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Page 15 THE BATTALION

Aggie Ladies start regionals

By JON HEIDTKE

Sports Reporter Texas A&M's women's basket-ball team travels to Baton Rouge this week to participate in what head coach Cherri Rapp calls "the strongest of the AIAW regional tournaments

udents are inthe Three of the 12 teams involved are ranked in the nation's top five tudy at 7 p.m.# country: Louisana Tech (2), Texas 3) Stephen F. Austin (5). The winner of the four-day tournanent will advance to the national of Kurt Vonne, championship in Mount a survivor of the Pleasant, Mich., March 21-23. The eighth-seeded Aggie er of his com

Ladies, 18-11 on the year, open e shown at 7:30 tournament action today with a rematch with Houston at 9 p.m. The Aggies eased by Houston store Profits for earlier in the year 75-64, but the resentative toe Cougars knocked the Ags out of op will beginat e state tournament last week with a 66-61 overtime victory, Supreme Court orking in Texe setting up Wednesday's rubber

"The girls were very excited oout playing Houston," Rapp aid. "After all, it is not very often ou get a second chance like this.

give us another shot at Louisana

The winner of the Texas A&M-Houston game will play Louisana Tech at 9 p.m. Thursday. Tech downed the Ags earlier in the

lead the Aggies in scoring with a 16.4 average. The 6-2 sophomore also leads the team in rebounding, averaging 7.2 per game. Senior Peggy Pope is next scoring and rebounding with averages of tion junior has been averaging 14.4 points over the last five

The Cougars, who bring a 17-12 record into the tourney, rely on a physical inside game and the the Ags' 7 of 11 from the line.

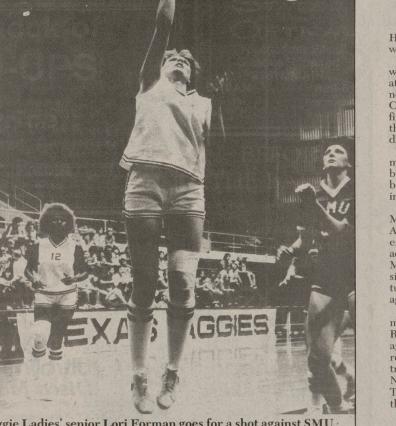
Arkansas, Texas Tech, Wayland Baptist, LSU, Oral Roberts, Louisana.

Lori Foreman continues to

14.7 and 6.9. Rapp has also been aided by the improved play of Trigg Crawford. The College Sta-

shooting and passing of Kip Anderson. In their overtime win over the Aggies, the Cougars won the game at the free throw line, hitting 24 out of 34, compared to

The rest of the field includes



in early season action. The Aggie Ladies open Association of Intercollegiate Athletics for Women regional tournament play tonight against Houston in Baton Rouge, La.

Astros may be team to beat in the NL West

By RICHARD OLIVER Staff Writer

It's baseball time again, and the Houston Astros have hit the ballfield with a new look and an old burden.

Full spring training begins this week, and critics are looking keenly at an Astros team (plus a couple of new faces) that nearly pulled off the Cinderella story of the 1979 season, finishing a mere 11/2 games behind the Cincinnati Reds in the western division of the National League. Long labeled the "Lastros" by the

media, the organization has slowly but surely built up a team that has become respectable and even envied

in some parts. The purchase of the team by John Mullen has injected something the Astros have never before experienced - big bucks. Over-the-winter acquisitions of Nolan Ryan and Joe Morgan via the free agent market signify the end of a "hands-off" attitude usually held by the team management

Historically, the Astros' manage-ment, led by since-departed "Spec" Richardson, had avoided the free agent market, choosing instead to rely on minor league hopefuls and trades to build a contending team. Not until Joe Sambito, Jeff Leonard, Terry Puhl and Craig Reynolds lifted the Astros out of the baseball slums Thus the Houston Astros now are

under the watchful eye of the media and baseball buffs who have supported the team through several 'this is the year" seasons, only to watch as the team slipped dismally and unnoticed through the season. The rise or fall of the Astros this year hinges largely on the success of newly-acquired Ryan, the fastball

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artist. Ryan, who led the American League in strikeouts, now teams up with National League strikeout leader J.R. Richard, Cy Young-nominee Joe Niekro, and Ken Forsch, who no-hit the Atlanta Braves last season. This staff should be one of the finest in the major leagues this season, depending largely on Ryan's oft-injured arm and Richard's consis-

The gambles of Tal Smith, a highly-respected baseball mind and the Astros' current general manager, have paid off thus far for the Astros. Smith has pulled off some remarkable and shrewd trades despite the past stumblings of Richardson, who traded off names such as Morgan, Cesar Geronimo, John Mayberry

last year have these attitudes paid and Rusty Staub during his stint as general manager Smith is responsible for bringing

in present manager Bill Virdon, All Star shortstop Craig Reynolds, reliable catcher Alan Ashby, and now Ryan, among others.

Despite the brilliant pitching corps of the Astros, the season's success lies mainly in the bats of highly capable but equally erratic regulars. The Astros' repeated efforts over the winter to trade Joaquin Andujar

for some power came up emptyhanded. The power is there in the present

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lineup, however silent the bats were last year. The addition of Morgan to the lineup should add some punch, and his playoff experience can only be a positive factor.

The low-key Virdon, long-known for his baseball smarts and ability to extract great play out of mediocre players, has expressed great hope for the coming season, saying, "If we get good overall offensive production, the pitching we're capable of and consistency, I feel the Houston Astros will be legitimate contenders in 1980."

Coming off their strongest year ever in 1979, and with the addition of Morgan and Ryan, the Astros may have just what it takes to pull it off. It'll be about time



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