

Ags 'start over' against Raiders

By RICHARD OLIVER
Sports Editor

It's always nice to be able to start over.

For the Texas A&M University basketball team, the chance came last week against Baylor. That game signified the start of the second half of the 1981 Southwest Conference schedule, and although the Aggies are out of the championship picture, now is the time to build some momentum for post-season play.

With only a 2-7 SWC slate, the Aggies look now toward the March 5-7 SWC Post-Season Tournament in San Antonio's HemisFair Arena. And, many opposing coaches who had previously been looking in that direction suddenly are looking back at a Texas A&M squad that looked very, very good last Saturday against the Bears.

In fact, last year's SWC champions looked for the most part like last year's SWC champions. The 84-59 victory over the slumping Bears was no fluke.

For weeks, the Aggies have been slowly regaining the confidence they had mysteriously lost in the early season.

Against Arkansas in Fayetteville two weekends ago, the Razorbacks, who must now be considered the favorites for the SWC title, were controlled for a large part of the game by an excellent Texas A&M press and some pinpoint shooting. The Aggies were eventually beaten 52-47 by a free throw slump.

Against Texas in College Station, the Aggies took the Longhorns into overtime, eventually losing 67-63 because of mental errors. In Houston, Texas A&M shot a fine 59.3 percent from the court, but was outshot by Rob Williams and the Cougars and lost, 76-71.

Finally, the tide turned in a big way for the Ags, and the 25-point win over Baylor stirred some hopes that the Aggies of old were reviving.

Leading the "old" Aggies were Vernon Smith and Rynn Wright, the duo that had strangely been ineffective most of the year.

As Metcalf repeated again and again, "As Rynn and Vernon go, so go the Aggies." Rynn and Vernon left for awhile, but returned in a re-sounding way last Saturday, scoring 44 points between them while Wright pulled down 17 rebounds and Smith 11.

"They both have to play for us to win," said Metcalf. "I was real pleased to see him (Wright) break out like that."

Baylor coach Jim Haller was also impressed: "That's the best I've seen them play in four years."

But, a new face stole the show for Texas A&M. Junior transfer guard Milton Woodley came off the bench in the absence of Tyrone Ladson and played to perfection, picking off six Baylor passes and scoring a career-high 15 points.

Perhaps the Aggies' most consistent player this season, Claude Riley, played good defense once again and displayed some court savvy when it was needed.

The biggest surprise of the year for Texas A&M, however, has been Reggie Roberts. The freshman dealt out a school record 12 assists against Baylor while scoring 10.

The Red Raiders, 5-5 in the SWC, have been playing some good basketball lately, dishing out a 81-70 beating to Houston last weekend and edging out TCU this week.

Ralph Brewster, the 6-8 senior who has been on the bench recently, has come on strong lately to lead the Red Raider charge, and will most likely be in the starting lineup against the Aggies Saturday.

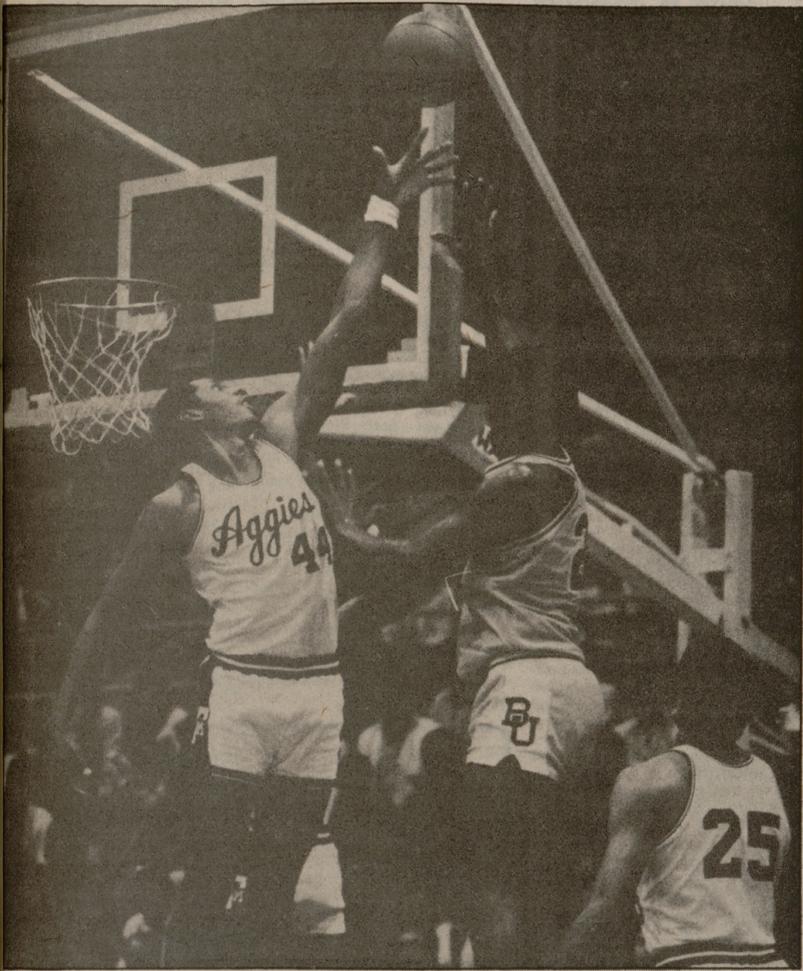
Ben Hill and Jeff Taylor (13 points a game average) will also give the Ags something to watch out for.

At approximately the mid-point of the SWC schedule, anything seems likely as Houston, Arkansas and Texas A&M have begun to play

championship caliber ball. For Shelby Metcalf, there is only one final destination — San Antonio — and the past is easily forgotten.

"If it wasn't for the Aggie fans, I don't know where I'd be," he said this week. "The students have been tremendous. We just haven't won."

"Intensity used to be the mark of our ballclubs; intensity, pounding the boards. Maybe we've got the chemistry going finally."



Staff photo by Greg Cammon

Texas A&M's Roy Jones leaps to deflect a shot in last weekend's 84-59 win over the Baylor Bears. Looking on is Milton Woodley, who

scored 13 points in that game. The Aggies play Texas Tech Saturday at 2:40 p.m. in C. Rollier White Coliseum.

Ali says he's not associated with embezzlement scheme

United Press International
LOS ANGELES — Muhammad Ali says the Harold Smith he befriended wouldn't invent the charges that Wells Fargo Bank officials tried to kill him to cover up a \$300 million embezzlement scheme, accusations the bank calls preposterous.

Smith, a boxing promoter being sued by Wells Fargo for \$21.3 million over an alleged bank fraud, still had not surfaced Wednesday after calling newspapers and broadcasters in New York and Los Angeles to level his accusations bank officials masterminded an embezzlement, not of \$21 million but up to \$300 million, then tried to kill him and abduct his young son.

"That's not the Harold Smith I know," Ali told United Press International. "He wouldn't say that unless it was real."

"I don't know where he got his facts. I'm not going to say he's right and I'm not going to say he's wrong," Wells Fargo chairman, Richard Cooley, meanwhile, issued a statement dismissing Smith's accusations.

"We find preposterous the statement that high officials of the bank and defalcations amounting to \$200 million or more are involved," Cooley said.

"Based on (our) investigation, we are convinced the loss of funds involves approximately \$21.3 million, and all but \$1 million is covered by insurance."

The FBI is investigating the bank embezzlement.

After its own investigation, Wells Fargo filed a \$21.3 million suit against Smith and several others, alleging the money was fraudulently withdrawn through an internal manipulation of funds involving accounts at branches in Beverly Hills and Santa Monica, Calif.

Among the accounts involved was one in the name of Muhammad Ali Professional Sports, Smith's boxing promotion company that purchased the rights to use Ali's name but with which Ali claims he has no association.

MAPS is promoting an \$8 million fight card Feb. 23 at Madison Square Garden which Ali said Tuesday he would try to save because of the cloud over Smith's promotion company.

But Wednesday, Ali seemed to hedge his bet, calling the purses Smith offered the fighters "outrageous" and saying Smith had "spoiled" the fighters by offering such big money. He said the fighters apparently were not willing to accept smaller purses and the fight card could be in jeopardy.

In calls Tuesday to news agencies in New York and Los Angeles, Smith said he had just returned from Switzerland, where he had fled after armed men came to his California home and took his son, holding him for a week, "making me promise to leave the country."

He said now that his family was safe he had returned to clear his name.

"They got to kill me for what I can tell. When I tell it, there's going to be the biggest run on Wells Fargo than on any bank you ever saw," Smith said.

Television changes time for ballgame

United Press International
FAYETTEVILLE, Ark. — The tipoff for the Feb. 14 Southwest Conference basketball game between Houston and Arkansas has been changed to accommodate television.

Start of the game in Barnhill Arena has been moved up from 7:30 p.m. to 12:10 p.m.

Houston currently leads the SWC with an 8-2 record, while the Hogs are in second at 6-3.

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