

Roberts, Metcalf hope UH can top Final Four field

by John Wagner

Battalion Staff
There's a party going on this weekend in New Orleans, but the guest list isn't long. Not long at all.

The four best college basketball teams in the country received invitations. To borrow a phrase from the sage of New Orleans, Bum Phillips, these teams may not be in a class by themselves, but it doesn't take long to call the roll.

Or guest list, as the case may be.

Amid all the speculation whether Coach Dean Smith of North Carolina will finally win it all, amid all the guessing as to just how dominating Georgetown's freshman center Patrick Ewing is, and amid all the talk about Louisville's blue-chip players, Guy Lewis and the Houston Cougars are going about the business of trying to become the best basketball team in the land.

The Cougars earned their invitation the hard way.

After a pre-season nod as a slight favorite to win the Southwest Conference, they jumped off to a great start, winning the Sugar Bowl Classic and looking unbeatable. Akeem Abdul Olajuwon, the sophomore from Nigeria, was grabbing headlines with his play off the bench. The rest of the Cougars were playing consistently, and UH ran its record to 11-1.

Things were looking good. Really good.

But the threads of what had appeared to be a dream season soon unraveled. Junior guard Rob Williams was hurting, the result of knee surgery, and he hadn't completely healed. When he regained full strength, he was pressing, trying to make up for lost time. The rest of the team was unhappy and critical of Williams for shooting the ball so much.

The Cougars were 2-4 in the SWC at one time, and a now-famous team meeting in Fort Worth turned the team around. Houston went on a tear during

the second half of the season, going 8-0. Lewis began putting the threads back together.

The first time the same Cougars played Texas A&M in G. Rollie White Coliseum, the Aggies bombed UH 95-77. The second time UH won 96-93. The Cougars won during the Southwest Conference tournament, and Aggie guard Reggie Roberts says UH is a different team now than they were that first meeting.

"They're playing real well together, real good team ball," he said. "Most of their players have been scoring in double figures, and Lynden Rose is playing super."

Roberts said he thinks Georgetown will win the NCAA championship, but he said: "If UH beats North Carolina, they'll win it all. Georgetown won't be able to keep Rob Williams down — Rob's head will be so big."

The sophomore from McKinney said the Cougars' success is helping the reputation of SWC basketball, a reputation that even this year was not complimentary. Basketball experts sometimes frown on SWC basketball as inferior, and many consider Texas high school basketball years behind the rest of the country.

"I think Texas is a good basketball state," Roberts said. "There's a lot of good players from Texas playing in junior colleges and at major colleges. Houston has given the conference a good reputation, and that's why I'm wishing them luck."

Roberts said he'll be in front of the television when Houston takes on number one-ranked North Carolina Saturday.

"I'll be watching it," he said. "And I'll definitely be pulling for the Cougars."

Aggie coach Shelby Metcalf said he hopes UH wins it all.

"I'll be pulling for Houston,

but I'll be thinking with my heart and not my head," Metcalf said.

"North Carolina has a disciplined team, but I think UH is the kind of team that can really bother North Carolina."

Both Metcalf and Roberts feel the Cougars need to out-rebound the Tar Heels and need to have the lead going into the latter stage of the game. North Carolina is well known for its four-corner stall, which Smith likes to use if UNC has a lead late in a game.

In Saturday's other game, Metcalf said he favored Louisville.

"Georgetown has a good team also, but I like the Cardinals in that game," he said. "I also think Houston has a better chance of beating Georgetown than they do North Carolina."

Metcalf said the Cougars' success is the result of several factors.

"The big thing is the way Olajuwon is coming along and the way Rob Williams is playing," Metcalf said. "I think Rob is playing his most unselfish basketball since he's been at UH."

"The Cougars started winning when they put Rose in and went with two guards. Rose takes a lot of pressure off of Williams, and makes them a quicker ballclub."

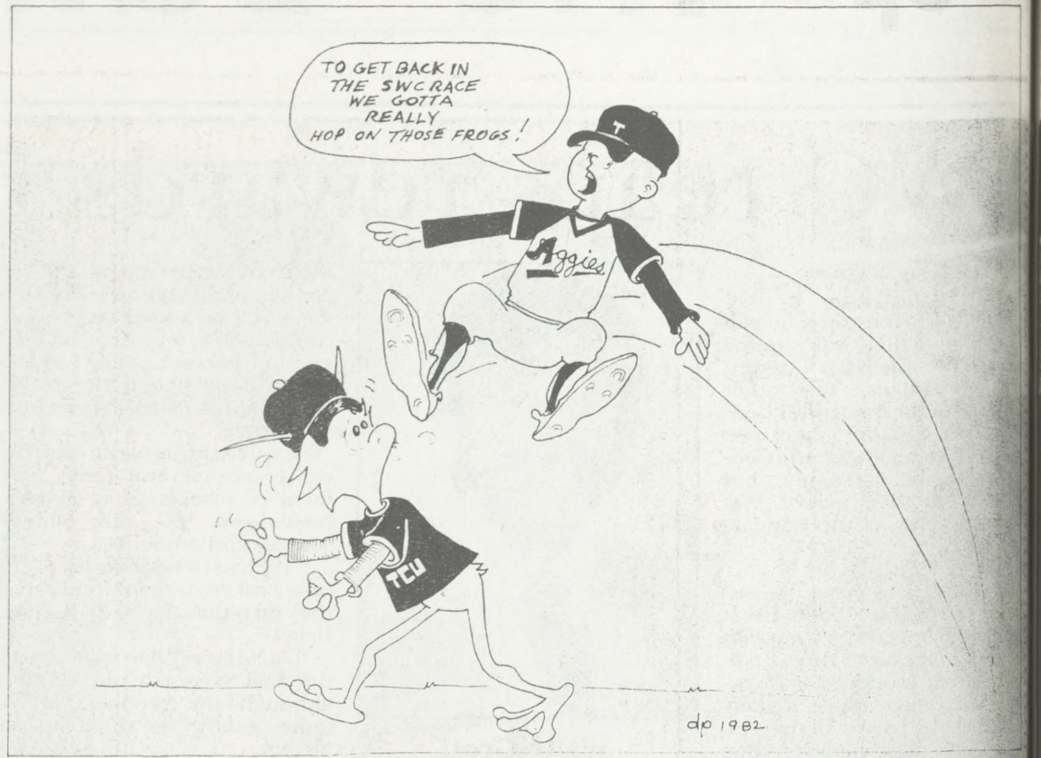
Metcalf said the Cougars' tournament success won't change the way the rest of the country looks at SWC basketball. The Aggie head coach said the conference's reputation isn't as bad as some think.

"We get treated with a lot of respect when they travel out of state," Metcalf said. "They know we have good programs."

Metcalf said he'll be in front of the television set when the Final Four begin battle.

"It'll be a good tournament. It has a little bit of everything," he said.

Including a SWC school.



Aggies at home

A&M in must-win series with TCU

by John Wagner

Battalion Staff
The Southwest Conference baseball season is only six games old for Texas A&M, but Coach Tom Chandler and the Aggies are already in a must-win situation as they prepare to meet the TCU Horned Frogs here this weekend.

The Aggies, picked by many as favorites in the 1982 race, won two of three from the Rice Owls in Olsen Field, but were ambushed by the University of Texas in Austin last Friday and Saturday.

The Aggies lost three games to the Longhorns, and enter this weekend's series with TCU 2-4 in conference play. They are 2-7 overall.

TCU is 1-5 in conference play

and 7-11-1 overall.

Texas and Houston lead the SWC with identical 3-0 conference records. The Aggies are three games back of first place and TCU is four games out. Overall, however, the Longhorns are 33-0. Houston is 22-3-2.

The Aggies need to finish in the top four in the conference to make the post-season tournament.

Chandler said he didn't know what to expect from TCU, since they have such a young ballclub.

"They've had some pitching problems, and when they went up to Arkansas to play the Razorbacks, they lost all three games in the last innings," Chandler said.

The Aggie head coach cited injuries and illness in the pitching staff as the reason for Texas A&M's recent problems. The losses to Texas, he said, disappointed his squad, but they rebounded well.

"It took a lot of starch out of the boys, but I think we've regrouped well," Chandler said. "Hopefully, the two wins over Minnesota got us back on the right track, because we had good pitching and some outstanding defensive plays."

Rick Luecken will start the first game for the Aggies tonight at 7:30. Sherman Corbett or Phillip Taylor will start in the first game on Saturday at 1 p.m. and David Flores will pitch in the second game of Saturday's double-header.

Rockets fire past Trail Blazers to win 108-95

United Press International
PORTLAND, Ore. — Houston coach Del Harris was optimistic today about his team's chances for making the playoffs after a solid 108-95 victory over the Portland Trail Blazers Thursday night.

"I feel very good about our chances," he said. "I felt when we won by two points at Utah the other night that we might be over the hump. This one really gives us a little edge."

The Houston victory,

sparked by Moses Malone's 41 points and 18 rebounds, gives the Rockets a 38-32 record. Portland, one of the teams contending with Houston for a playoff berth, dropped to 35-33.

"Mo (Malone) was magnificent once again," Harris said, "but we got solid games out of everybody."

"After a shaky start against Jim Paxson, I thought Robert Reid was magnificent. I don't think he missed a shot for us in the second half."

Houston led 50-47 at end of the first half during which Malone got 23 of his points. Malone fell off to 6 points in the third period, but Reid scored 11 and Houston went out in front 79-67. The Rockets built 18-point leads twice in the final quarter when Portland could get no closer than 11.

Harris, asked why the Rockets play so well on the road (18-7), said, "We are a good rebounding team and a good rebounding team should be a good road team. Also, we play pretty good defense and you've got to do that to win on the road."

He said, "We have the lowest points per game yield in the West and the West is where all the big scoring teams live — Denver, Los Angeles, San Antonio, Golden State, Seattle."

Portland Coach Jack Ramsay said: "You have to credit Houston for scoring and rebounding inside and shooting well from outside."

"Moses got the ball virtually unobstructed tonight and those things are costly."

Allen Leavell scored 19 points and Reid added 14 for Houston. Mychal Thompson hit 23 and Paxson had 20 for the Trail Blazers.

The third-place Rockets gained half a game on the San Antonio Spurs, who didn't play Thursday. Houston still trails the Spurs by 4½ games and second-place Denver by 1½ games.

The Rockets play at Seattle tonight and Portland plays at Golden State.

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