

BASEBALL

Aggies at Texas
7 p.m. Friday
2 p.m. doubleheader Saturday
Disch-Falk Field

Showdown in Austin

Aggies gun for title

By TRAVIS TINGLE
Assistant Sports Editor

Texas has won seven straight games from Texas A&M since the Ags took a doubleheader from the Horns at College Station in 1981.

You couldn't have written a more exciting ending to the Southwest Conference baseball season.

This weekend's Texas A&M-Texas series could be an Academy Award winning movie.

How's this for a dramatic script:

One of the winningest coaches in conference history announces his retirement after 26 years. His ballclub, ranked No. 12, plays the nation's No. 2 team in the final regular season series. The retiring coach's team must sweep all three games to win the conference championship. His opponents have created a dynasty, winning the title outright 14 out of the last 16 years.

That intriguing scenario is exactly the one Tom Chandler and his Texas Aggies face this weekend in Austin. Texas A&M travels to Texas' Disch-Falk field for a three-game series with the Horns, beginning Friday at 7 p.m. and concluding Saturday with a doubleheader at 2 p.m.

For the first time since 1974, Texas A&M (37-14, 12-6 in SWC) and Texas (49-11, 14-4 in SWC) both come into the series with a chance to clinch first place in the conference.

You talk to Texas head coach Cliff Gustafson, it just doesn't get any better than that.

Gustafson, in his 17th year with the Horns, said he can't think of a better way to end the season than by battling the Aggies for the conference title.

"It's fitting that it all comes down to the final series with our

biggest rival," Gustafson said. "We haven't always played each other in the last game of the year, but our rivalry has always been a heated one no matter when we play. Last year we had already clinched the title going into the A&M series."

Texas has won seven straight games from Texas A&M since the Ags took a doubleheader from the Horns at College Station in 1981.

But that's all in the past. 1984 has brought the Aggies back into contention for their first SWC championship since winning back-to-back titles in 1977-78. The Aggies have come along way from last season's disappointing 4-17 last place finish in the SWC.

Credit the Aggies' turnaround to a revitalization in the pitching staff and more productive hitting.

Junior college transfer Tom Arrington (8-3, 3.12 ERA), Kelly Keahey (7-2, 1.19 ERA) and Sherman Corbett (5-3, 3.33 ERA) have been the starters for every conference series and have given the Aggies solid performances.

The bullpen is much improved over last season with the addition of JC transfer Beje Mahoe (2-0). Mahoe has recorded four saves on the year. Rock King, Barry Smith and Chris Huchingson have also done their share of clutch relief work.

The Aggies have also been more productive at the plate in '84.

In 1983, the Aggies were sixth in the SWC in team batting with a .278 average. This year, Texas A&M is second in the conference, hitting .320 as a team. The Ags have also combined for 38 homers this season.

Coach Gustafson, like almost everyone, attributes Texas A&M's new offensive flair to one man — Rob Swain.

"He's just been fantastic all year long," Gustafson said. "His play has been the key to A&M's resurgence this season."

But Coach Gustafson's club has some offensive spark of its own.

The Horns are tied for fourth in the SWC with a team batting average of .304, including 49 homers this year. Longhorn third baseman David Denny leads the team with a .366 batting average.

Hitting the ball scores runs, but it's been the Horns' pitching staff that's brought them to the brink of their sixth straight SWC title.

Texas has a tradition of producing fine pitchers and 1984 is no exception.

Freshman Greg Swindell (10-1, 1.56 ERA), Eric Boudreaux (6-1, 3.38 ERA) and Steve Labay (5-3, 3.73 ERA) have been starting for the Horns through-

out the season. Gustafson expects all of them to be on the mound against the Aggies.

Swindell pitched a no-hitter against Texas Wesleyan, while Labay recorded one in a 5-0 victory over Baylor.

Although his young pitching staff is considered to be one of the best in the SWC, Gustafson doesn't like to brag much.

"I don't like to compare our staff to others in the conference, but I'll just say they've improved greatly since the beginning of the year," he said. "I guess you'd call them a pretty good staff right now."

Gustafson was more honest with his comments directed towards his long-time coaching adversary, Tom Chandler.

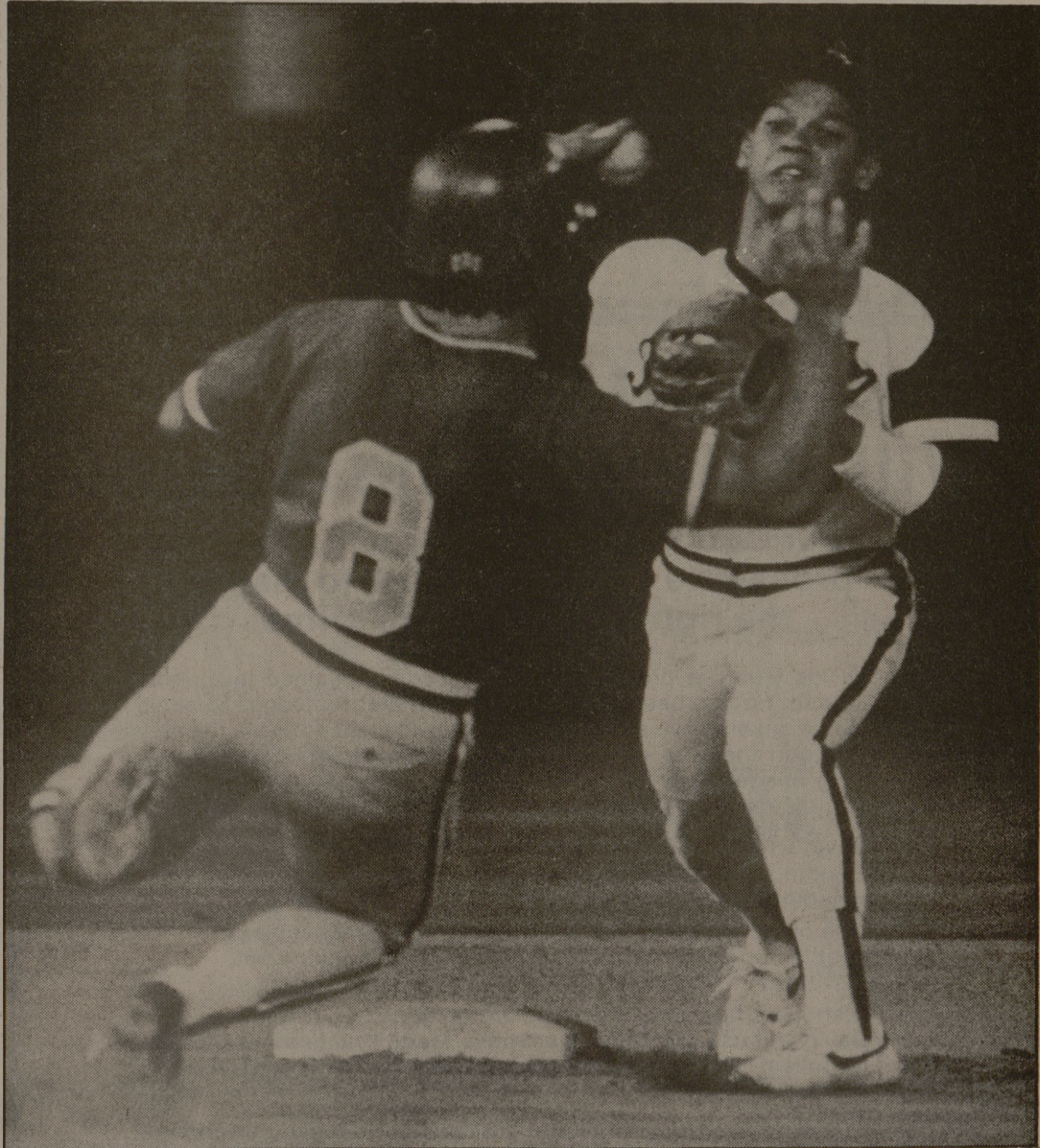
"I feel a certain sadness about his retiring because he's contributed so much to the sport and so much to Texas A&M," he said. "It's a just a shame that college baseball has to lose someone of coach Chandler's caliber."

It's all quite simple. This weekend's Texas A&M-Texas series will not only determine the SWC champion, but also the pairings for the conference tournament next week.

The tournament format isn't complicated: first place plays fourth place; second place plays third place. But deciding who finishes where in the standings makes things difficult.

If Texas wins just one game, the Horns are the SWC champs. If Texas A&M sweeps all three games, the Ags win the title. Simple, right?

But if Texas sweeps Texas A&M, the Aggies fall into a third place tie with Arkansas at



Texas A&M's Tim Cartwright tries to turn a double play against Rice's Jeff Tousa. The Ags will attempt a "triple play" this weekend against Texas.

12-9. Since the Hogs took two games from the Ags, Arkansas would place third.

Rice (13-8) needs Texas A&M to win only one game from Texas to ensure them a tie for second with the Aggies. Because the Owls took two games from the Ags, Rice would place second all alone.

Confused? Don't be. The only thing certain is that Texas, Texas A&M, Rice and Arkansas will gather in Austin for the 8th annual SWC baseball tournament on Friday May 11, and it's anybody's guess who will play in the opening games.

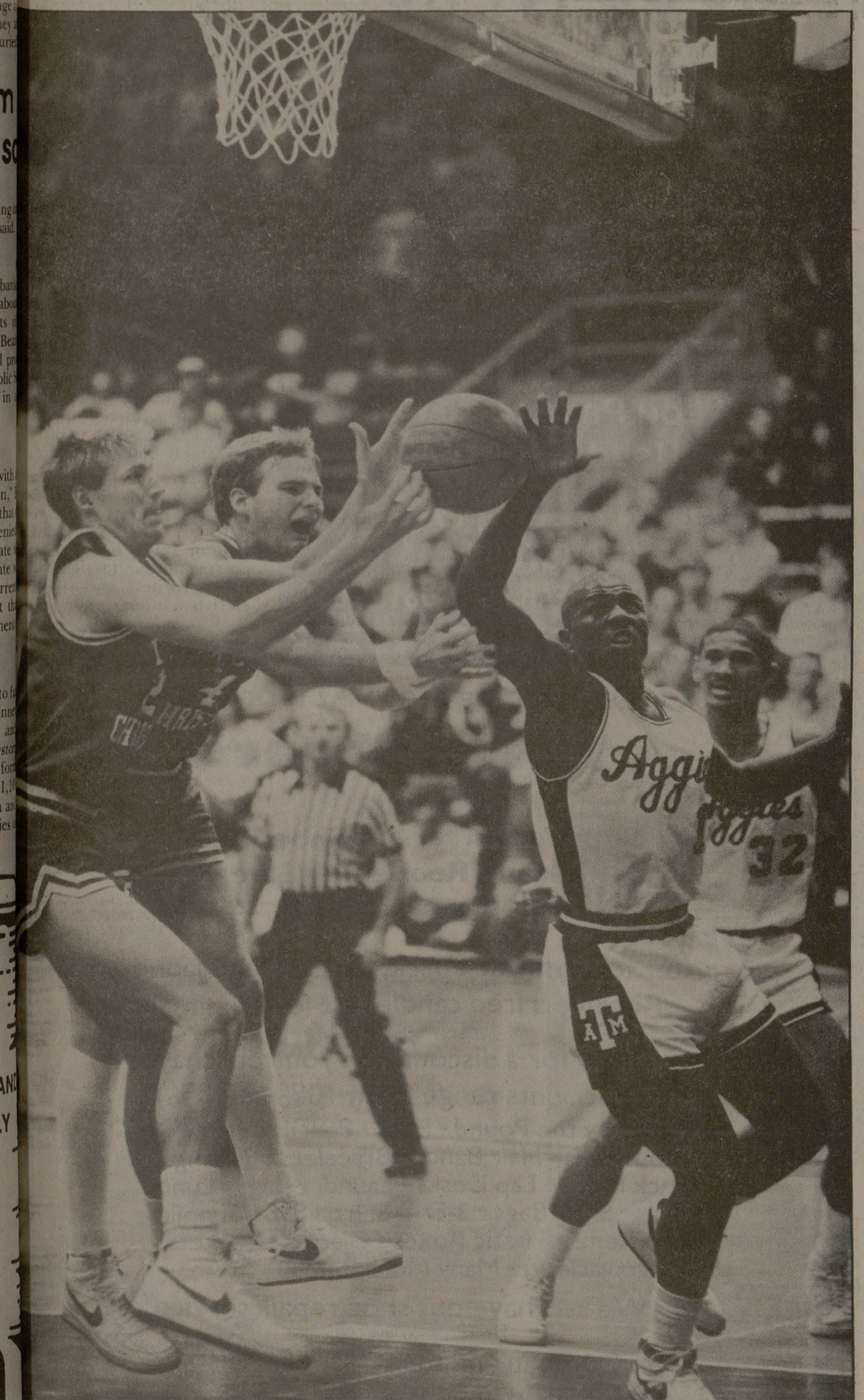


Photo by DEAN SAITO

Todd Holloway and Kenny Brown (#32) scramble for a loose ball under the glass during action against Texas Christian earlier this spring. Texas A&M was 16-4 this past season and was fifth in the SWC at 7-9.

Metcalf sees bright future

By DAVE SCOTT
Senior Sports Writer

Intensity, desire, hustle and other cliches were all coach Shelby Metcalf could use to describe his basketball team surprising success this past year.

"They played hard," Metcalf said, "and they were excellent competitors. I thought they were overachievers."

It might be difficult to think of a fifth place finish in the Southwest Conference with a record of 7-9, 16-14 overall, as achieving much of anything, let alone success. But because of their inexperience, the Aggies were picked to finish eighth in the conference. So finishing behind Houston, Arkansas, SMU and Texas Tech can be considered success.

For most of the season, the Aggies, with no seniors on the team, started two freshmen (Todd Holloway and Winston Crite), two sophomores (Jimmie Gilbert and Kenny Brown) and one junior college transfer (Darnell Williams). The Aggie players coming off the bench didn't have much experience either. Mike Clifford, a red-shirt freshman, Al Pulliam, a sophomore transfer student from the Air Force and sophomore Doug Lee were three important players coming off the bench.

Now Lee and teammate Roger Bock have both decided to transfer out of A&M and play next season at other universities.

The Aggie's season was a study in inconsistency. The team could play well one game and then be blown out the next.

In the non-conference schedules, A&M was beaten badly by Indiana, 73-48, but they rebounded to defeat Utah State, an eventual NIT team, 78-73.

However, the Dr. Jeckyll-Mr. Hyde routine became more apparent during the conference games. The Ags played horribly against Arkansas, losing 54-77 in Fayetteville. Texas A&M then won two games in a row before losing a tough game to the Cougars, 64-70.

But then A&M fell back on its face losing to SMU, 56-83. The Aggies then got back on track by beating TCU, 68-62, and Texas, 68-52. But Texas Tech derailed the surging Aggies, humiliating them, 49-74.

A&M next played Rice, who they had beaten the first time around. But the Owls walked out of G. Rollie White with a one-point win, 43-42.

The next two games at G. Rollie were heartbreakers for the Aggies. After being destroyed by both Arkansas and SMU, A&M lost by one-point to

the Razorbacks and by two-points to the Mustangs, in overtime.

At the SWC tournament it was the Aggies turn to heart some hearts. In the opening round, the Ags beat the Longhorns for the third time. Next the team shocked SMU beating them with an overtime Hail Mary shot. Arkansas squeezed by the surprising Aggies, 47-49.

Looking back at the blowouts the Aggie suffered and their come-back ability, Metcalf chalked it up to inexperience.

"It's all part of the learning process," Metcalf said. "It is something you have to experience."

Here's how Metcalf evaluated the progress and contributions made by some of the players:

- Jimmie Gilbert — "Jimmie made the big play against SMU. His free throw shooting has greatly improved. With Olajuwon gone, Jimmie has a chance to be the best defensive postman in the conference. I feel good about Jimmie. I expect him to be a better offensive player next year."
- Kenny Brown — "His confidence improved a lot. He played better defense and had more rebounds and steals than last year. He did a better job getting himself open. Kenny shoots well under pressure."

- Todd Holloway — "He's a heck of a competitor. Todd will challenge anybody and did challenge Olajuwon a couple of times and (Olajuwon) ate leather. The game here against Houston was his best game. He's a good pressure player too. He scored the winning basket against TCU."
- Darnell Williams — "A winner, a fierce competitor, but not a great basketball player. He enjoys game. He's always smiling, and I think that might have rubbed off on the rest of the team. He anticipates real well on defense."
- Winston Crite — "He's an awesome talent, great leaper and real quick feet. He matured a lot during the year. He had some games where he just disappeared. He was awed by some of the people he was playing against, but he could make big play like when he slammed over Olajuwon. He helped a lot with offensive rebounds."
- Mike Clifford — "He's mentally tough. A real banger and good defensive player. He needs to work to on his shooting, but I'm high on Mike."
- Al Pulliam — "He's an exceptional athlete. He was injured for most of the year with groin pull and hurt fingers, but he's got to be considered for a starting position."

Aggie golfers look for NCAA title

By TONY CORNETT
Sports Writer

To talk to Texas A&M men's golf coach Bob Ellis, you'd get the impression that he's just a bit frustrated with the way the season has gone for his players.

"We've not all played well," Ellis said. "Different guys have played well at different times, but we have not all played well together in a tournament all season."

An example of what can happen when a team meshes time and talent together is the performance of the University of Houston at the Southwest Conference Championship Tournament last month.

The Cougars blasted the nearest opponent by 43 strokes, while the Aggies finished a disappointing fourth.

A couple of things contributed to the Aggies fourth place finish in the Conference Championship event.

The best player on the team, Philip Parkin, had just returned from a disappointing trip to the Masters and was playing at an emotional low, Ellis said. And the rest of the team didn't pick up the slack.

But the biggest obstacle for the team, according to Ellis, has been the the rigors and anxieties of college life.

He feels that the pressure of school only adds to the pressure of playing golf.

"If I had to put my finger on anything," Ellis said, "it would have to be school. They're concerned about their grades and it creates a lot of pressure. It takes their mind off their golf."

So much for that part of the season for the Aggies, but classes are out for the summer.

The Southern Intercollegiate Tournament is coming up on May 17 in Athens, Ga. The big one, the NCAA Championship, gets under way on the 23rd just down the road at the Bear

Creek Golf World complex in Houston.

The NCAA Championship will be the final event for the personnel on this year's squad — a squad that may be the best to be seen here at Texas A&M for a while.

Ronny Byrd and Jacky Lee run out of eligibility after this season. That leaves sophomores Jorge Coghlan, Paul Mayo and Parkin.

About Parkin, Ellis can say only great things.

"I would have to say Phil is currently one of the best — if not the best — players in collegiate golf today," Ellis said.

There's no doubt that Parkin is essential to the hopes of the Aggies when talking about the run for the NCAA title or next year's team.

He participated in this year's Masters at Augusta, Ga. and earlier this season took top honors at the prestigious All American Intercollegiate Tourna-

ment held at Bear Creek Golf World.

Since Parkin plays well on this course, it can only help the Aggies as they travel there for the NCAA Championship.

The Aggies have a young team and when it comes to replacing exiting players, Ellis said he regrets that those who step in will not have a great deal of playing experience.

So, for the final event of the season, it's just a question of timing.

Can the Aggies get all of their talent to produce at the same time?

Coach Ellis sums it up like this:

"We're currently ranked 13th in the nation having not played well. If we can just get together in one tournament where we all play well, I feel quite confident that the team is going to do very well."