

the sports

Disappointed Aggies host Longhorns

By MARK PATTERSON
Battalion Staff

Saturday night's loss to the Texas Tech Red Raiders was possibly the most disappointing defeat of the season for the Texas Aggies.

Disappointing because the loss virtually ended this season's South-west Conference title hopes for the

Aggies. Texas A&M's conference record stands at 9-4, good for a third-place tie with Tech and two games behind league-leading Texas with three games remaining.

At the beginning of last week's action Coach Shelby Metcalf said that the Aggies, if they hoped to win the SWC, had to win two out of their

next three games, against Arkansas, Texas Tech and Texas, with one of those victories over the Longhorns tonight. At best, the Aggies can only win one of the three, having dropped the first two "must" games.

"As a team, we haven't been ready to play these last two ball games," Metcalf said after the 67-63

loss to Tech Saturday night. "We brought 11 players out here and only nine were ready to play.

"We just couldn't get ourselves ready. If there are one or two players not ready they distract you. We have to have everybody going to win. We have some problems, but we'll take care of those."

For the second game in a row the Aggies came out ice cold in the first half, connecting on 8-of-26 shots from the field for a 30.8 percent shooting mark at the break. The second stanza was somewhat brighter with the visitors hitting on 42.1 percent from the field, hitting 16-of-38 shots for a 37.5 percent mark for the game.

"I have to admire the guys for the way they came back in the second half," Metcalf said of his players making up the 12-point deficit they faced at the half. "I was really disappointed in our defense in the first half. But everybody looked good defensively in the second half. Rynn (Wright) and Vernon (Smith) really worked their rears off."

As did Steve Sylestine, the junior two-year letterman who came off the Aggie bench to hit five-of-six shots and four-of-four free throws for 14 points, trailing only Wright's 22 for the Aggies.

"Tonight was one of those games where you found out who had it under their shirts," Metcalf said. "I'm really proud of Sly's play tonight. He came in and played relaxed, good basketball. We got another basketball player back tonight."

Sylestine discounted his performance when approached after the loss.

"I'm disappointed with the team," Sylestine said. "It's been a frustrating year."

"This was probably my best game of the year because I was so relaxed. I've been too nervous, but tonight I played comfortable. But what good it is; we lost. I thought we were ready to play tonight, but apparently we weren't. We were in the locker room before the game yelling and seemed to be fired up, but I guess it was just a front. Apparently we weren't ready."

Rudy Woods was one of the Aggies who appeared to be not ready to play Saturday night. Against the Red Raiders, Woods was held to six points and collected five rebounds in the game. It was the third straight game that Woods was ineffective on the boards, collecting only four in each of the last two games before the Lubbock trip.

"I'm in a slump and can't get out of it," Woods said after the Tech loss. "The team was ready to play tonight and I wasn't. Tech didn't shut me down, I shut myself down. This is the worst game I've played. I haven't been dedicated enough. I need more work to break this streak. I have a day in between now and the Texas game and I'm going to work, starting tonight."

Vernon Smith is disturbed about the Aggies' play of late as well.

"We didn't come out ready to play and I don't know why," Smith said. "Things aren't going the way they've been going, not like earlier in the year. And something's got to happen to snap us out of it."

"We have the best people and it's up to those individuals. If want to win, we'll win."

The Aggies will try to salvage some pride when the Longhorns invade C. Rollie White Coliseum tonight at 7:30. It will give Texas A&M a chance to climb to within a game of the league-leading Long-

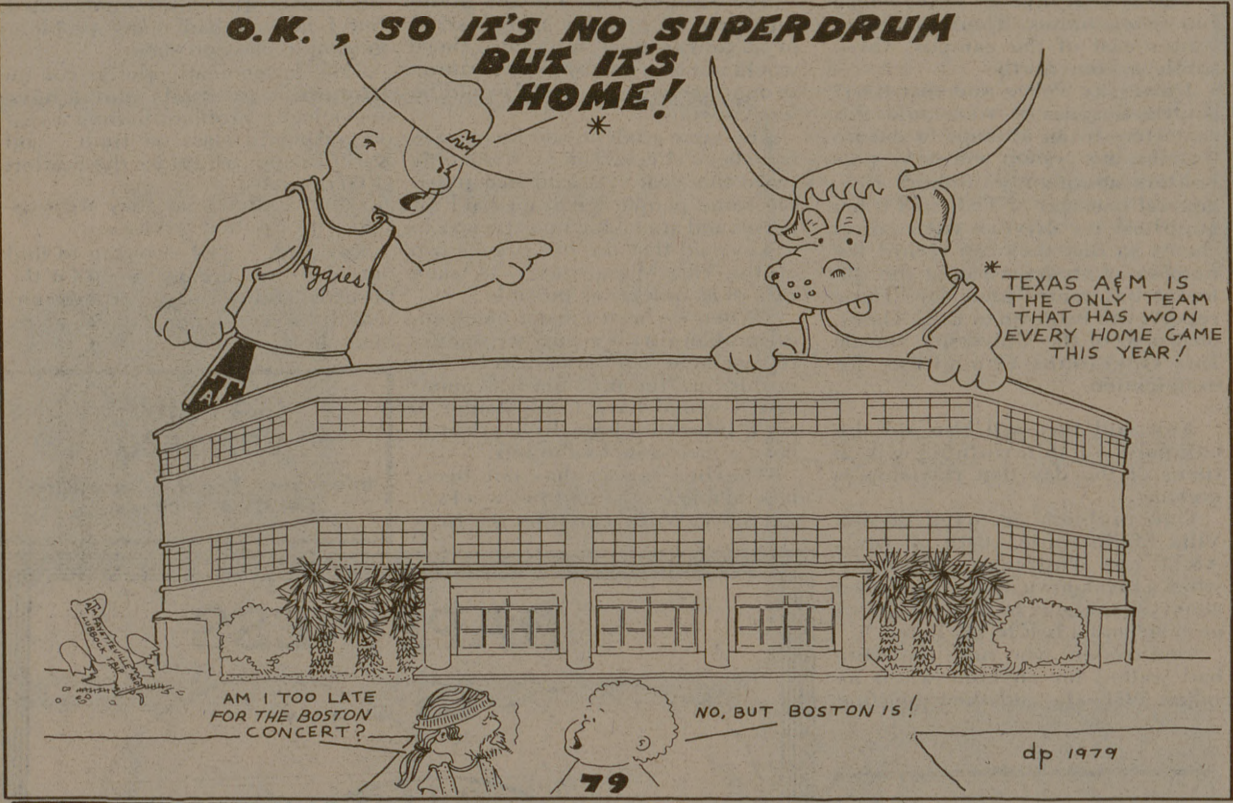
horns and improve their chances for a third-place finish in the SWC race.

"We're going to have a lot of pride riding on that Texas game," Metcalf said of tonight's contest. "The school record for wins in a season at A&M is 21, so if we can win our last three games we'll finish with 23. We still have a pretty good shot at finishing third this year."

"A victory over Texas would give

us some momentum going into the post-season tournament. We can't afford another loss. We have to throw this (race) into a tie with many as we can before the end of the season."

"We'll be tired Monday night but when those people start in G. Rollie we won't feel that way. We can't afford to."



viewpoint

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Enough of that big band sound

Basketball fans attending tonight's game are going to be disappointed during the halftime break. Instead of Longhorn Loves (Texas' answer to the Jollie Rollie Dollies' performance for those in attendance, the Fightin' Texas Aggie Band will play some more songs that all sound the same.

The Loves contacted officials of the University in an attempt to dance during the half, but somewhere along the line the offer was refused.

"I haven't ever heard of the Longhorn Loves," Band Director Col. Joe T. Haney said of the offer. "But even if I had, I still object to them coming here. The halftime is our chance to perform."

Perform? I question the expression. During the halftime of SMU game two weeks ago the band played five songs. Before game the band played seven songs, including the War Hymn, Spirit of Aggieland and The Star Spangled Banner. That's a total of 12 songs for the night and I would have sworn that I heard the same two or three times.

What is amazing is that the band is allowed into every basketball game that they decide to attend free plus it has an entire section of seats reserved for members and their dates in a choice section of stands. Why?

"It's been like that ever since I came here in 1973," Haney said. "It's a tradition."

Tradition is fine to a point, but when it becomes unrealistic time to abandon tradition for more sound reasoning. One suggestion would be to put the band at one end of the court.

The practice of placing the band at end-court is followed by other conference schools. At SMU, the 96-member band sits at one end and plays music throughout a game, good music that the fans enjoy. And those of you who went to the Baylor game in Waco were treated to one of the best sounding bands heard all year. There were six musicians composing the group. Why can't Texas A&M follow the lead of the other conference schools?

"I don't care what the other schools do," Haney exclaimed. "We do what we want to do here at A&M. We do what our men want and continue to do so."

"Texas has 150 members at their games. And 150 might not be adequate for what they want to do. But at A&M we (the band) have always done everything in a group. That's the way it's always been done."

Traditionally, the band's job at any sporting event has been to entertain the fans and help the team. Though the Aggie band has been successful at one of its functions, it is lacking at the other.

"Back when Col. Adams was band director (preceding Haney) the band was worth one to five points a ball game for us," Coach Shelby Metcalf remembered. "He just had a knack of knowing when to play when not to, when to speed up the tempo and when to slow it down. He was an asset."

Haney holds a different attitude on what the band should do during a game.

"I was told that we weren't suppose to play during the game, at time-outs, before the game and during the half," Haney said. "I don't want to get into the reasons why we quit playing during games."

When questioned if the band helps, members of the Aggie basketball team, who wished not to be identified, were vehemently against the band.

"Let us listen to our own music," one starter said. "We want to hear before a game. That's why we made our own tape to play in our ears. But when the band comes they start playing their stuff and we can't hear the tape."

"Why don't they just play the school song? All we need is support, not their music."

Every player who voiced an opinion, either pro or con, did so on one thing: 252 band members plus their dates are too many people to supply music in a 7,500-seat coliseum.

"The band gets me fired up, but they have way too many people who voiced one."

One player seemed to sum up the attitude of the team when he spoke his thoughts on the subject.

"We (the basketball team) have been talking about this for a long time," he said. "The main gripe is that some of our fans who have been following the team four years, back when we weren't this good, aren't able to see a game anymore. The band takes up an entire section, a lot of seats that fans could be better utilizing."

Which is the basis for this column. This isn't a put-down of the Texas Aggie band. True, there is no finer band on or beside a basketball field than ours.

But beside a basketball court the 252-piece Fightin' Texas Aggie Band is grossly out of place.

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