

the sports

# Aggies begin second half of SWC season tonight

By DAVID BOGGAN  
Battalion Sports Editor

The first half of the 1979 Southwest Conference basketball season is history, but for the Texas Aggies there is no time to reminisce. The future begins tonight.

Texas A&M, which travels to Waco to play Baylor at 7:30 this evening, finished the first half of the SWC season by defeating Rice in Houston Saturday 81-62. The Aggies are presently in second place in the conference with a 6-2 record, one game behind front runner Texas.

"It has gone by fast," Aggie forward Vernon Smith said after the

Aggies reached the midcourt stripe of the season. "I've always thought that this year would be our year to win the conference. We all have."

"Baylor is going to be one of the toughest games of the conference this year. It is not going to be as easy as people might think."

The Aggies made it look easy in Autry Court Saturday afternoon with all five starters scoring in double figures for the first time since the season opener against North Carolina State. Smith and Dave Goff each had 10 points, Rynn Wright scored 12 points and Rudy Woods and Tyrone Ladson scored 18 points a piece to lead the Aggies

past the Owls.

"Tyrone got hot outside and that opened up everything," Goff said. Ladson hit seven-of-seven field goals in the first half, including two steals that he converted to layups and four shots that arched in from somewhere close to downtown Houston.

"It was just a matter of getting my rhythm down," said Ladson, who started in only his second game for the Aggies. "I needed a good game. I hadn't had one in a long time."

Texas A&M coach Shelby Metcalf said that Ladson's play in the Rice game was indicative of the kind of performance the Kansas State transfer is capable of.

"I was less surprised with Tyrone's seven-of-seven shooting in the first half than I was when he shot 2-of-13 against Texas," Metcalf said. "We saw a truer picture of Tyrone Ladson today."

"Our whole first unit looked extremely sharp. They were mentally ready to play."

The Aggies played to a 36-21 halftime lead, hitting 60 percent of their shots from the field. Metcalf's men held off a Rice rally early in the second half and the Owls could get no closer to Texas A&M than 12 points.

"In the second half, everybody (for Texas A&M) got hot," Woods said. They (Rice) had to go out (and pressure the outside shooter) or get blown out. That's when I go to work."

Woods did indeed go to work in the final period, scoring 14 of his 18 points in the last 20 minutes. The Aggies hit 57.1 percent of their field goals in the game while the Owls hit only 38.5 percent. The Aggies had their best performance of the season

from the free-throw line with David Britton hitting Texas A&M's only free throw attempt with 7:01 left in the game.

"Hopefully, we're getting something started again," Goff said of the Aggies, who have won two games straight, bringing their season record to 17-4. "We've got to win the rest of our games and we've got to play well on the road."

The Aggies will have to play well in Baylor's Heart O' Texas Coliseum tonight if they hope to stay hot on the hoofs of the Texas Longhorns, who play five of their last eight games in the Super Drum. Baylor's Vinnie Johnson, who scored 31 points Saturday against TCU, will play against Texas A&M for the first time this season. Johnson was in New York at his mother's funeral when the teams met on Jan. 8.

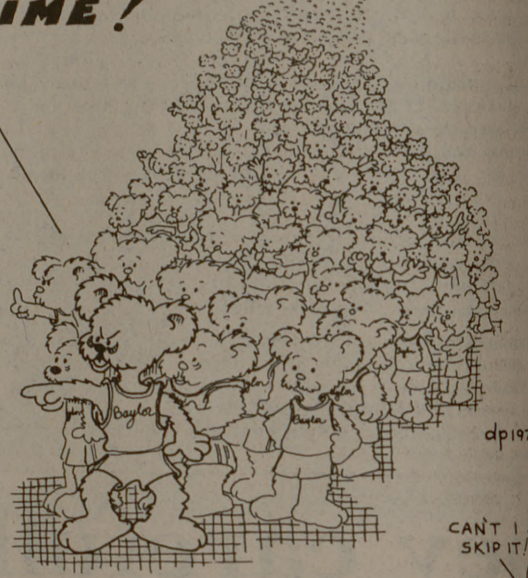
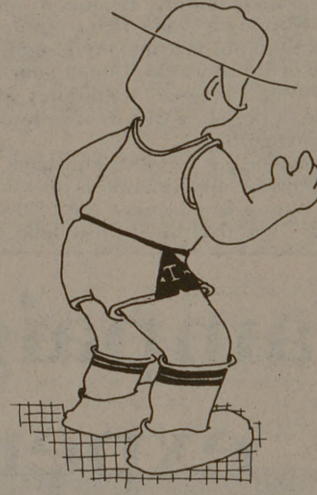
"You've got to fear him," Metcalf said of Johnson, one of the nation's top ten scorers. "He's probably one of the greatest seniors this conference has produced. And, of course, they've got that great freshman, Terry Teagle. And Wendle Mays always hurts us." In the Aggies' 77-64 victory over the Bears earlier this month, Teagle scored 16 points and Mays scored 18 points.

"It's going to be a high- and fast-scoring game," Woods said. "They believe in putting it up just like we do."

When Ladson heard that Metcalf planned to have him defend Johnson tonight, a big grin came across the New Yorker's face.

"That's going to be good," Ladson said. "I played against him in high school. We played in different conferences but we played each other about twice in the playoffs." Ladson and Johnson are both from Brook-

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"The only thing Vinnie's got on me is he jumps a little higher," Ladson added. Several players had some thoughts on what the next eight games will hold for the Texas Aggies:

"What ever we do is up to us," Woods said. "Talent-wise we have the best team in the conference. But

it is hard to stay up for 16 games."

"We're going to have to play every game as hard as we can," Wright said. "It's now or never; do or die."

In other words, the Aggies hold their future in their own hands.

**BOX SCORE**  
TEXAS A&M (81)  
Smith 5 0-0 10, Wright 6 0-0 12, Woods 9 0-0

18, Ladson 9 0-0 18, Goff 5 0-0 10, 1-1 5, Sylestine 2 0-0 4, Schlicher 1 Pederson 0 0-0 0, Culton 1 0-0 2, 0-0 2, Baird 0 0-0 0. Totals 40 1-1 31.  
RICE (62)  
Darden 8 1-1 17, Rieke 3 5-6 11, McGee 8, Wilson 3 0-0 6, Tudor 3 2-3 8, DeCade 6, Burns 1 0-0 2, Hubble 1 2-2 4, Miller 0 0-0 0. Totals 25 12-16 62.  
Halftime — Texas A&M 36, Rice 21.  
Out — none. Total Fouls — Texas A&M 17, Rice 14.  
Technical Fouls — Wright 1, Darden 1.

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