

Texas A&M

The Battalion Sports

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Final Four

Coogs, Akeem hope for Final Four dream

United Press International
ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. — The legend of Akeem Abdul Olajuwon is growing so rapidly that someday the folklore may contend he actually blocked out the dust which sifted through the site of the NCAA basketball championship Thursday.

Unfortunately for those gathering at the University of New Mexico, neither Olajuwon nor anybody else could do anything about the clouds of grit that turned throats raw.

But it is going to take a little more than dust to choke off Olajuwon in his momentum gathering outburst that could bring the Houston Cougars their first NCAA title.

"I didn't know how big the NCAA was until we lost last year," said Olajuwon, Houston's seven-foot center who has become the dominant name of this year's Final Four.

"We could have won. We had a good team. But we didn't realize it until after North Carolina beat us. It was too late then."

Houston made it this far a year ago before falling to the eventual champion North Carolina Tar Heels, 68-63. This year Olajuwon has played as if he knows what it takes to win.

In three NCAA tournament games Olajuwon has hit 26 of 35 shots from the field, blocked 13 shots and grabbed 26 rebounds.

"For a player who has been playing for such a short time," said Louisville coach Denny Crum, "Akeem is one of the best I've ever seen."

Olajuwon will have a chance to build on his newfound national publicity Saturday when the Houston Cougars face Louisville in the second of the semifinal matchups.

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Staying alive

Aggies host Razorbacks this weekend in key SWC series

by Joe Tindel Jr.
Battalion Staff

When Texas A&M was falling to the Houston Cougars for the second and third times last weekend, the Aggie outfielders probably were wishing for clouds.

But tonight, Aggie baseball coach Tom Chandler no doubt is hoping for weather more characteristic of mid-spring. Chandler said he thinks it may take such weather to lift pitcher Rick Luecken out of a slump that's seen him go winless in Southwest Conference play.

Much is riding on the performances of Luecken and the rest of Texas A&M's front-line pitching this weekend. The Aggies will host the Arkansas Razorbacks for three games — one beginning tonight at 7:30 and two Saturday, with the opener beginning at 1 p.m.

"We've been struggling, and our pitching has been struggling most of the year," Chandler said. "Rick Luecken started at TCU (where the Aggies went 2-1 against the Frogs) and didn't win. He started at Houston and didn't win."

"Last year, Rick, from mid-season on, was one of the best pitchers in the league. I think he's just one of those kinds of fellows that just take the warm weather in the spring to kind of get moving and come to the front."

But if spring weather includes bright sunshine as most people envision it, Aggie outfielders may want to make a compromise for Saturday's daytime doubleheader. That same bright sun was responsible for a couple of errors in the Aggie outfield last weekend that put runs on the scoreboard for the Cougars.

However, it's Texas A&M's recent pitching woes that have Chandler concerned as the Aggies, 2-5 in conference play



photo by Peter Rocha

Texas A&M shortstop Tim Cartwright tags a runner in a recent game against the Minnesota Gophers.

Cartwright and the Aggies will face Arkansas tonight at 7:30 in a key conference match up in Olsen Field

and 21-8 overall, enter this series.

"We've had to reach back," Chandler said, "and some of our second-line pitching has really improved. I think Luecken is just in somewhat of a slump right now."

This weekend's games are key ones because the Razorbacks, 3-6 in SWC play and 22-9 overall, already have played enough conference games to indicate

their relative position in the conference race.

They won't be competing for the top spot.

But they will be battling for what appear to be the only two spots in the SWC tournament Houston and Texas will allow anyone but themselves to have. And the Aggies will be trying to snatch the other spot.

Three victories for the Aggies will set Arkansas way

back, and maybe give somebody else a chance to slip into one of those tourney spots in place of the Hogs.

On the other hand, three Hog victories also would make it tough on the Aggies.

If Chandler's assessment of Arkansas' strong points is correct, the Aggies will need to watch the short game when the Hogs go to the plate.

"They have a lot of speed,"

Chandler said. "They can run the bases. They've already stolen over 50 bases. So we're going to have to cut down their running game and short game of bunting and hitting and running."

And while the Aggies are at the plate, Chandler will be looking for some clutch performances from left fielder Bobby Beach, who's leading Aggie batters with a .468 average, center

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Lewis says Coogs need to pass over LU press

United Press International
HOUSTON — Guy Lewis believes the best way to flout Louisville's withering press is to pass over it, and it's a good thing he believes that for the sake of the No. 1 Houston Cougars.

Lewis' team dribbles with the worst of them.

Whether the Cougars can do as their coach admonished them in their final home practice Thursday may go a long way in determining one team in the NCAA Tournament final.

Houston plays the No. 2 Louisville Cardinals Saturday in Albuquerque, N.M., in a semifinal.

"I guess I've spoken at about a thousand clinics on presses," he said. "I feel like I know as much about it as anybody. And the way to beat it is to pass."

Lewis, 61, is a frequent speaker at sports clinics. At them he tells coaches the safest route upcourt under pressure from the opposing team is found by passing. Passing produces mismatches, he

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