

Texas A&M

The Battalion Sports

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'Phi Slamma Jamma' rushes A&M, 86-66

by John Wagner
Sports Editor

Of the two teams that battled it out in G. Rollie White Coliseum Saturday, one was a talented team, a hard-working team, an exciting team with exciting players.

The other team was the Houston Cougars. The Cougars, you see, are not of this world. At least, they don't play like it. It isn't fair to compare those frat brothers of the fast break — Phi Slam-

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ma Jamma, as UH fans like to call them — with teams of a more earthly persuasion.

It also isn't fair to say the Aggies didn't play well in their 86-66 loss to the Cougars — that isn't so. It's just that UH is so far above the rest of the conference that nobody stands a chance with them.

Except for the Aggies. Or, the Aggies *did* stand a chance. If there was a team that could beat Houston, the experts were saying, the Aggies could. And if there was a place Houston could be beaten, it was the coliseum. In front of that rabid student section, and in the midst of all that noise, the Cougars didn't stand a chance, right?

Wrong. The experts forgot that these Cougars are not your ordinary team. They didn't even flinch when the crowd got after them. They are not of this planet. They belong in the NBA. Somebody call the Southwest Conference office and ask for disaster aid — the Cougars are on a roll.

The Aggies, who have traveled halfway around the world and all the way across the country in search of the perfect basketball team this season, found it — at a school just 90 miles away. And although they did it begrudgingly, they praised the Cougars for the job they did.

"Houston is the best team we've played so far," forward Claude Riley said. "They execute so well on offense and defense. They're just the best team we've seen."

The Cougars, however, didn't do anything that surprised Riley, he said.

"They played just like I expected them to play," Riley said. "It's just that we made a lot of mistakes and they seemed to score after every mistake. If we could have eliminated our turnovers, it would've been a different ball game."

Turnovers, however, didn't appear to be the Aggies' problem. They committed only 10, and UH turned the ball over eight times. Their problem, at least at the beginning of the game, was more like a mountain named Olajuwon. Or Akeem the Dream. Or Jelly Bean. Or human shot-blocking device.

Whatever you want to call him, UH center Akeem Abdul Olajuwon almost single-handedly kept the Aggies from scoring in the first half, blocking four shots and getting his hands on several others. Still, the Aggies decided they would live — or die — by taking the ball inside on the Cougars. It is a mission that several have tried this season, and all have failed. The Aggies did too.

"Everybody's been trying to go inside on them," Aggie coach Shelby Metcalf said, "but they're just awesome inside. Still, we thought that was our best shot."

"They just all play so well together," Metcalf said. "If you try to stop one man, they're gonna get you with somebody else."

Metcalf was impressed with the Cougs' defense, also.

"They played a box-and-one defense, and they did a good job on Claude. I thought that was a good way to play Texas A&M. If you played a box-and-one on them, you'd have to start nine people — four in the box and one on each of their starters."

The Aggies, who were outrebounded 42-35, just couldn't keep up with UH's inside game. The Cougars dominated Texas A&M under the boards, forcing the Aggies to move outside to score.

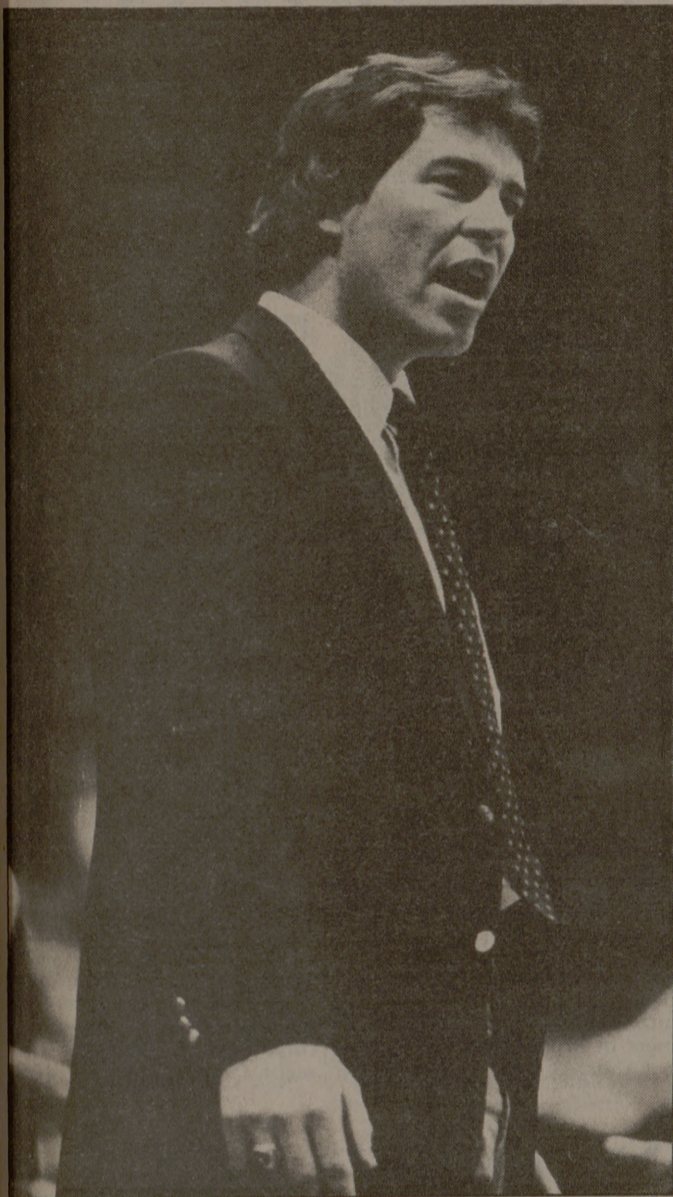
Several times in the game the Aggies drove the lane, or went for what appeared to be an easy layup, but were denied the hoop because of the Cougar defense.

"The difference in the ball game was the boards," Metcalf said. "We just can't board with them. They're a tremendous rebounding ball club. That was the big thing."

The Aggies, forced to shoot outside, brought in long-range bombers Kenny Brown and Doug Lee. Brown was ineffective, however, hitting only 3 of 13 shots. Lee was 4 of 7 from the field and 1 of 2 from the line for nine points.

The Cougars' starting lineup of Clyde Drexler, Michael Young, Larry Micheaux, Alvin Franklin and Olajuwon had 69 of UH's total points. Drexler and Young each had 20, and Olajuwon finished with 16. Benny Anders came off the

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Aggie assistant coach John Thornton, left, gives some instructions to the team during the Aggies' 86-66 loss to the Houston Cougars Saturday. At right,



staff photo by David Fisher

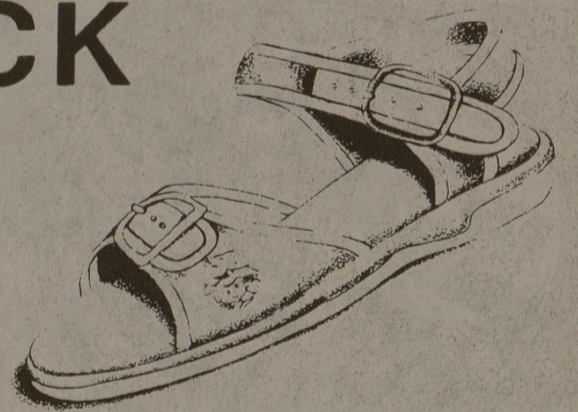
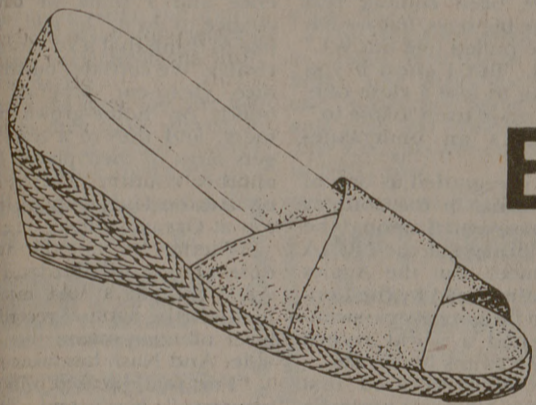
Akeem Olajuwon goes up for an offensive rebound against Texas A&M's Tyren Naulls. The Aggies evened their record at 11-11 with the loss to UH.

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