

Texas A&M

The Battalion Sports

March 1, 1982 /Page 15

Aggies take time out before tournament

Even with loss to Cougars, A&M has bye into quarters

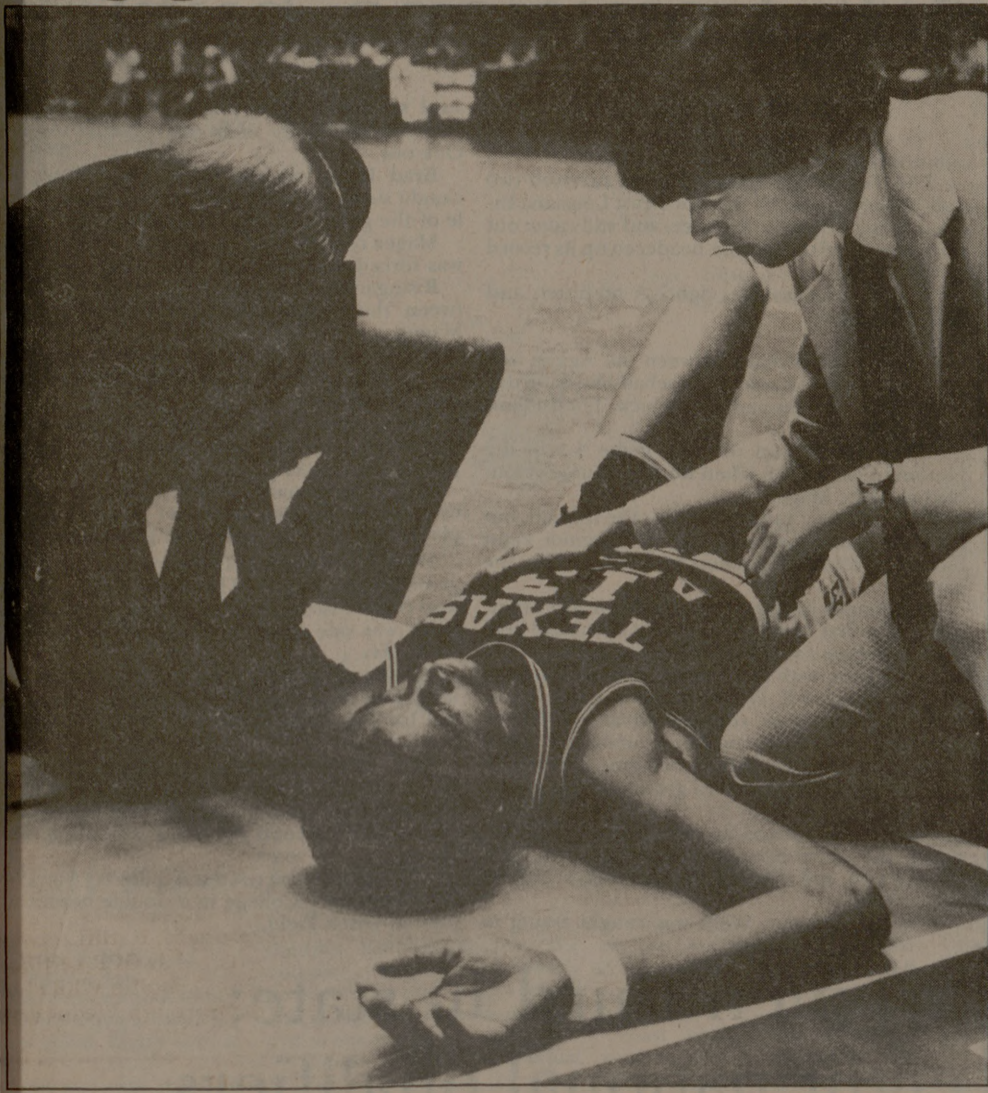


photo by C. Michel Chang

Texas A&M University forward Claude Riley lies still as Texas A&M trainers Jay Harris (left) and Steve Smith attend to him during the second half of the Houston Cougars' 96-93 victory

Saturday. Although no foul was called, Houston center Akeem Abdul Olajuwon had hit Riley from behind while both were attempting to get a rebound.

by Frank L. Christlieb
Sports Editor

"O! Seaweed!" University of Houston forward Clyde Drexler looked at teammate Michael Young and laughed after the Cougars' 96-93 victory Saturday over the Texas Aggies.

Seaweed? "He played his best game of the year — of his life," Drexler said of Young, the 6-6 guard/forward who led UH with 27 points and 13 rebounds. But Seaweed?

"Moses Malone (of the Houston Rockets) used to call him that when Young played against him during the summer," Drexler said, still laughing.

It didn't matter to Drexler that he didn't have the best game of his own career. As long as the Cougars avenged their 95-77 loss Feb. 1 to the Aggies in G. Rollier White Coliseum, nothing else mattered.

After all, Houston entered the game assured of at least a bye into the tournament quarterfinals. With the victory, the Cougars clinched second place and a spot in the SWC semifinals.

But an Aggie loss coupled with a Baylor defeat of TCU Saturday night could have taken away Texas A&M's chances for a bye into the Dallas portion of the Southwest Conference tournament, which begins Thursday in Dallas' Reunion Arena.

However, TCU defeated the Bears, giving the Aggies third place and a few days off until they must face the winner of tonight's Texas-Baylor game Thursday in the quarterfinals.

"Both teams were ready to play," Drexler said. "We didn't care what they (the Aggies) had at stake — we just wanted to beat them because they beat us up there."

The Cougars, who finished the regular season 20-6 overall and 11-5 in the SWC, have won eight games in row, with Texas A&M being the last team to defeat them. The 96 points were the most given up by the Aggies in a game this season.

SWC tourney

TONIGHT — Rice at Texas Tech, SMU at TCU, Texas at Baylor; all games 7:30.

THURSDAY — (At Dallas): Texas-Baylor winner vs. Texas A&M, 7 p.m.; SMU-TCU winner vs. Rice-Texas Tech winner, 30 minutes after opening game.

FRIDAY: Arkansas vs. winner of Thursday's game, 7 p.m.; Houston vs. winner Thursday first game, 30 minutes after opening game.

SATURDAY: Championship game, 8 p.m.

to win. We're not going to worry about who's picked."

Houston coach Guy Lewis said he couldn't begin to predict an outcome for the SWC tourney.

"I really don't know who the favorite could be," Lewis said. "I don't even know who to pull for."

Metcalfe said that although the Aggies lost, he was pleased with their comeback in the second half.

"We've only played one real poor ball-game — that's the one at Arkansas (won by the Razorbacks 92-75)," Metcalfe said. "This team's come a long way from being picked to finish sixth in the conference at the beginning of the season."

The Aggies finished the regular season 17-9 overall and 10-6 in the SWC.

Texas A&M guard Reggie Roberts, who scored 11 points before fouling out with 4:23 left in the game, said the team couldn't quite overcome the second-half streak that gave the Cougars a 13-point lead with 15:17 remaining.

"I feel disappointed, but I feel pretty good about the way we came back," Roberts said. "We kept strong, and it still came down to the last shot."

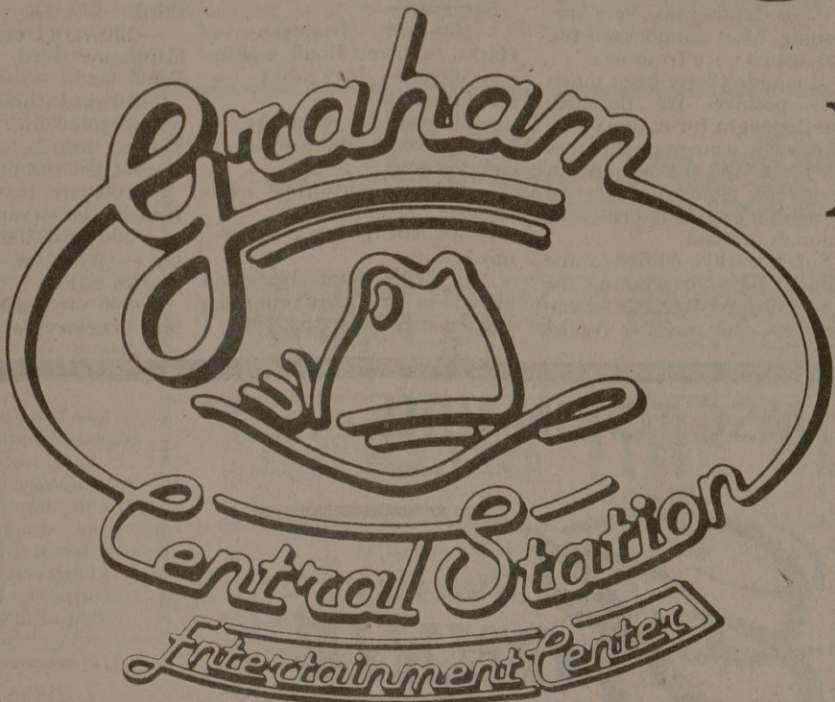
Tyren Naulls' 22-footer from the top of the key with four seconds left bounced off the rim and into the hands of Houston center Akeem Abdul Olajuwon, whom Claude Riley fouled with two seconds left.

"I feel it was one of our best games," Roberts said. "It's just that the shots that were falling for them weren't falling for us. They just came out hot at the start of the second half, and spread their offense out a little bit."

Naulls said the Aggies didn't give up after falling behind early in the second half.

"We never feel out of the game until it's over," Naulls said. "We were hitting too, but it seemed like they were hitting six points to our two, so we couldn't do anything about it."

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