

Reflections

by Richard Oliver



A little spirit never hurts

Sometimes it's a little too late for reflection, a little too late for "what-ifs," and a little too late for consolation. Such is the case for the Texas A&M University basketball team.

There is only the future. But, still, after traveling half of the maze that is the Southwest Conference this year, perhaps forgetting the past and striving for a winning effort should be the only thing left.

Deep inside, most people realize there are certain intangibles that make up a winning or losing season. Ringing through the ages are tales of magnificent ballteams that somehow just managed to lose despite that magnificence. It wasn't that the effort was not there, it wasn't that the want wasn't there, it came down to the fact that it wasn't to be.

I have been accused in the past of being too objective at times in my reporting. I have also been accused of being too supportive. So, instead of addressing this subject as the sports editor of the Battalion, I will address it as a fan. A journalism no-no, but in this instance we will step out of the boundaries of structure.

We, as Aggies, have seen much happen this year. Most of us sat through the football season, and agonized as our names were dirtied by a drug investigation and a losing season. Sure, we as fans hurt when several Rice students held up a sign that said, "Gig those druggies!" at the Rice game at Kyle Field. It wasn't really funny, and I felt perhaps a twinge of anger at the thoughtlessness of it. Could other schools be so naive as to ignore their own problems by playing up ours? Didn't they see the unfairness of labeling an entire school for the mistakes of a few players?

But, they were fans too, and their support for their team simply took a different form than I would picture support as being.

We entered the basketball season with high hopes. Everyone who was supposed to know had labeled us as the runaway winners of the Southwest Conference. Ah, I thought, here is where we show the world what we are made of. But, a few losses later, it became clear the basketball team was having its problems too. Free throws, outside shooting, etc., all have played a part as the Aggies have treaded water so far.

Against Rice, I yelled and squirmed in my exclusive press row seat, another journalism no-no. As the Owls put the game away, I felt the anger rise again. I watched as a Rice player on the bench twirled a towel around and around his head and shook his fist at the crowd. It was happening again.

In Arkansas Saturday night, the scenario repeated itself, as a crowd I would better describe as a mob screamed obscenities and berated the officials from the opening tipoff until the final minute — even with the Razorbacks clear and away the winners.

Early in the first half, I sat once again at my exclusive Barnhill Arena press table seat and surveyed the action. It didn't take long before the anger was bubbling again.

Behind me, a group of Hog fans let loose, berating the team and filling A&M radio broadcaster DeWayne Staats' microphone with more obscenities than any reasonable listener should have to hear.

Claude Riley, the most vocal and enthusiastic of the Aggies on the court, became the early recipient of the abuse.

"Hey, Claude, you asshole! Why don't you go home?"

At one point, Riley and Hog guard U.S. Reed collided in the lane, and an official called Reed for the infraction. Behind me once again, the cries sounded, and on the court Riley raised his arms in agreement with the call.

"Dammit, I'll kick his ass now. Right now!" I glanced behind and saw a burly fellow being restrained by two of his friends.

In the second half, the Aggies fell behind and the fans took up a new call: "Hey, Druggies, forget your drugs? Where's Rudy?"

The fan in me suddenly reared its ugly, non-journalistic head, and I turned around and glared hard. Not being the physically imposing type, the glare didn't really accomplish its purpose and I turned back around. But, I had sealed my fate (I had pointed myself out to the mob as an Aggie).

The fans had found me out, so it was bomb the student reporter time.

"Yeah, if a certain Aggie guy turns around one more time I'll knock the shit out of him, too." There was a chorus of agreements.

Later tales of other confrontations came back to me, and it really made me wonder.

But through the outrage I felt in frenzied Barnhill Arena, I found out something about being a fan and an Aggie. On the field and on the court, we've hit rough times.

But, as Shelby Metcalf has said repeatedly to me all year, there is something about playing at home in G. Rollie White, win or lose. Despite stumbling occasionally on the field or court, the stands continue to be supportive and well-behaved. For the most part, we behave as adults.

Aside from the fear of getting hit on the head with an occasional frisbee, there is no tension over flying ice or paper cups.

This is not a sour grapes column; it's not a we-we-screwed column. It's an article from an Aggie (a fan) who's finally felt something he hasn't let himself feel in quite awhile because of his position — pride in his school.

Lack of leadership sinks Ags' title visions

Decline and fall of 1980-81 team may be new Aggie joke

By RICK STOLLE
Battalion Staff

Probably the biggest Aggie joke of the decade will be the decline and fall of the 1980-81 Texas A&M basketball team.

Yes, the team that was supposed to win it all. They were going to have to look for competition in the lowly Southwest Conference. The same team that was going to win and win big.

This team was touted as a potential final four team in advertisements in Dallas before the TCU game.

Probably the only thing the Aggie basketball team will win this year is a trip to the record books as the fastest-collapse of a major college team.

So far, this year's team has the dubious honor of being the biggest choke in recent Aggie history. And I thought the basketball team was the one team at A&M that had a history of winning the big, must games.

Not even the football losses to Michigan in 1977 (41-3 when the Ags were ranked second in the nation) or to Arkansas in 1975 (31-6 when they needed a victory to win the conference) can compare.

Following the holiday break the Ags have gone a miserable 1-7 after a very respectable 7-0 start.

Sure, you can blame the poor play of co-captains Vernon Smith and Rynn Wright. Or even the lackluster play of the numerous members at the guard position. The poor outside shooting, free throw percentage and field goal percentage have all contributed.

The ultimate blame, however, has to be the lack of leadership the team has displayed throughout the conference season.

No individual is responsible for the poor showing this season. Everybody on the team has had their good as well as bad

games. Yet, no two have been able to combine good games. Quite a few of them have been able to combine for poor games, though.

The Ags have no one player who will stand up and take the leadership of the team. Last year, David Goff was the field general and helped the Ags to a fantastic 26-8 year and lofty national ranking. The final loss, that went into overtime, came at the hands of the eventual national champions (Louisville).

Before Goff, Sonny Parker and Barry Davis ran the show. They led the team through thick and thin.

The only thing that has been notable this season is the extreme lack of a leader. The player that is hot one game and scoring well will assume the leadership. But, by the time the next game rolls around, he has cooled off and can no longer lead.

Analysis

With the loss against Texas, the Ags put the final nail in their own coffin. It is highly doubtful they can pull out of the nosedive long enough to get out of last place.

Without a doubt, this season has to be the most frustrating one coach Shelby Metcalf has ever had. He has used many different starting lineups and none has produced.

Perhaps he should let some of the younger players start and see what they can do. Maybe Roy Jones, Maurice McDaniel, Bruce Sooter or even Ethan Glass can produce. Maybe it's worth a try.

I profess no profound knowledge of the strategies and intricacies of basketball. It's Metcalf's team and he can have it. I

just try to call things the way I see them. And with the loss to Texas, Metcalf has a team that cannot score well or defend.

Even the most simple things seem to confound the Ags. Free throws, freebies, the shots most players hit with frequency because there is nobody in their face when they shoot, are beyond their reach. Those same clutch shots Ags made last year.

For the season, the team is hitting about 57 percent freebies while their opponents are hitting 70 percent. In conference, they have only been able to hit an even 50 percent while conference foes have hit 65 percent. A blistering tangle considering the ineptness of the Ags.

In Arkansas, the Ags were able to hit only seven of 16 free throws while the Hogs were making 16 of 27.

The team is one in transition. They have gone from a better (before Christmas break) to bad and finally from bad to mediocre.

In fact, I think they are slowly sinking from mediocre to pathetic.

Each player I am sure wants to win. They are getting tired and do not want to become used to losing. Yet, they are realistic.

Like the man said, "I don't think we are going to be a better 11-game winning streak."

They have little chance of even getting into the conference tournament now and should be thinking of next year. The freshmen for experience and play the veterans for the knowledge each one of the players has in himself and the team. At least things can't be much worse than they already

Women win LSU meet Saturday

By RICHARD OLIVER
Sports Editor

The Texas A&M women's track team went to Baton Rouge, La. with a full squad Saturday and came away with a meet victory.

The unique thing about that is two weeks ago the Aggie women were represented by only seven members in the Sooner Indoor Relays in Oklahoma City, and still took third place.

With the full squad, the Ags took six first places and racked up 60 points. Ellen Smith participated in

three first place efforts to lead the women. Evelyn Smith, Sandra Cooper, Marylee Metherly, and the mile relay team of the two Smiths, Jana Graves, and Cooper also took firsts.

LSU was second in the meet with 55 points, followed by Baylor with eight.

Women's results:
HIGH JUMP — Dena Spier, 5-2, 2nd.
SHOT PUT — Spier, 26-3, 3rd.
LONG JUMP — Paula Lake, 15-9, 3rd; Spier, 15-5, 4th.
MILE RUN — Barbara Collinsworth, 5:20.62, 2nd.

60-YARD HURDLES — Ellen Smith, 8.6, 1st.
440-YARD DASH — Evelyn Smith, 59.67, 1st; Jana Graves, 59.72, 2nd.
600-YARD RUN — Ellen Smith, 1:26.32, 1st; Lake, 1:35.18, 4th.
60-YARD DASH — Sandra Cooper, 7.25, 1st; Graves, 7.64, 4th.
880-YARD RUN — D. Harrell, 2:22.71, 2nd; Beverly Porter, 2:28.89, 3rd.
1,000-YARD RUN — Suzann Sheffield, 2:41.08, 2nd; Collinsworth, 2:55.92, 3rd.
TWO-MILE RUN — Marylee Metherly, 11:14.02, 1st; Adelaide Bratten, 11:58.42, 3rd.
MILE RELAY — Texas A&M (Graves, Ellen Smith, Evelyn Smith and Cooper), 4:00.04, 1st.

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Swimming team defeats Rice in dual meet Friday

In Monday's Battalion, it was reported that the men's swimming team had lost in a dual meet against Rice in Houston, 89-55.

The men actually won the match by that score as the Aggies had firsts in 13 of 17 events. The Battalion regrets the error.

Here are the A&M results from that matchup against Rice:

400-MEDLEY RELAY — A&M, 3:52.947, 2nd (a school record).
MEN'S 1,000 FREE — Bill McCracken, 10:05.523, 2nd.
MEN'S 100 INTERMEDIATE — Chris Londrigan, 56.416, 1st; Bobby Barnett, 57.815, 2nd.
MEN'S 200 FREE — Rob Mulqueen, 1:48.401, 1st; Kord Reid, 1:50.997, 2nd.
MEN'S 50 BACKSTROKE — Pat Henry, 26.366, 1st; Kirk Mason, 31.477, 4th.
MEN'S 50 BREASTSTROKE — Jay Holmes, 26.674, 1st.
MEN'S 200 FLY — Henry, 1:58.763, 1st; Tim Brown, 2:01.212, 2nd.
MEN'S 50 FREESTYLE — Kevin Londrigan, 22.154, 1st.

MEN'S 1-METER DIVING — Kirk Mason, 174.85, 1st; John Mason, 164.60, 2nd.
MEN'S 100 FREESTYLE — Bobby Barnett, 46.630, 1st; David Salm, 52.057, 3rd.
MEN'S 200 BACKSTROKE — Brown, 2:10.485, 1st.
MEN'S 200 BREASTSTROKE — Jay Holmes, 2:18.440, 1st.
MEN'S 500 FREESTYLE — Rob Mulqueen, 4:51.739, 1st.
MEN'S 50 FLY — Henry, 24.874, 1st; Bobby Hightower, 25.409, 2nd; Pat Ballard, 25.771, 3rd.
MEN'S 1-METER OPTIONAL DIVING — John Mason, 273.70, 1st; Kirk Mason, 262.10, 2nd.
MEN'S 400 INTERMEDIATE — Salm, 4:29.259, 2nd; Kord Reid, 4:33.022, 3rd.
MEN'S 400 FREE RELAY — A&M, 3:15.273, 2nd.

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