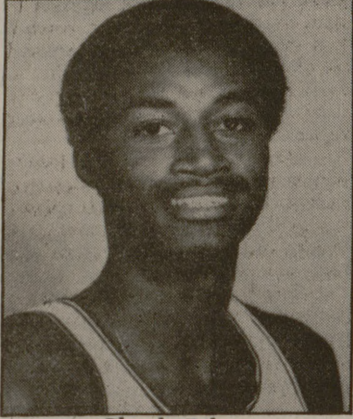
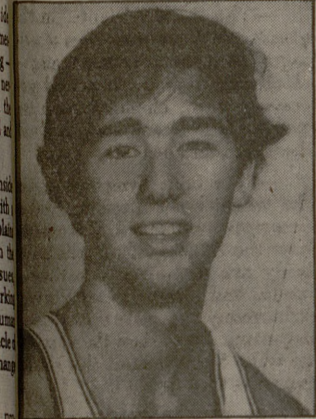


Sports

Home — how sweet it is!

A&M beats SMU, 71-51, to halt skid



Mike Brown

Claude Riley

By RICHARD OLIVER
Sports Editor

"Whew! I guess they really needed us after all." A Texas A&M University student turned to her boyfriend and smiled. "I know they're glad to be back home."

Most of the 7,009 in attendance at C. Rollie White Coliseum breathed a big sigh of relief with the Texas Aggie basketball team Saturday night. Since Dec. 8, the Ags have played nine games on the road, losing five in a row before hightailing back to A&M this weekend.

The homecoming was a rewarding one, as Texas A&M stopped a scrap SMU team, 71-51. The victory was the first SWC win of the year for the Aggies, 1-3 (8-5 overall), and may have signified the end of a miserable slump which saw the team lose its rebounding touch, rebounding control and often, its togetherness.

"It really feels good," said Claude Riley, who scored a career high 21 points to lead the Ags. "It really feels great to get that winning feeling back. That positive attitude never went away. We kept on workin' hard every day."

Although Riley played his most intense game of the year, it was a team effort that clinched the win for A&M. That effort had been noticeably absent in the five previous games. Also, a boisterous Aggie crowd filled the Coliseum. Lines began forming an hour before game time despite the cold weather, and several students had to be turned away once the game began. SMU, after keeping the game close for the first five and a half minutes, watched as the Aggies reeled

Metcalfe substituting freely, the Aggies piled up a 26-point lead at one point in the second half before finally settling for the 20-point win.

Woods, playing his final game of the season before becoming ineligible for the last 13 regular-season games due to grade problems last semester, had seven points and five rebounds in approximately nine minutes playing time.

The 6-11 junior from Bryan, however, has been having a rough year on the court, and has seen only limited action the last few weeks. After the game, he was optimistic about his future.

"I'm coming back," he said. "I will be back. It (the grade problem) doesn't really bother me. Everybody has to grow up at one time or another in their life. I see this as my test. I just ask the good Lord to see me through. And I know He will. I'll be definitely stronger next year because of it."

Woods said he will go to Blinn Junior College in Brenham next semester to try to pick up his grades and believes he will be back at A&M next year.

Although the Aggies have compiled only a 1-3 record in the Conference, some notable upsets over the past week have put them right back in the Conference chase.

The race is now only a quarter over, and the surprising Baylor Bears lead the pack with a 4-0 record. Houston, 3-1; Texas Tech, 3-2; Arkansas and Rice, 2-2; SMU and TCU, 2-3; A&M, 1-3; and Texas 1-4 follow the Bears in the SWC standings.

The Aggies face another tough test Tuesday evening at 7:30 in C. Rollie White when Rice comes into town. The Owls have been tough this year, beating Texas earlier in the season and most recently, shocking the Red Raiders Saturday night, 52-50 in overtime.

The Owls are led by sharpshooter Ricky Pierce, who was the hero in Saturday's game, hitting a 20-foot jump shot with time running out to give the Owls the win.

The Aggies are more than aware of Rice's ambushing tendencies.

"Rice — that's all we're looking toward," said Smith. "They play us close every game, every year."

Head Coach Shelby Metcalfe agreed.

The Aggies were ranked seventh in the nation in defense going into Saturday's game.

And at home in front of a full C. Rollie White Coliseum, the Aggies have been unbeatable.

"They (the crowd) helped a lot," said Wright. "It's nice because we've been on the road for so long. We're used to people booing us and it was a nice change."

Metcalfe was optimistic.

"I've been real proud of them," he said as he watched his team practice Sunday. "Considering all they've been through, they stayed tight."

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