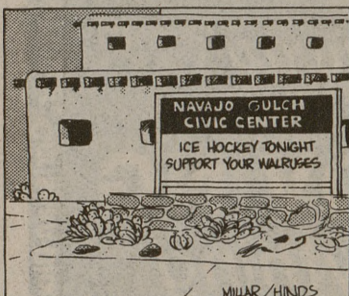


TANK McNAMARA



by Jeff Millar & Bill Hinds

Smith scores 21 as Aggies defeat feisty SMU, 61-56

By RICHARD OLIVER

Sports Editor
Vernon Smith's 21 points helped Texas A&M University overcome a stubborn SMU Mustang squad Tuesday night and pull out a 61-56 victory.

Once again, the Aggies defense kept surprisingly consistent SMU from coming from behind late in the game, and some clutch shooting by Smith and Reggie Roberts sealed the Mustangs fate and pulled Texas A&M into seventh place in the SWC standings.

The victory, the third in a row for Texas A&M, put them at 4-7 in the Southwest Conference and 11-9 overall. SMU is mired in last with a 3-9 record, while TCU, with an 88-84 loss to Texas Tuesday, falls into eighth behind the Aggies at 4-8.

SMU, playing deliberately most of the game, took an early lead at 6-4 with 14:32 left in the first half, but the Aggies started to battle back and finished the first half up by six, 31-25. The difference early in the game was the Mustangs' proficiency from the free throw line as they hit nine-of-11 shots to keep them in the game. Also, the Mustangs committed only four turnovers in that stanza despite a pressing Texas A&M defense.

Later in the half, however, Aggie Head Coach Shelby Metcalf switched his team to a man-on-man defense to break the slow pace the Mustangs had set. The ploy worked, as A&M began hitting some timely outside shots and controlling the boards in a more fast-paced contest.

The game was very physical with many personal battles being waged between the two teams; Rynn Wright and the Mustangs' Gordon Welch bumped each other quite a bit.

Smith paced the Aggies, hitting 15 points in the first half and ending up with the game-high 21.

Texas A&M entered the second half using a man-on-man defense, and the game became quick paced. The two teams traded baskets for 12 minutes, with the Aggies never being ahead by more than four.

With approximately eight minutes remaining, Roberts picked up a loose ball for the Aggies and drove down for what seemed to be an easy layup. He was given a stiff shove from behind, however, by SMU's Dave Piehler. Roberts hit two free throws to put the Aggies up by six, 49-43, and they never looked back.

SMU trailed by only four with



seven minutes to go, but Roberts boosted the Aggies lead to six with the first of his long shots and Claude Riley then hit a layup to put A&M in front by eight.

The Mustangs then surged back to within three, but Roberts again hit a long-range jumper and after the two teams traded baskets Roberts once more scored to open up a seven-point advantage with two minutes to go.

It was the first SWC road victory for Texas A&M, and Metcalf couldn't have been happier.

"This (Moody Coliseum) is a tough place to play," he said after the game. "Of course, we got here and the lockerroom was so cold; they had left the air conditioners on, so that's why we came out early to practice."

"It's our first road victory, and we're definitely out of last place in the SWC, so I guess we can't say we're the best last place team in the league anymore."

Metcalf said SMU's patience was the key to keeping them in the game.

"We went from a zone to a man-on-man because they were being so patient," he said. "We wanted to up-tempo things a bit."

"We kind of played in spurts. Vernon didn't play in spurts, I don't think, but I guess as a team we played in spurts."

SMU ended with less than 10 turnovers in the game.

"They handled it (defensive pressure) real well," said Metcalf. "We tried to put pressure on them. We had more turnovers than that just being foolish. We got a little too casual at times. I noticed Milton (Woodley) lost the ball once in front of our bench with his eyes closed."

Woodley, after turning in two fine games in a row as a starting guard, was a little off Tuesday night, as he hit only two points and fouled out with 5:44 left in the game.

"I know Milton had never seen this place before," said Metcalf.

Overall, Metcalf was happy and looked forward to this weekend's matchup against Rice in Houston.

"I've seen us play better and get beat," he said, "but I'll sure take this win."

Piehler led the Mustangs with 19 points, and teammates Johnny James, Gordon Welch and Dave Gadis added 13, 12 and 10 points respectively. The only other person to score for SMU was Dwight Freeman, who had two.

For the Aggies, Smith had 21, Riley and Roberts 13, Wright eight, Mike Brown three and Woodley and Jones two. Maurice McDaniel and Bruce Sooter also saw action.

League jumbled after Hogs' win

Here's a quick wrapup of Tuesday night's SWC action:

RICE (55) at TEXAS TECH (61) — Clarence Swannegan converted a three-point play with 1:35 to go to break open the game and then hit two free throws with 23 seconds left, carrying Texas Tech to a 61-55 decision over the Rice Owls in Lubbock.

Tech, which evened its Southwest Conference record at 6-6, came from nine points behind early in the second half to move in front midway through the period.

TCU (84) at TEXAS (88) — Ken Montgomery scored 28 points to lead Texas to an 88-84 win over Texas Christian in Austin.

Montgomery, held scoreless a week ago against Arkansas, scored 18 of his points during a torrid Texas first half in which the Longhorns built a 53-28 halftime lead.

BAYLOR (50) at ARKANSAS (67) — Arkansas blew a close game open with six minutes left in the first half and, on the shooting of Scott Hastings and the quickness of its full court press, went on to throttle the Baylor Bears, 67-50 in Fayetteville.

Arkansas stayed in second place in the Southwest Conference at 8-3, a game behind league-leading Houston. The Razorbacks have a 17-6 overall record. The Bears are now 7-5 and 12-10.

A&M-SMU boxscore

TEXAS A&M (61) — Smith 9 3-3 21, Wright 3 2-3 8, Riley 6 1-3 13, Roberts 4 5-6 13, Woodley 1 0-0 2, Brown 1 1-2 3, Jones 0 1-2 1, Sooter 0 0-0 0, McDaniel 0 0-0 0. Totals 24 13-19 61.
SMU (56) — Welch 2 8-8 12, Frierson 0 0-0 0, James 5 3-4 13, Gadis 4 2-10 2, Piehler 8 3-3 19, Freeman 1 0-0 2, Lundblade 0 0-0 0, Beverley 0 0-0 0. Totals 20 16-19 56.

Halftime — Texas A&M 31, SMU 25. Fouled Out — Woodley, Freeman. Total Fouls — Texas A&M 17, SMU 19. A — 5,223.

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Colleges signing today

An old-fashioned outcome in the recruiting of high school football players can be defined as one in which the University of Texas fills its satchel with all the goodies it wants.

And this seems to be building into an old-fashioned year.

The Southwest Conference's nine head football coaches and all their assistants will disperse around the country today to sign high school prospects to scholarship agreements that are binding only within the SWC.

This year's crop of high school talent is not one of the more im-

pressive in recent years, particularly in the area of running backs. But Texas A&M will likely sign the recruit considered to be the top runner in the state, Pat Franklin of Bay City.

Among the other leading prospects in the state are linebacker Gerald Turner of Pittsburg and center Todd Schoppe of LaPorte, both apparently headed for the Houston Cougars; and offensive lineman Brian Camp of Lewisville, who seems to be wrapped up by Baylor.

They will have to do it all over again the following Wednesday on "national signing day."

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