

Aggies break into top 20, win here

SMU 'walled' out of G. Rollie, 67-56

By TONY CALLUCCI
Sports Editor

The Aggie "Wall" got a fresh patch job just in time to victimize SMU for the second time this season and up the Aggies' Southwest Conference-leading record to 10-1.

The Aggies, ranked 20th in the nation this week by United Press International, 19th by Sporting News and 12th by Sports Illustrated, moved a half-game ahead of Arkansas in the chase for the title with the 67-56 win over the Mustangs.

Coach Shelby Metcalf's crew rebounded from a disappointing loss to Texas Tech Monday and played well to beat the depleted Ponies. Mus-

tang Coach Sonny Allen left backup postman Johnnie James in Dallas because James shaved his head — according to rumor — in defiance of Allen.

Allen had his team open up with a three-guard four-corner offense in an effort to slow down the Aggies. The Mustangs had been unable to keep up with the torrid second-half pace the Ags had set in the two teams previous meeting this season in Dallas.

It was a surprise opening, but Metcalf was never fooled.

"As soon as I saw three guards in there I knew what they were going to do," he said. Texas A&M jumped to a

quick 5-0 lead in the first two minutes but SMU's patience paid off.

Three baskets by senior Brad Branson and one by Phil Hale gave the Mustangs an 8-5 lead five minutes deep in the first half. An official timeout gave the Aggies time to regroup.

The teams traded baskets for the next ten minutes before Rynn Wright scored on a layup and Vernon Smith followed with a jumper from the left side put the Ags up by three points, 23-20, at 4:35. That was the Aggies' biggest lead of the first half and was the margin they carried into the locker room — at 27-24.

At the half, the "Wall" was responsible for all of the Aggies' field goals, hitting 61.1 percent from the field. Rudy Woods, Smith and Wright also had 12 of the 15 team rebounds, five blocked shots and 26 of the team's 27 points. Smith led in rebounding with 5. Wright had the high point total with 16 and Woods had blocked three shots.

SMU had little chance in the second half. Woods owned the floor under the basket, David Britton and Smith got hot and freshman Claude Riley came in to add four early points as the Aggies powered to a 15-point lead in the first ten minutes.

From there, the Aggies coasted in

for the win, their 18th in 24 starts.

Wright ended the night as leading scorer on both teams, with 20. Smith poured in 17, 13 of them in the second half and gathered in 10 rebounds to lead the Ags in that category. Woods was the only other Aggie in double figures, getting 10 points, all inside shots. Woods also had nine rebounds and six blocked shots.

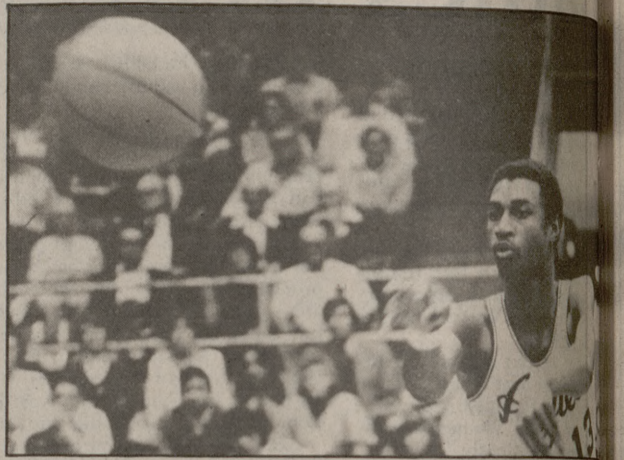
Ten Aggies played in the game, eight of them scoring.

Freshman Dave Piehler led SMU scorers with 16 points, followed by sophomore Billy Allen with 15 points. Branson led Mustang rebounders with five.

The Mustangs hot shooting touch

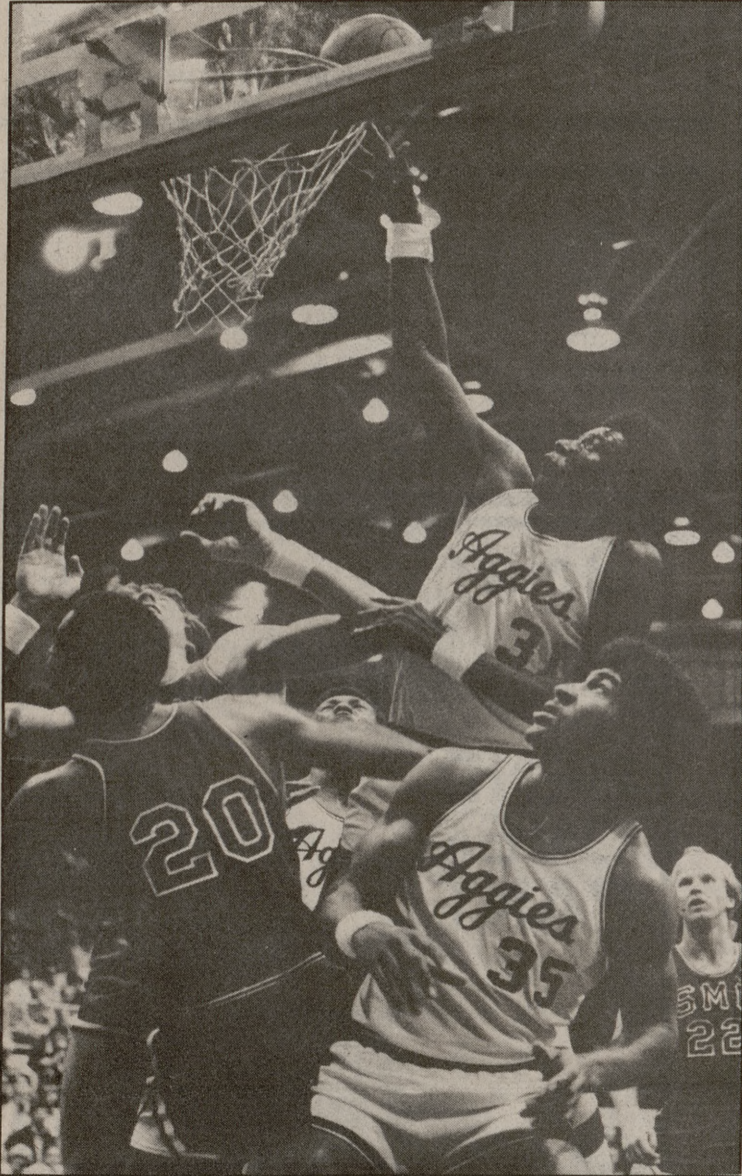
— 55 percent — in the first half cooled to an unenviable 30 percent in the second half and totaled only 40 percent for the game. The Aggies' 50 percent at the half soared to 61.5 percent in the second period to give the Ags a 56.3 percent figure for the game. It was the 14th time this year the Aggies have hit over the halfway mark and the 20th time they have held their opponents to less than 50 percent.

The news will come from Waco tonight on whether or not Arkansas' Razorbacks can stay tied with the Aggies for the SWC lead. Baylor hosts the Hogs at Heart O' Texas Coliseum there.



Freshman Claude Riley, the Crockett Rocket, passes off to teammate in last night's 67-56 Aggie victory. Riley got a standing ovation for his play in the game. The 20th-ranked Aggie led the Southwest Conference with a 10-1 record.

Staff photo by Lee Roy Leschper Jr.



The "Wall" at work. Junior forward Vernon Smith (31) puts in two in the second half of A&M's 67-56 win over SMU. Smith poured in 13 second-half points while teammate Rynn Wright (35) had 16 in the first half. Rudy Woods (background) blocked six shots as SMU was "walled" out.

Staff photo by Lee Roy Leschper Jr.



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