

Men's basketball team suffering from 'mass exodus'

by Joe Tindel Jr.
Battalion Staff

Jimmie Gilbert has to be wondering where everybody went and why so soon.

Just two years ago, he was a high school basketball star at Huntsville, surrounded by friends. Now he's only a sophomore — a talented 6-9 sophomore — but still a sophomore.

And he's all alone. He's the only returning starter on the 1983-1984 Texas A&M basketball team.

Gilbert and the Aggies rebounded in the second half of last season to finish third in the Southwest Conference, and posted a season record of 17-14. But familiar faces like that of 6-10 forward Claude Riley, a third-round draft choice of the NBA's Philadelphia 76ers this summer, are gone.

Also missing are talented point-guard Tyren Nauulls, who also was drafted into the NBA, forwards Roy Jones and Lowell McHenry, and guard Reggie Roberts.

Roberts and McHenry were declared academically ineligible.

Thus the challenge. Head coach Shelby Metcalf will begin his 21st season with the Aggies with the tough job of finding two forwards and two guards who can step in quickly.

But some fine reserves returning from last season as well as some quality freshmen re-

cruits should make the job a bit easier.

"It won't be easy this year, especially since the conference as a whole should be so tough," Metcalf said of the upcoming season. "But I'm excited because everyone we have coming back has great qualities as players and people. This should be a great, but young, bunch to work with."

The job openings at guard may fill up quickly, as two of the finest shooters Metcalf has said he's ever coached will be back with a year of experience behind them.

Sophomores Kenny Brown and Doug Lee, as a matter of fact, are probably the leading candidates to fill in the holes left by Nauulls and Roberts. Brown, known for his pinpoint accuracy with long-distance jumpers, started in 10 games last season and played in many more. Brown averaged 9.6 points a game and was the hero during the Aggies' appearance in the Alaska Shootout tournament, in which he was named to the all-tournament team.

A 24-year old sophomore, Brown came to Texas A&M after playing military basketball while in the Army.

The other probable starter at guard is 6-foot, 4-inch Lee, who started in three games last season and gained a reputation as an outside shooting threat and a tough rebounder.

Another possibility at guard is Gary Lewis, who left the squad in December. Lewis turned in good performances during the 1981-82 season, and has excellent point guard abilities.

In addition to those back from last year, Metcalf has a handful of freshmen and a transfer from which to pick.

The transfer is 6-2 point guard Darnell Williams from Garden City Community College in Kansas. Clint Thomas of Snook and 6-foot, 5-inch Phil James of Los Angeles, Calif. are two freshmen who could break into action.

While some top lettermen are available to fill the guard spots,

both forward positions must be filled by newcomers. One of the top prospects is 6-6 Winston Crite, of Bakersfield, Calif. Another is 6-5, 210-pound Al Pulliam, a 24-year-old who, much like Brown, enters college ball after playing military basketball in the Air Force.

The Aggies' schedule this year may be more suited for newcomers than those in the past, since they will host the first three games before taking on tough LSU in Houston's Sum-

mit. The opener is Nov. 12 against the Houston AAU Flyers.

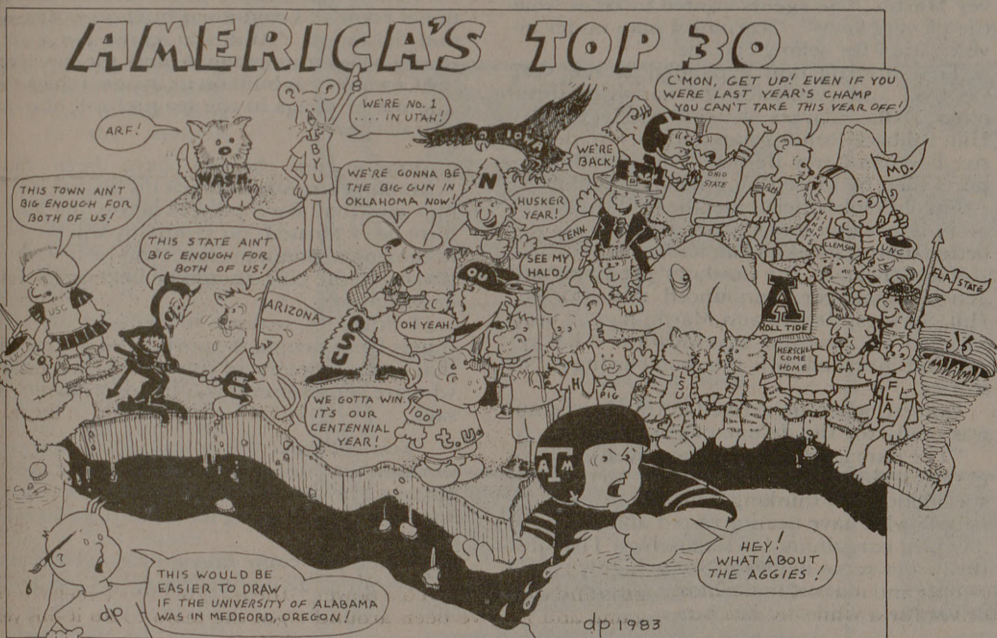
Texas A&M will travel to two tournaments before conference play begins. The first is the Indiana Classic in Bloomington, Ind., which begins Dec. 16. Teams in the tournament are Illinois State, Indiana and Utah State.

The second is the Music City Invitational, in Nashville, Tenn., where the Aggies will enter with Air Force, Southern Florida and Vanderbilt.

Conference play begins Jan. 4 at Rice.



Texas A&M basketball coach Shelby Metcalf lost four starters off of last year's 17-14 club. Only center Jimmie Gilbert returns, leaving Metcalf with a major rebuilding job.



Floods leave manufacturer short of bags

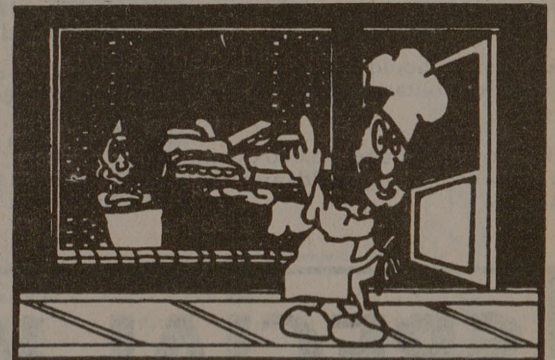
United Press International
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