

Aggies prepare to defend SWC basketball title

By DAVID WALKER
Battalion Sports Writer

After posting its best non-conference record since 1965, Texas A&M gets ready to defend its Southwest Conference title this week.

The Aggies went through the pre-conference schedule with a 7-3 mark that included two strong performances in losses to nationally ranked Louisville and San Francisco. The Aggies begin Southwest Conference play Saturday against Baylor in Waco.

"More than anything we needed the experience of playing some tough teams on the road, and we got it," said Aggie assistant coach Norman Reuther.

"We played some highly rated teams and should have won. We out-played Louisville and they won it at the free throw line," Reuther said. Louisville had 34 free throws to 12 for the Aggies. "We also had a good game against San Francisco and should have won it, but we didn't," Reuther added.

Reuther added that he feels that this year's Aggies are on par with last year's SWC champs.

"Last year we were down after losing in the Houston tournament and we came back and worked a week and really put everything together. If the past couple of workouts are of any indication, I would say that we are going to be all right. Our men have worked hard the past couple of days, and I think everything is beginning to fall in place.

"Our freshmen are getting more consistent, and they are learning what they can and can't do. They are really improving to the point that we don't think of them as freshmen," Reuther added.

"And of course our seniors are doing the job. Sonny Parker is play-

ing tremendous basketball. He played hurt in the Houston tournament and played super. Having Ray Roberts is like having a piece of the rock. He's good insurance because you know everytime he goes out he's going to have a good game. I don't think anyone is going to argue that Barry Davis is one of the toughest competitors ever at A&M and Gates Erwin has done a fine job coming off the bench," Reuther said.

Parker has been the leading player for the Aggies so far this year. The 6-7 senior forward from Chicago was named most valuable player of the Bluebonnet Classic in Houston last week. He was also named SWC Player of the Week for his performance in the tournament where he had 23 points against San Francisco and 39 against Houston Baptist. For the two games Parker hit 26 of 39 shots from the field, 10 of 12 free throws, had 16 rebounds, 62 points, five assists and six steals.

For the season, Parker is averaging 19.6 points per game while shooting 55.2 per cent from the field and

81.3 per cent from the free-throw line. He is the team's No.2 rebounder with 70 and leads the team in assists with 37 and steals with 27. Aggie coach Shelby Metcalf calls Parker, "the best player I've seen in the Southwest Conference in my 18 years."

Rounding out the starting lineup for the Aggies are 6-6 senior Barry Davis at the high post, 6-4 senior Ray Roberts on the wing, 6-6 freshman Jarvis Williams at the low post and 6-3 Karl Godine at the point. Davis is the leading rebounder with a 10.8 average and the No.2 scorer with a 14.6 norm. Roberts is averaging 13.9 with a high game of 30 against Louisville. Godine is averaging 13.4 with Williams at 9.6.

Top reserves have been 6-7 junior Steve Jones (5.9), 6-8 freshman Wally Swanson (6.4), freshman Joey Robinson (5.1) and senior Gates Erwin (2.1).

The Aggies return home Jan. 14 to face SMU. The team then goes to Lubbock Jan. 17 for a 3 p.m. TV game against Texas Tech.

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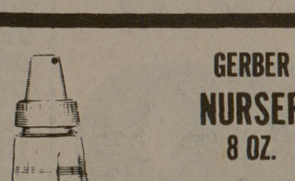
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