Roundballers improve during holidays

Mercer, Joseph and Johnson tabbed all-tourney

By KEVIN COFFEY
Sports Editor

Over the holidays, UCLA and A&M proved that when it comes o basketball, nothing is constant.

For the Aggies it was a season-l break full of ups and downs ut coach Shelby Metcalf saw ome marked improvement.

"The fans that didn't see us play over the holidays should be pleased with what we've accomplished since last semester," said Metcalf. "Of course, I wish we would have learned a little more."

The Ags left College Station with an unblemished 4-0 mark before hitting the rough tournament competition.

"Overall I was pleased with the caliber of teams that we played and we found out a lot about the team," said the Aggie mentor.

Teamwise, the Ags split the two games of each of the three tournaments. Individually, Jerry Mercer, Cedric Joseph and Mike Johnson garnered all-tournament honors.

"Mike (Johnson) and John (Thornton) were probably the most improved individuals over the break," said Metcalf, "but we had some other good things happen as well."

Johnson hit 28 points, his high as an Aggie, against Denver in the Bluebonnet Classic in Houston.

"Mike has really learned our system well for a freshman," Metcalf said of the Chicago native. "He has matured to the point that when he isn't scoring he doesn't let it affect other parts of his game. He still plays tough defense."

Thornton, a junior college transfer from San Antonio, appears to be quickly becoming the apple of Metcalf's eye.

"John is so versatile and solid it's unreal," said Metcalf. "We can use him in the pivot to rest Joseph or Mercer or outside when Knowles needs a breather. His attitude is just great and it adds a lot to the club."

Other bright spots for the Ags include the new stability of Randy Knowles who was struggling in the early going.

"Randy is working as hard now as when he was a sophomore and has finally found the groove" said Metcalf. "Mike Floyd is finally getting healthy again and this should help him break a mid-season slump.

Assistant coach Norm Reuther whose duties include working with the postmen said the big men hopefully have found a peak at which to level off.

"We just haven't found the consistency we need yet," said Reuther. "Mercer, Joseph and Thornton all play some great games but we need to keep playing that way. At times we let up and that is only natural but we just can't let people sneak up on us."

Players and coaches alike felt the highlight to the holiday activities was the Marshall Memorial Tournament in Huntington, W. Va.

"Hezekiah Ward, one of the few people we met up there from Texas, just about adopted the team and made the holidays great," said Metcalf. "Even though we didn't play real well, the personal touch made the trip worthwhile."

The Ags are 9-5 with a 1-1 conference mark entering tonight's contest with Texas Tech.

Holiday Results

A&M		OPP
71	Va. Commonwealth	72
65	Geo. Washington	91**
86	Northwestern	84**
89	Okla. Christian	68***
67	Tulsa	88***
79	Florida State	99****
99	Denver	84****
100	Southwestern	87
90	SMU	75*
72	TCU	88

*—Southwest Conference
**—Marshall Memorial Tournament.
***—Pan American Classic
****—Bluebonnet Classic

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Notre Dame tops UCLA for No. 1

By The Associated Press

Notre Dame's basketball team joined Ara Parseghian's football team Monday as sovereign of all it could survey—No. 1 in The Associated Press poll.

Dick "Digger" Phelps, young coach of the Fighting Irish cagers, anticipated the outcome when, holding one finger on each hand high in the air, told a Sunday night pep rally:

"I want to thank you fans for being the No. 1 sports fans and No. 1 sports town in America."

Notre Dame, in ending UCLA's 88-game winning streak with a dramatic come-from-behind 71-70 victory Saturday, bumped the great California team out of first place for the first time in three years.

The Irish collected 36 of 51 first-place votes from a panel of sports writers and broadcasters for a total of 990 points. UCLA received 15 first-place votes and 944 points.

The Notre Dame victory, scored with an unbroken 12-point surge in the final three minutes of the game at South Bend, ended the longest winning streak in college basketball history.

It duplicated—on a smaller scale—Notre Dame's upset of another powerful UCLA team Jan. 23, 1971, when the Irish won 89-82 to hand the Bruins their first non-league loss in 48 games.

UCLA, under the grandfatherly John Wooden, has dominated college basketball for most of the last decade, winning No. 1 honors in 1964, 1967, 1969, 1971, 1972 and 1973.

The Bruins have won the last seven NCAA championships and nine of the last 10.

Notre Dame's tenancy on the poll's penthouse could be short-lived. The Fighting Irish have a return engagement with the Bruins next Saturday night at UCLA's Pauley Pavilion, and the West Coast giants have let it be known they will be out for blood.

The Top Twenty, with first-place votes in parentheses, season records through games of last Saturday and total points. Points tabulated on basis of 20-18-16-14-12-10-9-8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1:

1.	Notre Dame (36)	10-0	990
2.	UCLA (15)	13-1	944
3.	N. Car. St.	11-1	782
4.	No. Carolina	12-1	651
5	Maryland	10-2	649
6.	Marquette	14-1	510
7.	Vanderbilt	12-1	423
8.	Providence	13-2	375
9.	Alabama	10-2	334
10.	L. Beach St.	12-1	285
11.	Indiana	11-3	176
12.	Southern Cal	11-2	150
13.	So. Carolina	10-3	105
14.	Louisville	10-3	104
15.	Michigan	11-2	99
16.	Pittsburgh	13-1	88
17.	Wisconsin	10-2	69
18.	Centenary	12-0	41
19.	New Mexico	12-3	23
20.	Arizona St.	11-4	16

Others receiving votes, listed alphabetically: Arizona, Cincinnati, Colorado State, Detroit, Jacksonville, Kansas, Kansas State, Marshall, Maryland-Eastern Shore, Missouri, Nevada-Las Vegas, Oral Roberts, Purdue, Syracuse, Texas-El Paso.

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