

Cagers seek rebound, repeat of history



Jeff Overhouse

Coming off the second worst Texas Aggie ever record in 15 years the Texas A&M basketball squad embarks on the 1971 season as the underdog.

And in no game will they be more the underdog than when they tangle with the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) in December.

Last year's 9-17 mark, only the second losing campaign in seven tries for Coach Shelby Metcalf, came at the end of predictions that ranged for the Aggies to be either the champion or a major contender for the Southwest Conference title.

But the Aggies found themselves nestled in seventh place in the eight team circuit and minus a standout player. In the past it had been Carroll Broussard, Bennie Lenox, John Bealy and most recently Mike Heitmann that gave the Aggies the consistent 20 point performance. Last year it wasn't there.

Metcalf, whose teams own a couple of Southwest Conference titles, two second place finishes and a third in seven years, will seek to put the Aggies back in the winning column.

Recalling Metcalf's first losing season of 1967, the next Aggie club was 14-10 and then a year later they were conference champs. In other words the sophomores, who had their problems in 1967 had developed into cham-

ions by their senior season. Last year's group was paced by several sophomores, the most prominent of which was the league's sophomore of the year, 6-7 Jeff Overhouse. Overhouse averaged 13.3 points and 8.7 points to rank second on the squad behind Steve Niles.

Niles, one of four departed seniors, was drafted by the New York Knickerbockers of the National Basketball Association in that league's annual collegiate player draft.

Besides Overhouse, who could see action at either post this fall, the Aggies got timely support especially in the second half of the season from first year players, Charlie Jenkins, Bob Gobin and Wayne Howard.

Howard, after seeing very little action in the early part of the season due to a misunderstanding with Coach Metcalf, finished the season with an 11.4 average in SWC games as the former high school All-American at Spring Branch Memorial had scored only 17 points in part-time duty in 8 nonleague contests.

Jenkins took over the point post and scored at an average of 7.2 during league play. His play was valuable late in the campaign as the Aggies had to fill the point post that came open when senior Pat Kavanaugh missed the last half of the season

due to a back injury. Gone also are seniors Bill Cooksey and Chuck Smith, who shared their moments of glory and along with Niles were members of the 1969 championship squad.

Gobin, noted for his aggressive style of play, passing and ballhawking defense, hopes to improve on his shooting which produced 5.3 per game.

Another sophomore from last year's squad was Bill O'Brien, but the 6-0 pointman who teamed with Howard at Memorial, is not returning this fall as he is transferring to McNeese State.

6-7 Rick Duplantis and 6-3 Bobby Threadgill are the only returning seniors for the Aggies and, like their counterparts, had their moments but as the case was didn't have enough of them.

Duplantis, bothered early last season with a knee injury that was recuperating from surgery, chipped for a 7.5 average in scoring and 4.2 rebounds per game. His .496 shooting percentage ranked among the top's leaders.

Coach Metcalf and assistant Jim Culpepper went hunting for the big gun and felt that the quickest help might be the junior college route where the Baylor Bears have benefited greatly and the Texas Christian University Horned Frogs found a conference champion.

Culpepper — spending numerous hours searching the midwest, northeast and west and fighting with the powers such as Drake, USC and Jacksonville and just about everybody else — picked up two junior college stars.

The most prominent of them is 6-2 Mario Brown from Kennedy King Junior College in Chicago. Brown, a prolific driver, will fight along with Gobin, Jenkins and freshman Bobby McKey for the point position.

Brad Pauley from Glendive Junior College in Montana is 6-5 and will be in the battle at the high post and at the wings when practice starts in October.

The Aggies have added five freshman recruits to the list but have six prospects coming up from last year's 7-5 squad to battle for the varsity.

Lots of travel for Ag cagers

Traveling from one end of the country to the other, the Texas Aggie basketball team is slated to appear in three tournaments this winter in their 27 game schedule.

The Aggies hit the road after opening the season with three games to travel to Los Angeles for a matchup with defending national champion, UCLA and then on Jan. 7-8 will be on the other end of the continent when they take part in the Presidential Classic in Washington, D.C.

Appearing with the Aggies at the Presidential Tourney will be the host team, George Washington, American University and Virginia Tech.

On Dec. 22-23 A&M will face a top notch field in the Lobo Invitational tournament at Albuquerque, N. Mex. The University of New Mexico, eastern independent St. John's and Midwestern independent Creighton will provide the opposition.

The Aggies are slated to make their annual visit to the Houston Classic Dec. 27-28 when they and the University of Houston co-host the event at Hofheinz Pavilion. Louisiana State University of the Southeastern Conference and Michigan State University of the Big Ten will be on hand to round out the field.

A&M opens the season against Texas Wesleyan, Northwestern Louisiana State and Missouri Valley Conference power Tulsa before going to the west coast.

Most prominent among the sophomores-to-be is 6-6 Randy Knowles, who will be trying for a wing or post job and McKey, a fiery competitor at the point. McKey, from Dallas Thomas Jefferson was impressive with his leadership, quickness and a good shooting eye. Knowles, from Geneva, Ohio, is an outstanding outside shooter as he led the Fish with an 18-point average last season.

Other prospects from the Fish are 6-3 Joe Arciniega at a wing post, and 6-8 postmen Johnny Mayo and Jack Vest.

Mark Stewart, who was one of the Fish leaders despite playing without a scholarship, will also contend for wing post.

The five freshman recruits who will make the nucleus of the Aggie Fish team coached by Culpepper are headed by Cedric Joseph who was chosen the play-

er of the year last season for high school basketball in Texas and scored 66 points in one game. He will be joined by high school teammate 6-4 wingman Dale Donaldson.

6-7 Webb Williams brings his 30-plus average from Class B power Comstock and 6-8 Jerry Mercer brings a lot of muscle and scoring power from Cypress-Fairbanks, the Class 4A basketball champion. Mercer, also was an All-State selection in football and dominated the backboards at the state basketball tourney. Another 30-point average was recorded by 5-11 guard Mike Floyd from Rockford, Illinois.

With defending national champion UCLA on the schedule the Aggies will definitely be the underdog but there's a possibility the Aggies will come back and that comeback will be a strong one. Remember 1967 and 1969.



Rick Duplantis



Charlie Jenkins



Bobby Threadgill



Bob Gobin



Wayne Howard

Veriato, Johnson pace Ag golfers

With the changing of the Southwest Conference golf championship format to medal play rather than round robin match play, the conference moved in the direction of the re-entry into league competition of the University of Texas at Austin.

The Aggies seem to agree with medal play as Steve Veriato, and Tommy Johnson finished first and third respectively this spring in the Southwest Conference medal individual tournament on the A&M course.

Both return as a fine nucleus for the team that was fourth behind Texas Tech, Arkansas and Southern Methodist in match play standings.

If the University of Texas at Austin is allowed re-entry then the circuit will be forced with contending against the National champions as the Longhorns, behind freshman medalist Ben Crenshaw, squeezed by Florida and the University of Houston for the title on the final day.

Veriato, from Hilo, Hawaii, sizzled the course with the lowest four rounds ever shot, 273, in-

cluding a round of 64, seven under par in the tournament. Johnson after opening with a 65 in his first round, finished with a 279.

Coach Henry Ransom's Aggies have won six Southwest Conference championships in his twelve seasons and lost only one senior off last year's squad, Mike Machemehl from Beaumont.

Aside from Veriato and Johnson, the Aggies return three-year lettermen Tommy Shelton, of A&M Consolidated and Tommy Gilbert from Jacksboro.

Other top players who will be bidding for the team spots will be sophomore Clay Dosier, sophomore Chet Edwards, and junior Randy Tickner.

Players vie for the four spots on the Aggie traveling squad through grueling competition that usually includes playing 10 rounds of golf to find a low score winner.

This was Veriato's second appearance in the league medal tournament as he finished 10th a year ago at Houston while a teammate Richard Ellis took fifth place.

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