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Arkansas not quite good enough

Ags beat 'other' team, 45-39

By TONY GALLUCCI
Sports Editor

"It is too early, too early to come to any conclusions," said head coach Shelby Metcalf after his Aggie basketball squad marched to a 45-39 win last night over Arkansas. In referring to the Southwest Conference (SWC) state of affairs he said, "This is not like the Iowa caucus."

Unlike the polls, a packed house of 8,030 watched David Britton, Rudy Woods, Vernon Smith, Rynn Wright, Dave Goff and assistants polish off the 'other' major contender in the race for the SWC crown. Playing their defensive game like Boris Spassky, A&M held the usually hot-handed Razorbacks to 45 percent accuracy from the field and to their lowest point total in 20 games.

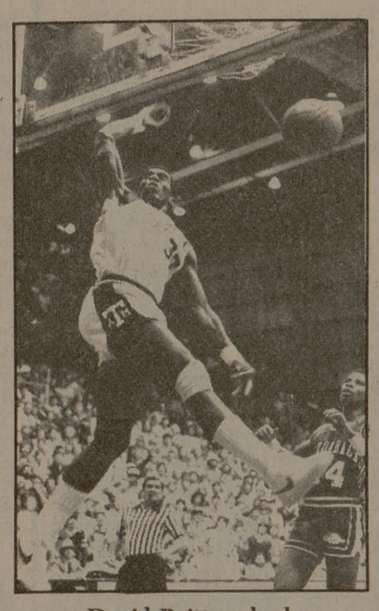
The win gives A&M a perfect 6-0 record in conference play and a one game edge over Arkansas, now 5-1, and Texas Tech, idle last night. The Aggies season record is upped to 14-5, also tops in the league.

Playing their already superior, but still improving, man-to-man defense and hitting tough inside turnaround jumpers, A&M roared to an early 6-2 lead. Britton slammed a windmill dunk after a beautiful rebound and outlet pass from Woods to make it 8-2 and Arkansas coach Eddie Sutton called a timeout.

Arkansas, without a point for five minutes, quickly closed the gap to 8-7. Woods responded with one of his three-for-three field goals in the form of a dunk.

With their tiringly patient offensive game, though, Arkansas kept the game close for a short while more, tying it up once at 15-15 with 8:57 remaining in the first half. The Ags ruled the next six minutes, holding Arkansas scoreless again, and tossing in eight for the biggest lead of the night. Steals under the Arkansas basket by Goff and Claude Riley were crucial in that run.

Metcalf inserted the slow-down offense with five and a half minutes remaining in the half. Arkansas was still able to add six more points before the half, all on free throws. They narrowed the A&M lead to three before the buzzer but A&M led 24-20 at the half.


David Britton dunks

Arkansas came back from the locker room ready to play and quickly narrowed the lead to 24-22 and 26-25 before jumping into a tie and then the lead at 31-29 on a shot by U.S. Reed.

Arkansas had garnered as much as a four point lead at 33-29 and 35-31 when Sutton was hit with a technical. Sutton, who had said, "sometimes you just have to take a technical," after his Hogs came back from a 15 point deficit against Houston last week, found his strategy none too successful this time. Goff hit one of the two free throws awarded and Vernon followed a shot on the inbound play to make the score 36-35 in favor of the Ags again.

The Aggies, instructed to press, played perhaps their toughest defense of the evening both on the trips down the court and under the basket and it payed off. They never again lost control of the game. Hastings, vital to the Razorbacks at the post, fouled out with 6:30 to go in the game and Sutton's ever present towel dangled limply at his side.

Prime-time rebounding by Smith and Wright and cool Ag heads at the free throw line kept Arkansas from exploiting numerous late game opportunities. A block by Woods with six seconds left was only salt in the wound.

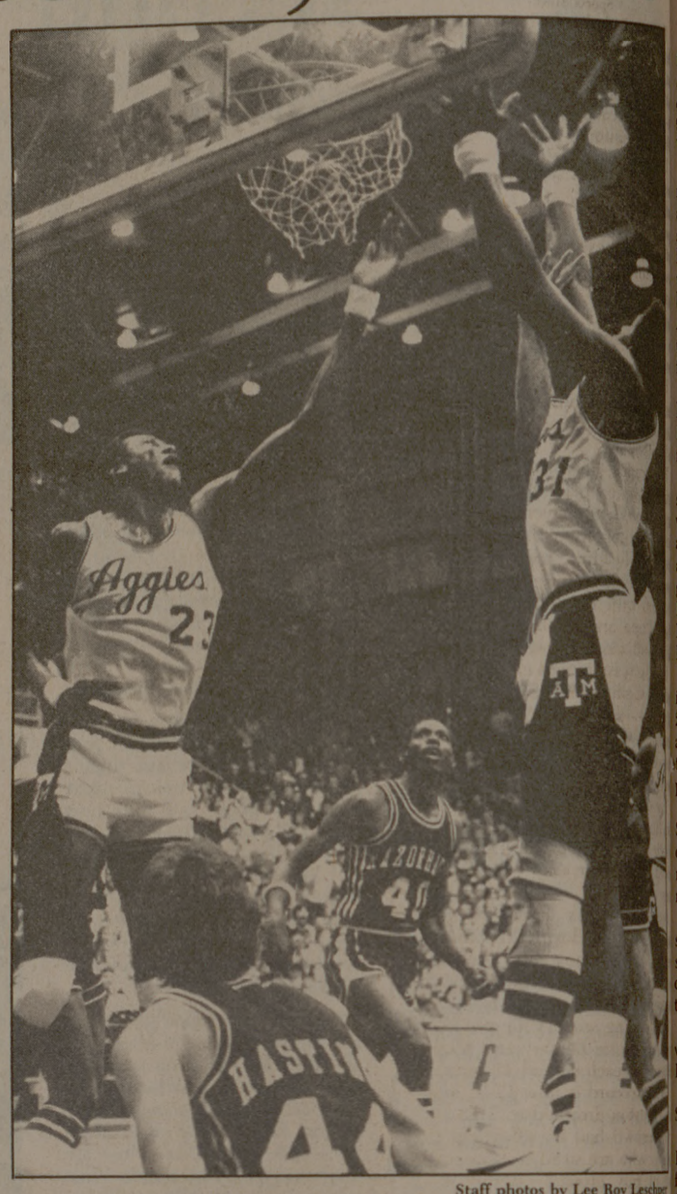
Britton had 13 points to lead Aggie scorers, and Smith and Wright each tossed in ten. Goff and Woods had six each to round out Aggie scoring. Woods also pulled down six rebounds, while Smith and Wright each collected five.

Hastings led Hog scorers with 11 points and Reed added 10. Each of them had five rebounds. No other Razorback had more than four points or two rebounds.

"Texas A&M has a great team and played extremely well," said Sutton. "Their defense was very good and their crowd gave them quite a lift."

"It was kind of what we expected, you know," said Wright. "They had a tight zone and we expected that. The press didn't bother us either, we can usually break up a press pretty easily."

Metcalf was adamant about the turning point, "They got out ahead of us and then we went into the press. It kind of changed the tempo — it picked it up — and they started putting the ball up quicker," he said. "They were having trouble with the press. We started moving on the offensive end. The press helped us two ways. It got us moving and speeded up the tempo a little bit. Then we got out ahead of them and it was our turn."


Staff photos by Lee Roy Leschper

Vernon Smith (31) goes up for a rebound in last nights 45-39 Aggie win over Arkansas. Rudy Woods (23) and David Britton of the Aggies and Tony Brown (40) of Arkansas look on. Scott Hastings (44), Razorback center, watches from ground level.

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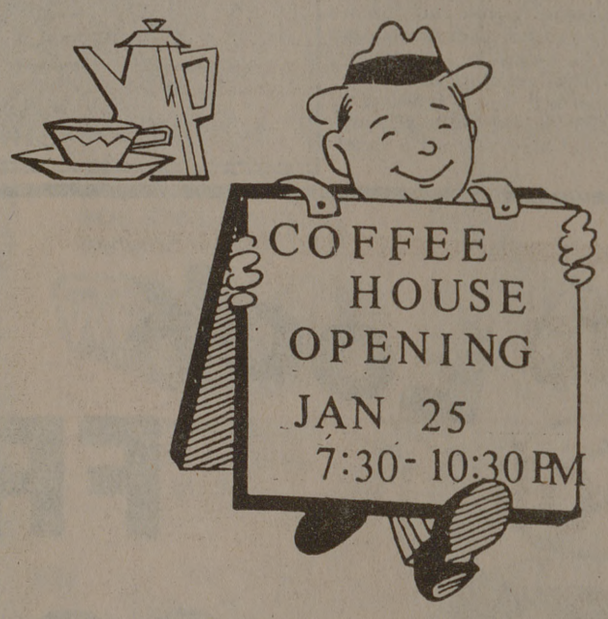

Angels out in cold for lack of back rent

United Press International

HOUSTON — Lack of cash to pay back rent has forced the Houston Angels to cancel their second home game in a week.

Team owner Hugh Sweeney said a new playing site, Rice University's Autry Gym, was being sought so that the beleagured Womens Pro Basketball League franchise could continue its season. The next home game is Feb. 1.

The latest cancellation was Tuesday night's game against New Orleans in the Summit sports arena. A Summit official said the Angels owed $9,000 for two previous games played there.

Last week the University of Houston's Hofheinz Pavilion refused to allow the Angels to play a Saturday game against Dallas until $8,800 in back rent was paid.

Rice Athletic Director Augie Erfurth on Monday turned down Sweeney's request to move the game against New Orleans to Autry Court Wednesday night. A Rice athletic committee considered scheduling future Angels game there.

Rent at the Summit is $4,500, at Hofheinz $2,200 and at Autry Court $1,000.

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