

photo by Bob Sebree

A&M basketball team most overlooked in conference

If pictures are worth a thousand words, Rudy Woods can write a novel.

The photos of Woods that ran in *The Bryan-College Station Eagle* Sunday and in *The Battalion* Monday are almost identical. In one, Woods is going up for a dunk against the Texas Longhorns.

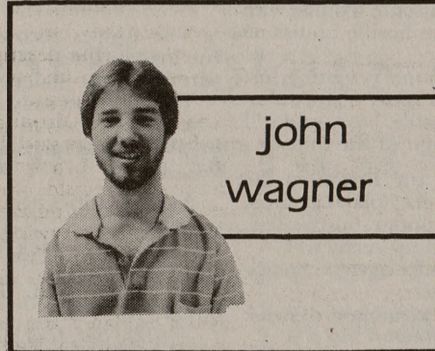
In the other, the ball is on its way down, the cords of the net blurred from the force of the slam dunk. The look on Woods' face is one of sheer determination and drive.

Ironic? In a way. While the pictures show Woods hanging in mid-air on his way to the dunk, they also show Texas' All-Everything center LaSalle Thompson with his back to the play, his feet on the floor. Woods' expression, caught for posterity by photographers, may well sum up the feelings of the entire Aggie basketball team.

While other players around the conference get their share of publicity, the starting line-up of Coach Shelby Metcalf's Aggies wallows in obscurity. Aside from an occasional story such as the one on Woods written by Tracy Dodds Monday in the *Houston Post*, the Aggies simply don't get the ink they deserve.

Even Dodds didn't give the Aggies a fair shake. Her piece on Woods was certainly not flattering, focusing mainly on the problems the 6-11 senior has had. Dodds barely mentioned Woods' play of late, which has bordered on brilliant.

Along with junior Claude Riley, Woods has sparked the Aggies offensively and defensively. The duo's inside play has enabled the



Aggies to play more wide-open, and aside from the loss to Arkansas Feb. 15, the results have been favorable.

So while the Thompsons, Teagles, Pierces and Hastings get the press, the Aggies just continue to play basketball. Taking nothing away from the aforementioned athletes, Coach Metcalf and Co. seem to be getting along great without a star.

The Aggies have received balanced scoring and rebounding all season. And while not having one big man to count on might be a problem at times, it can also be an advantage. The opponents' defenses have to guard everyone, and when the Aggies are hot, they can be unbeatable.

Conversely, when the Rice Owls brought the Ricky Pierce Show to G. Rollie White

Coliseum, its star was unbelievable. Pierce threw in 34 points at will, scoring from everywhere on the floor. The Aggies had three players in double figures and seven players that scored. They won by 11. Advantage, Texas A&M.

Not having a star player might help the Aggies, but it must hurt to not be recognized for playing good ball. And the Aggies have been playing good ball.

The press has taken a liking to Thompson, but Woods and Riley have outplayed him in both games between Texas A&M and Texas this season. The press has made a big fuss over the effects of the loss of Mike Wacker on the Longhorns, but the Aggies have survived losing forward Roy Jones to a knee injury.

The press likes to praise Rob Williams of Houston, but the Aggies have four guards who could average 20 points a game if they played all 40 minutes, as Williams usually does.

It all boils down to consistency, and the Aggies have been one of the most consistent teams in the street fight called the SWC. Individually they have been sporadic at best. But as a team, they've been on the mark more often than Arkansas, Houston, or anybody.

They may not have any stars, but they just may be the best team in the SWC.

So forgive Rudy Woods if he appears determined. He's just trying to get his picture in the paper. The Aggies might not ever get any print, but they'll take a championship ring and a trip to the NCAA tournament over pictures any day. No one will know who they are, but...

Adding to the Aggie lead

Texas A&M guard Tyren Naulls leans falls toward the basket to put in a layup late in the Aggies' 91-70 victory over the Texas Longhorns Saturday, as Texas' LaSalle

Thompson defends on the play. Texas A&M hosts TCU tonight at 7:30 in G. Rollie White Coliseum.

The Texas A&M basketball team, tied with Houston for second place in the Southwest Conference, hosts TCU tonight at 7:30 in G. Rollie White Coliseum.

The Aggies, 16-8 overall and 9-5 in the SWC, defeated the Horned Frogs 60-54 in their first conference game of the season Jan. 5 in Fort Worth. Since that time, TCU has surprised

several teams in the conference by staying near the top of the SWC race.

The Horned Frogs have a 13-11 season record and a fifth-place 8-6 conference record. While the Aggies and Cougars are one game behind the 10-4 Arkansas Razorbacks, Baylor is one and a half games out at 9-6 and TCU is only two games out.

The Aggies defeated the Texas Longhorns 91-70 Saturday, with senior guard Milton Woodley leading with 19 points. Aggie coach Shelby Metcalf said the scoring burst by Woodley wasn't unexpected.

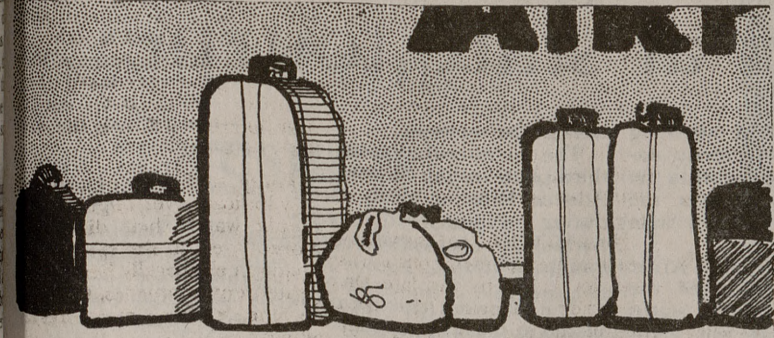
"He's a good shooter," Metcalf said. "He had a good game, but it wasn't unexpected."

The Aggies who have lost to

Arkansas twice, Texas Tech twice and Baylor once, must win their remaining games with TCU and Houston to receive a bye into the SWC tournament semifinals. That bye goes to the team finishing the regular season in second place.

The third-place team receives a bye into the quarterfinals of the tourney.

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