

Aggies will always be proven winners

BRANDON BERRY
Sports Writer

Whoosh! The clenched fist with extended forefinger jutted immediately into the sky. The only thing to rise more quickly was my pride. We were No. 1.

The year was 1982 and the event was the Class 5A state basketball championship game. My high school's team capped a 37-3 season by bringing home the state trophy — a testimonial to their ability, perseverance and hard work.

More than that, however, the trophy was tangible proof for everyone to see. Our school was No. 1. We were proven winners.

Since then, those moments for me have become rare indeed. Texas A&M has won about as many Southwest Conference football championships in the past three years as there have been lunar eclipses. Coaches have come and gone, promises made and broken and even Reveille has been retired. Only one thing has remained constant — the Aggies have rarely been No. 1.

Oh sure they've had their moments, but they never seemed to keep it going for long. Glorious victories were always followed by even more devastating defeats. And, in between, the Aggies were always mediocre.

"We're No. 5!" just doesn't have the same ring to it. Champions just don't come in a plural form. Yet, on the Ouija board of SWC athletics, that's where the dial always seemed to land for the Aggies.

But now things are changing. Not just last Saturday, but throughout this entire year the Aggies' moments have burned brighter and lasted longer than in recent seasons.

Texas A&M 37, Texas 12.

What a moment!

Even before 37-12, the Aggies were big victors on the hardwood volleyball courts of G. Rollie White Coliseum. The men's tennis team looks like the best A&M has ever fielded. Both the men's and women's golf teams have been nationally ranked and the men's basketball team can be competitive against anyone.

So why don't I feel happier now that the wins are becoming more frequent?

Having come from a background of winning, I believed from the beginning that all of A&M's problems could be solved in the camaraderie and fellowship of a banner season. When the Aggies hired Jackie Sherrill, I told my grandfather the Board of Regents must have agreed with me. And to this day, I'll never forget his response:

"Son, Aggies will be Aggies. They'll be bad losers and even worse winners, but it won't really matter. They don't need to prove anything."

Now I'm scared that the coming athletic success will make us forget this legacy of non-proof. While we lost championships on the field, we always found them in the stands.

In fact, sixty thousand students weaving back and forth sawing varsity's horns off just might be more memorable a few years down the road than the score of any game — even 37-12.

I sincerely hope that Texas A&M becomes synonymous with athletic glory and conference championship trophies. But, even more, I hope that Aggies never forget our success. Our real success can't be counted along with the wins and losses of any team. Last Saturday, I finally realized that we were winners and never needed to prove it again.

Somewhere, my grandfather must be smiling.

Metcalfe leery of ORU Titans' 'senior five' starting lineup

By **TONY CORNETT**
Sports Writer

If the Texas A&M basketball team can get Aggie quarterback Craig Stump to pitch them some of whatever it was that helped beat Texas 37-12, then they'll be that much better off when they take on Oral Roberts University tonight in G. Rollie White Coliseum at 8:08 p.m.

Aggie coach Shelby Metcalfe knows what to expect from Oral Roberts' "senior five."

"We've got to be very concerned," Metcalfe said. "If we were playing well, we'd have to be concerned because you know we're going to be the (under)dog tonight. They have an outstanding ballclub. They've lost a couple of close games, but they were to Top 20 teams."

Oral Roberts naturally will send talented players onto the hardwoods, but their main strength lies in the team's overall experience.

"They're starting five seniors," Metcalfe said. "You know if you take a team that's been playing together for four years, they're going to be a very polished machine. They put great pressure on you. Defensively, they do a good job. They've got a strong bench."

The Titans have a talented brother combination. They also happen to be the sons of ORU Coach Dick Acres. Jeff Acres, a 6-foot-9 forward, and Mark Acres, a 6-foot-11 center, garnered high praise from Metcalfe.

"The two Acres boys are just exceptional players," Metcalfe said. "The little one, Jeff, is averaging 25 points a game. And Mark was the second best big-man we played against last year to (Houston's Akeem) Olajuwon. He's further along offensively."

The Ags have played two games. Both have been at home. They beat Stephen F. Austin 79-64 and, to the surprise of many, lost one to St.

Mary's 70-66. The Aggies definitely had a rough night against St. Mary's, doing particularly poorly on the defensive boards.

"We haven't been pleased with the play — period," Metcalfe said. "The players aren't pleased. We have to play with great intensity to be effective and when we do, we're going to be a good basketball team. I think we learned that the hard way. I think all you have to do is go up there and write 'St. Mary's' on the board and I think the whole picture will come back to the staff and players."

In spite of the last showing, Metcalfe is looking forward to tonight's matchup.

"It really is perfect for us from this standpoint," Metcalfe said. "They (ORU) are so much like teams in our conference. Size wise, talent wise, intensity wise, they're a lot like Arkansas, Texas Tech and Texas. We're going to be giving away sizes. I think it's a big challenge. It'll be good for us. I'm not foolish enough to think we're as far along as they are."

The Aggies' probable starters for tonight's game are junior Jimmie Gilbert at center, junior Kenny Brown at guard, sophomore Todd Holloway at guard, junior transfer Don Marbury at guard and sophomore Winston Crite at forward. All, except Marbury, are returning starters.

"We've been working hard and some of our new players are starting to pick up the system a little better," Metcalfe said. "It just takes a little bit of time for new people to work in."

There's always a question of just doing a better job with the people who are already in there or inserting some more people in there. We're looking at different combinations. We're starting the same way, but we're looking at possibly inserting a little more rebounding in the lineup as the game goes on, if that continues to be a problem for us."

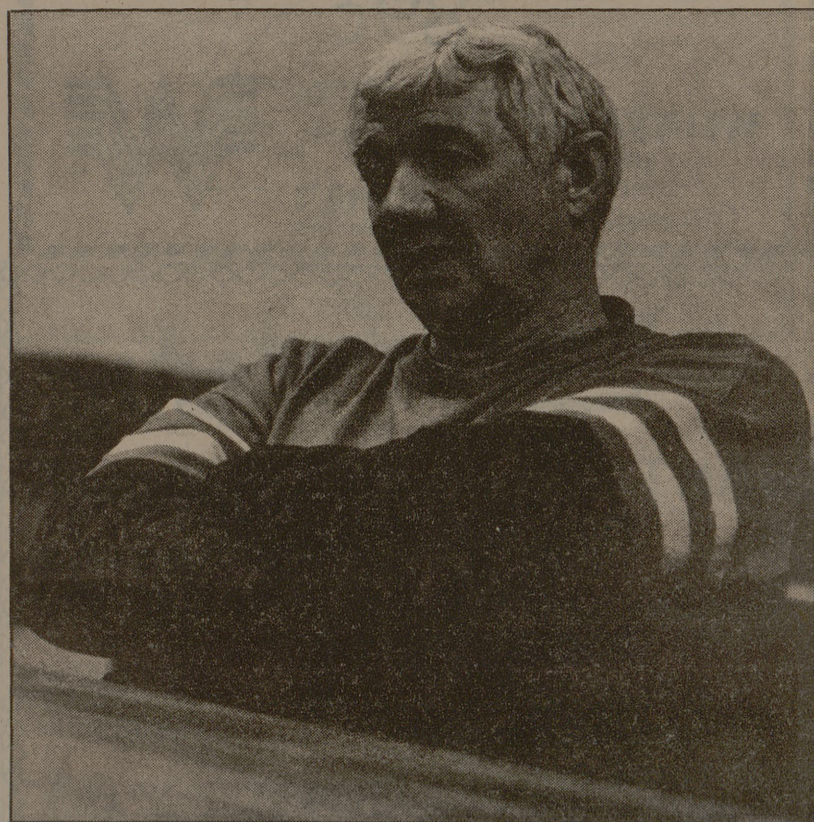


Photo by FRANK IRWIN

Texas A&M Head Basketball Coach Shelby Metcalfe — "(Oral Roberts) is starting five seniors. You know if you take a team that's been playing together for four years, they're going to be a very polished machine. They've got a strong bench."

It's still awfully early in the basketball season. Fan morale over the closing of the football season with the Aggie win over Texas is still high. Metcalfe understands the importance of fans at an athletic event — especially one at "The Holler House on the Brazos."

"Fan turnout is always important," Metcalfe said. "But the one thing I've learned is you have to get what you earn. Me saying we're going to have a good team or the players saying we're going to have a good team — talk is cheap. You've got to go out on the floor and do it. There's no question about it. When our crowd is here and the band is here, we're a 10-15 point better team."

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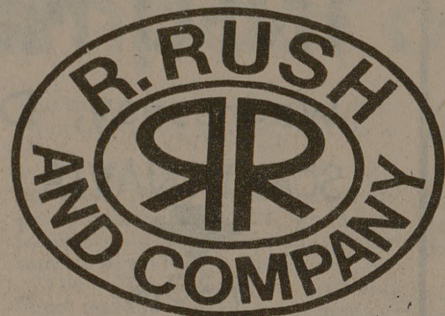
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