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Thornton leads Aggs past Hogs, 86-80

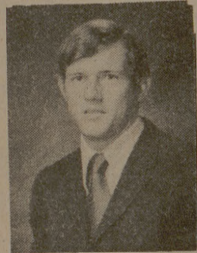
Junco transfer hits 29 in overtime victory



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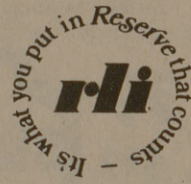
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By KEVIN COFFEY
Sports Editor

Junior college transfer John Thornton scored eight of his 29 points in a five minute overtime period to lead the Texas Aggies to an 86-80 Southwest Conference basketball win over the Arkansas Razorbacks.

Some 4,127 fans in G. Rollie White Coliseum witnessed Thornton's finest performance as an Aggie. The burley 6-6 junior hauled in nine rebounds while hitting in 12 of 19 shots. He added a perfect 5 of 5 free shots for his game high total.

Thornton was not alone in his efforts as it was a team win for the Aggies.

Cedric Joseph poured in 20 points and collected 18 rebounds while aiding in shutting off the Hogs Dean Tolson in the second half.

Tolson hit 20 points in the first stanza but the Aggies' collapsing zone defense forced the high scoring postman away from the basket where he proved ineffective.

Jerry Mercer was saddled with personal fouls most of the second half and held to eight points and three rebounds. C. W. Guthrie however, aided the cause with six points and six rebounds.

Randy Knowles, who burned the Razorbacks last year for 42

points here, hit for 13 and nine rebounds.

Only five Razorbacks scored, all in double figures. Tolson hit for 26, Ricky Medlock 17, Robert Birden 15, Jack Schulte 12 and Dan Pauler 10.

The Aggies led almost the entire game but Arkansas tied it at 72-all with 2:01 remaining. Each team scored two more points and the Aggs had a chance to win in regulation time but Knowles desperation shot missed the mark.

Birden put the Hogs on top 76-74 with the overtime just six seconds old. Joseph tied the game again 20 seconds later and Thornton put A&M up by two at 78-76. Schulte brought the Hogs back over with 2:34 left but Thornton then put the game away.

A&M's answer to super-sub all year, hit two free throws and two buckets to give A&M a comfortable 84-78 lead.

Birden hit two meaningless free throws for Arkansas as did Knowles as time ran out.

Charlie Jenkins, forced to play the entire 40 minutes due to a sidelining injury to Mike Floyd, handled the Razorback press with relative ease. Only one point, the close of the first half, did the Hogs make steals for easy scores, Jenkins scored only two points but tossed six assists.

A&M was an entirely different team from last Saturday against Baylor. Lackluster in Waco, The

Aggies scraped for loose balls and battled the Hogs for every rebound.

Arkansas coach Lanny Van Eman thought the passing at the hands of Baylor was a big factor in last night's game.

"After A&M got out rebounding by 15 in Waco," the Razorback mentor said, "they had to come back on pride."

Van Eman took blame for the Hogs' inability to get the ball to Tolson in the second half. "It just didn't seem we could get it in. I'll have to see the films to find out exactly why. I think he (Tolson) started to come outside too early and he lost some effectiveness."

Thornton was his usual, sedate self in the Aggie locker room.

"It was an insult against Baylor so we had to come back and prove something. We've had problems getting ready on the road. I don't know why but we were ready tonight."

Thornton, who found himself open for easy shots, said the Arkansas defense went to sleep at times.

"They were standing around, not dropping back the way they should and I got some good passes. I didn't do anything different tonight."

In an effort to shake up the team, coach Shelby Metcalf started Thornton and Ray Roberts in place of Floyd and Knowles.

"Randy has been getting off to slow starts and Mike's injury necessitated in changes. John and Ray played well in starting roles."

Roberts collected 11 rebounds

and four points while coming with several steals on the press.

Arkansas is now 6-13 in season, 2-5 in conference.



JOHN THORNTON seems to be everywhere as he led the Aggies to a 86-80 win last night to lead the Aggs to a 86-80 win as SWC finish the first half of league play. (Photo by Steve Ueckert)

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Ruggers win, start fund drive

The A&M Rugby team scored two second-half goals here Saturday and defeated the Houston Rugby Club, 8-0, on the Drill Field.

The Aggies snapped a halftime 0-0 deadlock with the two goals by Jim Goulding and Randy Harju.

A&M, which has an 89-4 record over the past three seasons (only losses in national tournaments) travels to Austin next Saturday to meet the University of Texas.

Club officials announced they are starting a fund-raising drive to help pay the team's expenses to a tournament in Monterey, California, March 23.

The team is already scheduled to play Feb. 23 at the National Collegiate championships at Baton Rouge, La.

The club hopes to raise \$5,000 for the trip. Anyone interested in contributing to the fund is urged to contact the A&M Rugby Club, through the Memorial Student Center at A&M. George Alden if president.

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