon Young of Sam Houston placed first in both of these events helping to pull his team 4.9 points ahead of the Aggies. A&M was able to muster a third place on the floor exercise with Lee Reeves scoring a 7.05 and a second place on the side horse as Mike Kyler scored a 5.2. While competing in the floor exercise, Reeves, A&M's best vaulter, sprained his ankle seriously enough to eliminate him from competing in what could have been the Aggies most important event. With their number one vaulter out, the Aggies gave up first place to Sam Houston's Bob Kofod in the long horse vault who scored a 6.55 while Mickey Stratton of A&M took third with a score of 6.05.

The parallel bars provided the keenest competition with Sam Houston's Clayton Thurston turning in a score of 7.2 for a first place, while A&M's Rex Stratton earned a 6.95 rating and placed third. At the end of this event, Sam Houston was ahead by 7.14 points. The high bar was the Aggies best event of the night as Mickey Stratton took first with a 5.95, while Mike Kyler and Rex Stratton earned second and third places, respectively. A&M's fine performance here cut SHSTC's lead to only 3 points. In his first meet this season, A&M's Tom Cooper took a second place in the rings, but this was not enough to put the Aggies in the lead.

Even though the Aggies were edged this meet, they are improving and expect to have a fine

season. The team score went up 21.7 points over their score in their last competition. Average individual scores went up from 4.37 to 5.57.

A&M's gymnastics team's next competition will be Saturday, Feb. 15, in a triangular meet against San Jacinto and Odessa in Houston.

**A&M Car Club Hosts Rallye**

The Texas A&M Sports Car Club will be having its club picture taken for the Aggie-land this evening at 7:30 p.m. in front of the M.S.C. After the picture-taking, a short Monte Carlo-type rallye will be held which will last no more than an hour.

This rallye will be of a promotional nature, in preparation for the club's big two-day, all expenses-paid rallye to Del Rio and back, which will be held early in May. The May rallye will be the club's largest venture to date, with fifty entries, overnight stops and twin banquets included, a large purse for the winners, and plenty of exciting driving.

The TAMSCC offers to all drivers a chance to compete with their automobile in club-sponsored and other local and state-wide events, and offers valuable discounts and information to novice and expert drivers alike through its meetings and other functions. The club is open to all drivers and non-drivers, if they have a true interest in any aspect of the automotive world. For more information about the club and its upcoming plans, call Mr. Alan Weckerling or Mr. Emil Pela at 845-3005 or 845-1984.



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