

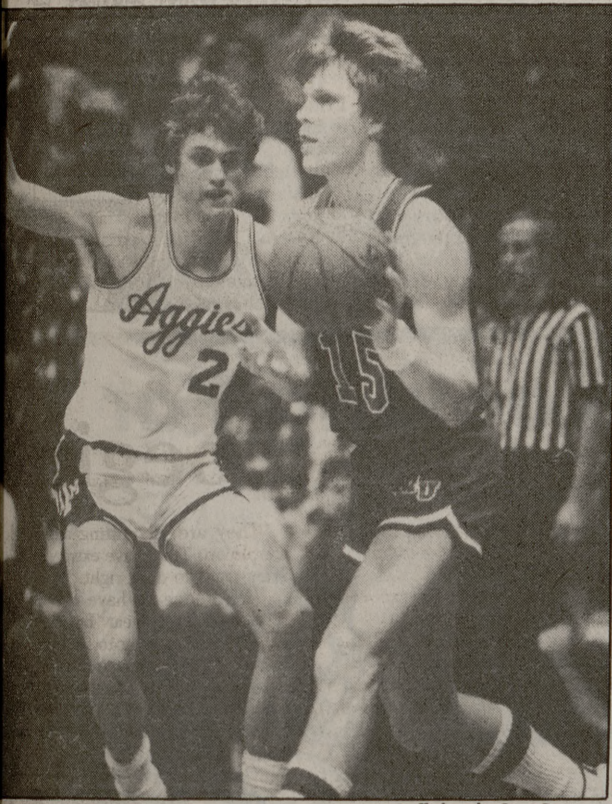
# Step 2 in title chase begins tonight

By RICHARD OLIVER  
Sports Editor

The second quarter of the 1981 basketball season begins tonight for the Texas Aggies, and no one need tell Shelby Metcalf's troops that it's now or never in the quest for the SWC crown.

And the 8-5 Aggies will be pursuing that goal without the help of 6-11 junior Rudy Woods. The three-year letterman from Bryan was declared ineligible this week after failing to pass enough courses last semester.

Although the loss of the big man in the middle may dampen the team's spirit, Woods' loss will not be a



Staff photo by Greg Gammon

Texas A&M reserve guard Jay McHugh keeps an eye on the ball while defending against SMU's Dave Piehler in Saturday night's 71-51 A&M win over the Ponies. The Aggies, 1-3, go against Rice tonight in G. Rollie White at 7:30 p.m.

crushing blow by any means. Since Day 1 of the Conference schedule, Metcalf has been platooning Woods and shuffling in a two-guard lineup.

Despite the 0-3 SWC record the Aggies brought into Saturday's game with SMU, the two-guard system has worked quite well as Tyrone Ladson, Reggie Roberts, Jay McHugh and Mike Brown have shared the duties.

The most pleasant surprise has been the hustle and court sense of Brown, who dealt out a team season-high seven assists against SMU in the Ags 71-51 win at G. Rollie White.

Brown, who transferred from Middle Georgia Junior College where he led that team to the national junior tournament, is now being used much more frequently by Metcalf after seeing action in only half of the first 12 games. He is a possible starter tonight.

Another big surprise has been the consistent play of Riley. The newest member of The Wall, Riley exhibited his finest form of the season Saturday by scoring a career-high 21 points. The 6-9 sophomore from Crockett is averaging 11.2 points a game and 6.5 rebounds.

Team leaders Vernon Smith and Rynn Wright have been erratic thus far, but their performances against Texas Tech and SMU signify that they may be back on the right track.

Smith is averaging 13.6 points a game and nine rebounds, while Wright averages 12.7 and 6.3. Smith will become the Texas A&M all-time scoring leader in the next week or two.

Smith has totaled 1,557 points in his over-three-year career here, and needs only 37 more to catch current leader John Beasley, who led the Aggies from 1964-66 and finished his career with 1,594 points.

If current average holds true, Smith will pass up Beasley either against Arkansas Saturday in Fayetteville or Texas Monday night in College Station.

Rice will be coming into College Station fresh from an overtime upset over Texas Tech, 52-50, which despite the loss has fashioned a surprising 3-2 record in the SWC so far.

Rice returns five starters from last year's 7-19 team, and are led by 6-5 All-SWC forward Ricky Pierce, who is averaging more than 20 points a game, and clinched the overtime win over Tech with a 20-foot jump shot with time running out. He is averaging 53 percent from the field.

6-8 forward Kenny Austin is also a force to be reckoned with, averaging 10.3 points a game.

The biggest problem the Aggies have faced over the past few weeks is a lack of leadership and unity on the court. Against Tech and SMU, however, that was no problem.

"We got much more movement," said Claude Riley after Saturday's game. "We worked on getting more movement. We needed this win to get us back going."

Although he won't start, McDaniel will doubtless see some action.

At this point, the Aggies are 1-3 in conference and 8-5 overall, it's as simple as that. Judging from Saturday's performance in front of a packed home crowd, the Ags have found themselves on the court. However, the Owls have found they can play ball, too.

At home in front of another packed house tonight, though, the Aggies will be hard to beat.

"I just think we need to play at home," Rynn Wright said Saturday. That's the difference.

## Analysis

## Richard given OK to train

United Press International  
HOUSTON — Doctors Monday cleared stroke-victim J.R. Richard to begin full-scale workouts in preparation for rejoining the Houston Astros.

A statement from the team termed "excellent" the results of medical tests made last week to determine if Richard had residual damage of weakened muscles on the left side of his body.

The statement clearly gave Richard, last year's NL all-star starting pitcher, the green light for a return to the Astros, a feat few people believed possible in the first months following his collapse July 30 from a

blood clot in a neck artery. The left side of his face, and his left arm and leg were partially paralyzed due to the absence of blood to his brain for more than four hours.

Richard, 30, underwent lifesaving surgery to remove the clot and then two months later went through an 18-hour operation to remove a clot in his right shoulder and to place an abdominal artery section in his right shoulder.

A righthander, Richard is feared by National League hitters as one of the hardest throwers. He regularly throws his fastball at close to 100 mph.

Richard was unavailable for comment. Since the stroke, his attorneys have kept him in seclusion.

The announcement did not speak of limitations, and it did not speculate about his future.

"Houston Astros pitcher J.R. Richard has been cleared to begin a full pre-spring training workout program," it said.

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