

Sports

Aggie basketball team shoots for top-rate conference finish

By FRANK L. CHRISTLIEB

Battalion Staff
Three goals are within reach of Texas A&M University head basketball coach Shelby Metcalf. Achieving any of the three will require a great deal of teamwork, spirit and a few lucky breaks, all of which are trademarks of top-rate athletic teams. However, if Metcalf and his 1981-82 Aggie squad can find the right combination of talent and team chemistry, it may be easy for the 19th-year coach to forget the ups and downs of last season.

Winning a Southwest Conference championship is the top priority in Metcalf's threefold plan. When Texas A&M's SWC season begins Jan. 5 at Texas Christian University, Metcalf expects the team to regain the title that won a league title with 15-1 overall and 14-2 SWC records two years ago.

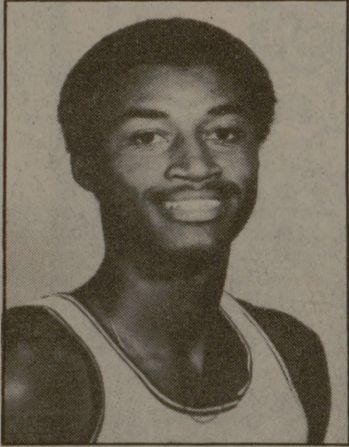
God number two begins Nov. when the Aggies begin their three-year season competition by playing St. Edwards University. After becoming the Texas A&M record of 288-191, meaning his 300th career win may come this season if the team finds a way to win.

During last season, Metcalf won the 1980-81 SWC game, making him the second winningest coach in conference history. If the Aggies win 11 SWC games this season, Metcalf will surpass former Arkansas Razorback coach Glen Rose, who finished his 19-year career with 176 wins.

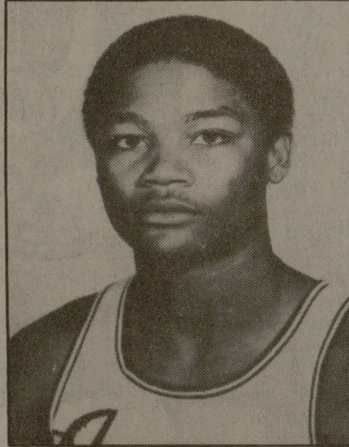
Metcalf and the Aggies must replace the leadership and talent of Vernon Smith and Rynn Wright, who led the Aggies in rebounding and scoring the last two seasons. In his four years at Texas A&M, Smith scored 1,778 points and 978 rebounds to finish as the all-time leading Aggie scorer and rebounder. Wright followed as the third leading scorer with 1,495 points and finished his career rebounding with 861 rebounds in 1977-81.

Both Smith and Wright were drafted by the Philadelphia 76ers and two years ago the National Basketball Association draft, but neither player chose to join the team. Wright was cut from the team four weeks ago, and Smith was placed on waivers on Wednesday. Smith, who had signed a three-year contract, performed well during Philadelphia's exhibition season, but was unable to make the 76ers' roster.

Texas A&M begins competition in the Windor Basketball exhibition game. The week period between the exhibition and the Aggies' Nov. 30 season opening date will allow Metcalf and the Aggies to work on any weaknesses they find in the Windor scrimmage.



Claude Riley



Reggie Roberts

After last season's exciting start and finish, Metcalf hopes the Aggies continue the pace at which they finished the 1981 conference schedule. Texas A&M won seven of its final eight SWC games last season, finishing with a 15-12 overall record and a conference mark of 8-8, tying the Aggies with the Texas Tech Red Raiders for fourth place.

During the first three weeks of the Aggies' 1980-81 season, the team won seven straight games. The streak included impressive tournament wins in the First Union Invitational in Charlotte, N.C., and the Virginia Tech Invitational in Blacksburg, Va.

However, the trip to the KOA Classic in Billings, Mont., started the Aggies on a downhill slide which sent them spiraling downward from the number 10 national ranking they achieved during the win streak. During the second half of the SWC season, the Aggies pulled together and played like the league champions of the previous year, but by that time the title had been all but clinched by the Houston Cougars.

After playing so well at the end of the season, Texas A&M's efforts were wasted when TCU's Darrell Browder hit a 38-foot jump shot to beat the Aggies 62-60 in the first round of the conference tournament. Metcalf says he wants to forget the unpredictable events of the past season, and hopes that the Aggies will start a new trend of consistency when this season begins.

"That's one I'd like to forget," Metcalf said. "It was the most frustrating season I've had as a coach. We played great early and got ranked as high as 10th in the nation, then we went into the worst slump I've ever seen. We're optimistic now, but I guess everybody is at this point in time. I've got a great coaching staff — all three (Barry Davis, John Thornton and David Goff) were captains of championship teams here, so they know what it's all about."

looks strong after Metcalf's good recruiting year.

Metcalf said another top player on his squad is UCLA transfer Tyren Naulls, a 6-4 junior guard who sat out last season to become eligible. The performance of Blinn Junior College transfer Lonnie Bluntson, a 6-8, 220-pound center, has given Metcalf a reason to be excited about the Aggies' strength under the basket.

Metcalf's other top players include 6-1 freshman guard Gary Lewis, 5-11 senior guard Mike Brown, 6-3 senior guard Bruce Sooter, 6-6 junior transfer forward Mike Thomas, 6-8 sophomore forward Ethan Glass and 6-6 junior transfer forward Sonny Burton.

One surprise during the fall workouts, which began Oct. 15, has been walk-on Temple Junior College transfer Kevin Cunningham, a 6-5 forward, is an intelligent athlete who should contribute to the team's effort.

Metcalf said the SWC race will be more competitive than before, because of the overall balance of the league. Although the title has already been conceded to Houston by most SWC followers, several teams have a chance to unseat the champion Cougars.

"The league is going to be super, super tough this year, because all the great players last year were underclassmen," Metcalf said.

Metcalf cited Baylor University forward Terry Teagle, University of Arkansas center Scott Hastings, University of Texas center LaSalle Thompson and Houston guard Rob Williams as returning top conference performers.

Texas A&M will exhibit a more exciting brand of basketball this season, Metcalf said, with the Aggies running more fast breaks and presses.

Although preseason picks slate the Aggies for fifth or sixth place in the SWC, Metcalf hopes that his team can prove false those predictions.

"I think there will be a great race in the Southwest Conference this season," Metcalf said. "I just hope we're part of it."

The leading returnees for the 1981-82 season are 6-9 junior forward Claude Riley, 6-2 sophomore guard Reggie Roberts and 6-1 senior guard Milton Woodley. In addition, 6-11, 220-pound center-forward Rudy Woods returns to the Aggies after sitting out the spring of last season because of academic difficulties.

Woods had been averaging 8.1 points and 5.1 rebounds a game before being declared ineligible for the spring semester. With 938 career points and 612 rebounds, Woods ranks 14th and eighth on the all-time Aggie list in those categories.

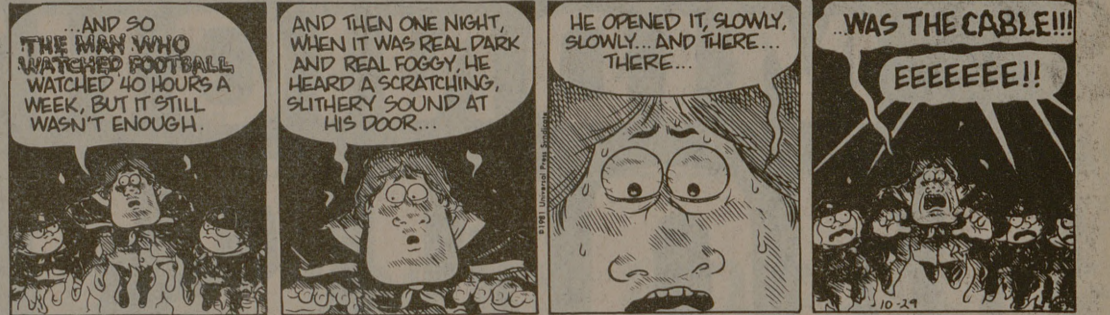
Riley, who started every game last season, is the leading returning Aggie scorer after averaging 10.6 points and 6.2 rebounds a game. Roberts brings a 9.7 point average and a 2.4 rebound average into this season after making the All-SWC Newcomer team in 1980-81.

After solidifying the Aggies backcourt while starting the Aggies' final nine games last season, Milton Woodley returns as a top guard prospect. Woodley averaged 4 points, 1.6 rebounds and 3.2 assists in a starting role.

Junior forward Roy Jones, at 6-7, played well coming off the bench last season, and should solidify a group of Aggie reserves that

TANK McNAMARA

by Jeff Millar & Bill Hinds



Landry says young Dallas secondary must fill holes

United Press International
DALLAS — The Dallas Cowboys, who used to consistently challenge for the honor of being the NFL's No. 1 defensive team, are currently ranked as the worst defensive club in the National Football Conference.

Through the first half of the season the Cowboys have given up 3,046 yards, or 380.8 per game. Most of the damage has come through the air, where the Cowboys have allowed 260 yards each time its young secondary has taken to the field.

But somehow, Dallas has managed to compile a 6-2 record.

"It really doesn't make you confident (to have given up so much yardage)," said Cowboys coach Tom Landry. "Well, we're going to give up yards. There is no use

kidding ourselves. We have a young secondary and we have not really jelled well.

"Anytime you step on the field something is going to happen. You may leave early or you may have to stay late. But something is going to happen. We've got the potential to be a good defensive team. But now we are still giving away the big plays in the secondary."

Offsetting the yardage allowed, however, is the surprising number of interceptions that have been claimed by the Cowboys.

Rookie cornerback Everson Walls leads the league with eight and fellow cornerback Dennis Thurman has six. The Cowboys have a total of 22, tops in the NFL.

"We are still going to have to make the turnovers," said Landry. "We had five interceptions last

Sunday and without those it would not have been a contest."

The inexperience of the Cowboys secondary — which includes two rookies and another player (Thurman) forced to fill a cornerback role instead of the more familiar safety position — is obviously the main problem.

"When you are a rookie you don't see anything," Landry said. "I remember when I played as a rookie, I saw very little. I didn't know what was going on half the time. You just play by instincts. Everything is blurry to you."

"You tell a guy to key on something, but all they see is a whole cloud of movement. They couldn't key on a man if they wanted to. And that kind of hurts you on defense," he said.

Biles files complaint with NFL after official's interference call

United Press International
HOUSTON — Houston Oilers Head Coach Ed Biles has filed a grievance with the NFL over a penalty call made by field judge Donald Orr in Monday's game at Pittsburgh. It was Orr who two years ago made a critical incomplete-pass call against the Oilers in a playoff game against the Steelers.

In both cases, on Monday night and on Jan. 6, 1980, Orr's calls involved Oilers wide receiver Mike Renfro.

"I lodged a complaint with Art McNally's office," Biles said Tuesday. McNally is the supervisor of NFL referees.

"I went through proper chan-

nels. I don't want to get in an officiating controversy. The Steelers beat us," he said. Pittsburgh won the game 26-13.

Orr ruled in the 1980 AFC Championship game that Renfro juggled a touchdown pass that would have tied the game, making it incomplete. The call was scrutinized closely after the game and then-Oilers Head Coach Bum Phillips openly criticized Orr and said Renfro had made the reception as he showed films of it to the media.

Monday night Renfro was flagged for offensive pass interference by Orr, and the call nullified a call by another official of defensive pass interference inside the Steel-

ers' 5-yard line. After watching the play on the Oilers' game film Tuesday, Biles said there was no penalty against Renfro. He admitted, however, that "it was a judgement call."

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