

Ags beat Raiders, capture SWC lead

By TONY GALLUCCI
Battalion Staff Writer

The Aggies took a giant step towards defending their Southwest Conference basketball championship in the past week by defeating three of the top five contenders for the crown. Included was a win over pre-season favorite Tech. The

Ags also beat Baylor. Both games were road games. The SMU game, played in College Station, saw the Ags take their third SWC win.

The Aggies, generally picked to finish a close second or third in this year's race, now lead the conference standings with a perfect 3-0 slate. Tech is in second with a 4-1 record marred only by the squeaker loss to the Ags on the floor of Lubbock Municipal Coliseum last Saturday.

The Ags were behind by seven at the half causing coach Shelby Metcalf to remark to TV announcer Dick Risenhoover's query about stopping Rick Bullock in the second half, "We've done everything we can except pull the hairs off his legs." But the Ags returned with a slightly altered game plan and Barry Davis took Bullock to task, scoring at will over his outstretched hands while Sonny Parker did his own number on outside jumpers.

Davis explained, "We had to make him start playing defense. He can't afford to play defense because he fouls and he's too valuable to his team. But you let him catch that ball too often he's gonna do something. He's quicker than he looks." Davis and freshman teammates Wally Swanson and Jarvis Williams teamed to limit Bullock to a mere nine points and two rebounds in the second half after he had collected 22 points and five caroms during the first half.

Bullock ended the game with exactly half of his team's 62 points. Davis and Parker together put in 44 of A&M's 64 points but it was the last two points both on Sonny P free throws that made the game for A&M.

Bullock had put the Red Raiders in the lead with three minutes remaining on a layup that made the score 62-60 Tech. A&M called time out with 2-1/2 minutes remaining and the ball in Ag possession under the basket. Seven seconds later, frosh Karl Godine tossed the ball to Davis underneath and Barry laid it in easily for the tie game. Bullock was called for blocking and A&M got the ball out of bounds, but the ball was tied up right away by Tech. Tech regained possession but then conference MVP Sonny P made a timely steal and the Ags retreated immediately to their patented four-corner stall. With 1:17 remaining on the clock the Ags called time out to discuss strategy.

The four-corner runaround was immediately instituted and at times got rather hectic as the Techs tried to force the Ags into a mistake. But it was Red Raider Senior Grady Newton who made the mistake that counted. Newton stepped in front of Sonny P as he drove to the basket with seven seconds remaining in the game and was called for an illegal block. Sonny P was to get two shots. Again an Aggie time out was called. Just as Parker stepped up to the line, though, Tech called a time out, apparently to prolong the misery and allow the pressure to build up on Sonny P.

But when time came Parker, in front of a regional TV crowd and 7,096 live witnesses, calmly dropped both free throws without scratching the rim. Tech's final shot at the win was a harmless air ball.

The teams had come into the game both undefeated and leading the conference. A&M had previously whipped SMU 93-87 in College Station in what was considered the game of the season until Saturday in Lubbock. At that time A&M was the tenth leading scoring machine in the nation at just over 90 points a game. In the Ags only other conference action thus far, they ousted the scrappy Baylor

Bears 76-69 in a foul-marred overtime brawl.

The Ags completed their pre-season games at 7-3, the best for an Aggie team since 1965. It included several impressive wins and narrow losses to three nationally ranked opponents.

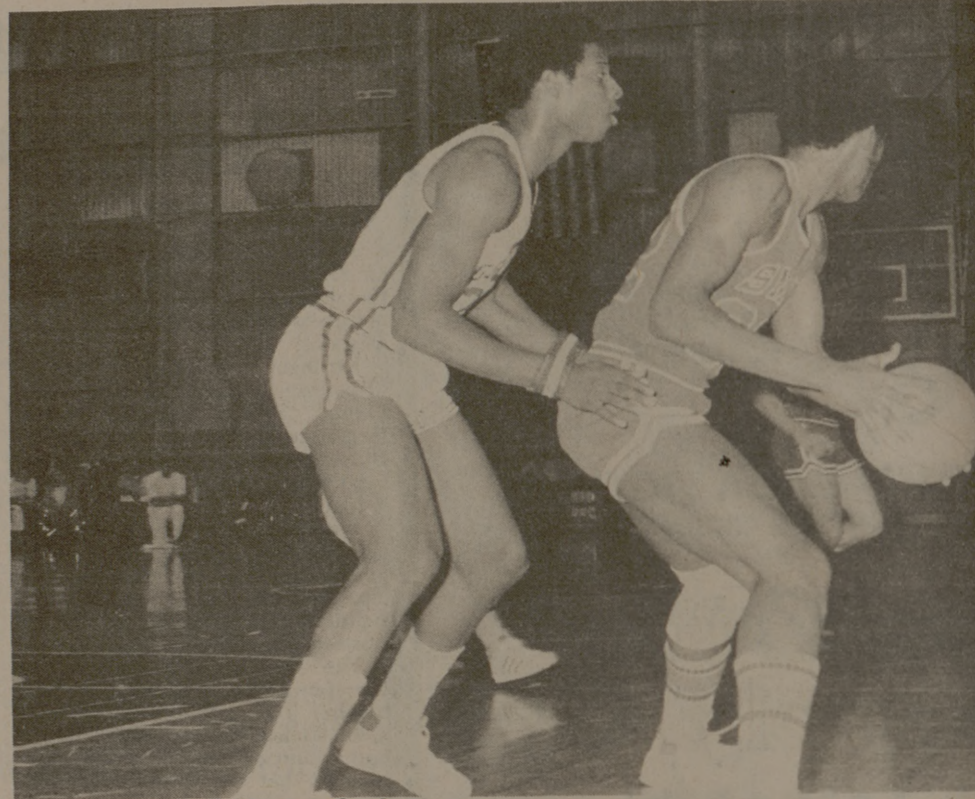
In the Jayhawk Classic the Ags narrowly lost 59-57 to LaSalle while shooting a miserable 37 per cent from the field. They turned the tables on Yale to take third place in the tourney with 71-62 win.

The Ags then traveled to Kentucky for the Louisville Holiday Classic, where they knocked off Seattle 71-67 in the first round and then outfought Louisville in a losing battle with the refs, only to come up at the short end of a 102-88 score. The Ags hit 38 shots from the field to the Cardinals 34 but Louisville connected on 34 of 43 from the line to the Ags 12 of 16.

From there the Ags traveled to Houston for their annual effort in the Bluebonnet Classic. In the first round again they were skinned by a talented club, this time San Francisco with the nation's number one prospect in Bill Cartwright. Score of that endeavor was 77-75 in SF's favor. A&M got revenge against Houston Baptist with a 99-74 win, the Ags second win over the Huskies this season. Sonny P was awarded the tournament Most Valuable

Player award after his 39-point performance over HBU.

The conference leading Ags will, within the next week, take on what is left of the contenders in the SWC when they host the University of Houston and then travel to Fayetteville to play Arkansas in Barnhill Fieldhouse. They will then return for dates against Rice at home and then Texas in Austin and TCU in Fort Worth before reversing the schedule for another try at each team. Rice and Texas are both virtually eliminated from this year's race. TCU was a preseason favorite to finish in the bottom two.



Jarvis Williams, a freshman post man out of Kashmere, fends away SMU's

Butch Bostic in the 93-87 A&M win over the Ponies last week. Photo by Tony Gallucci

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