

The Battalion Sports

March 11, 1982 /Page 11

Aggies survive Lamar scare to win 60-58

Roberts' steals guide A&M to second round of NIT against 19-9 Huskies

by Frank L. Christlieb
Sports Editor

Lamar basketball coach Pat Foster says his team should have beaten Texas A&M Wednesday night in G. Rollie White Coliseum.

And he's probably right. The Cardinals had a 52-49 lead with 6:07 left in the National Invitational Tournament game, played in front of 3,217 spectators. Even with only 2:43 left, Lamar still led 54-53 after guard Terry Long hit a jumper from the left corner.

However, two free throws by Texas A&M freshman guard Gary Lewis gave the Aggies a 55-54 lead with 2:33 left. They never trailed after that.

With a final three-point play from forward Claude Riley, Texas A&M won the NIT opener 60-58 to advance to the next round against Washington Tuesday in Pullman, Wash. The Huskies came back from a 40-28 halftime deficit to defeat Brigham Young 66-63 Wednesday night.

Consider these points that seem to indicate a victory for Lamar:

— The Cardinals shot 51 percent from the field, including 57 percent on 12 of 21 in the second half. On the other hand, the Aggies shot only 39.7 percent from the floor — 42 percent in the first half and 37 in the second half.

— Long, who scored 22 points, connected on 11 of 20 from the field and teammate Kenneth Perkins, with 15 points, hit seven of 11 field goal attempts. Long scored from 10 different spots on the court during the game, including shots from 24, 25, 26 and 27 feet.

— Texas A&M's Tyren Naulls, who played 34 minutes in the game, scored two

points on only one of nine from the field. Roberts, who may have won the game for the Aggies by coming up with six steals, hit only four of 12 from the floor.

But Texas A&M made key plays when they were needed and hit their free throws near the end of the game. The Aggies made 10 of 15 free throws, while Lamar made only 10 of 21 free throws. Lamar center Dave Richardson made only one of six.

Texas A&M had a height advantage with the 6-11 Woods and 6-10 Riley in the lineup, since Lamar's tallest players stood only 6-9 and 6-6. The difference became evident in the final statistics, which showed Woods and Riley finishing with 25 of the Aggies' 38 rebounds.

Lamar, led by Perkins with 10 and Richardson with seven, had 35 rebounds. Along with his rebound total, Riley scored a team-high 20 points, Milton Woodley had 14 and Woods and Roberts had 10 each.

Foster cited the Aggies' scoring and rebounding strength as a major factor in their victory.

"They beat us inside all night long," Foster said. "We couldn't contain them inside and they got several easy baskets. That was the difference in the ballgame, and we didn't capitalize on our opportunities late in the game."

When the Cardinals had the ball and the 52-49 lead, a steal by Reggie Roberts and a fast-break dunk brought the Aggies to within a point. And with 3:40 left, Roberts' attempted steal caused Lamar's Brian Kellybrew to lose the ball out-of-bounds.

Texas A&M converted that mistake into a basket when Riley rebounded a missed free throw by Woods and dunked the ball for a

53-52 Aggie lead. Foster said the Aggies' pressure caused the Cardinals to make key mistakes during the deciding minutes of the game.

"We didn't handle it well at all," Foster said. "The players got a little tight. We told them to go into the passing game and hold on to the ball."

"That was critical — fatal, in fact. We had chances to win the ballgame, and we should have won it," Foster said. "We just didn't make the plays. The players put a lot of work into preparing for this ballgame and they played hard."

The loss ends Lamar's season at 22-7, and the Aggies now have won 19 and lost 10. Washington, a member of the Pacific 10 Conference, has a 19-9 record.

Riley said the Aggies must upgrade their intensity in order to stay alive in the NIT.

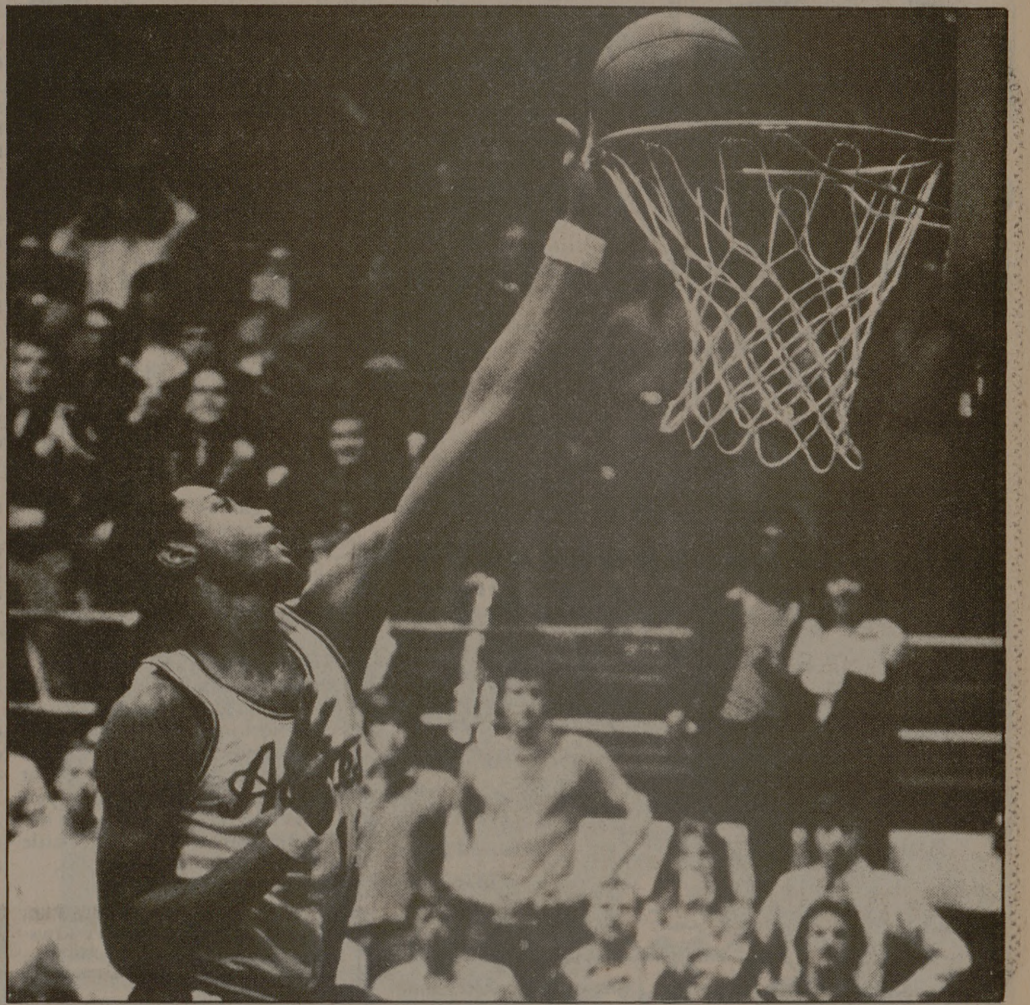
"We have played better, and I know we can play better," Riley said. "They (the Cardinals) played like we thought they would. They played good, patient basketball."

Texas A&M coach Shelby Metcalf said Lamar's matchup defense prevented the Aggies from taking command during the game.

"Texas runs a matchup defense, but Texas doesn't put the pressure on you," Metcalf said. "This is the first matchup I've seen that puts a lot of pressure on the ball and makes you pass."

"I thought we handled the pressure all right. I think the turnovers we had (14) weren't so much a result of the pressure as of our mistakes. We'd pass into the defense... it was a combination of things."

Lamar guard Nicky Snell said that although the Aggies have a great deal of talent, the Cardinals should have won the game.



staff photo by John Ryan

Texas A&M forward Claude Riley puts over Lamar Wednesday night in a dunk in the Aggies' 60-58 victory in NIT opener. Riley scored 20 points.

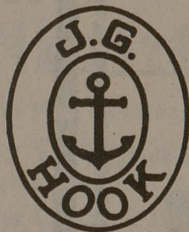
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