

SPORTS

Aggies try to turn the corner

By BRANDON BERRY
Sports Writer

When the Texas A&M women's basketball team tips off against Texas Christian tonight at 7:30 p.m. in Fort Worth, Michell Tatum will be doing more than just jumping center for the Aggies.

Tatum, like the entire Aggie team, will be attempting to turn around a season plagued with frustration and pain.

"Injuries have just killed us this season," said Texas A&M Women's Basketball Coach Lynn Hickey. "We haven't been able to keep any continuity in our starting line-up. It's great to have Michell back, but that's another change the girls will have to deal with."

"One thing I can't find fault with is (the team's) attitude. They've never given up, no matter how difficult the situation."

Lately, those situations have come with alarming frequency. The Aggies are 7-6 on the season, but own an 0-3 Southwest Conference record and a four-game losing streak.

Home court losses to Arkansas (67-81) and Texas-San Antonio (51-61) were sandwiched around a road game loss to Baylor (60-71).

Hickey said the low-point, however, was a recent 66-62 loss at home to SMU.

"That one really hurt because the girls were really used to beating SMU," Hickey said. "I don't think they expected (SMU) to play so aggressively."

Sophomore forward Rochelle Bennett said the Aggies recent woes can be traced to one lethal deficiency — the team's shooting percentage.

"The shots just aren't falling for us right now and it's really frustrating," Bennett said.

With nationally-ranked Texas Tech, Houston and Texas coming up on the schedule, Hickey said the

Aggies can't afford to become discouraged with themselves.

"(The coaches) have never told the girls to win or else," she said. "But we do demand that they give their total effort out there every night."

"This conference has really improved, while we have had to stay pretty much with the same team we had last year. Because the coaching change (Hickey is in her first season at Texas A&M) happened so late last year, we didn't really have a chance to recruit. This team is mostly seniors."

"I think it would be really easy for a senior team to give up after all they have been through, but they haven't. They're still out there trying to improve and learn some of the things we want them to do. This team needs to learn how to win. They need to have that one night where everything clicks. Once they have felt it once, it will happen again."

The game with TCU could be just the classroom environment the Aggies need to receive a passing grade in the win column. TCU is 0-4 in conference play and has a relatively new women's basketball program.

Hickey said, despite the apparent talent differential between the two teams, the Aggies cannot afford to take the Lady Horned Frogs lightly.

"When you go out on the road, you have to have your head set right," she said. "We've competed with every team we've played against, but little things have kept going wrong. The odds have been against this team. I really hope things turn around for them."

The next home game for the Aggies is Jan. 23 against No. 17 Texas Tech. The Ags play No. 2 Texas coming Saturday in Austin.

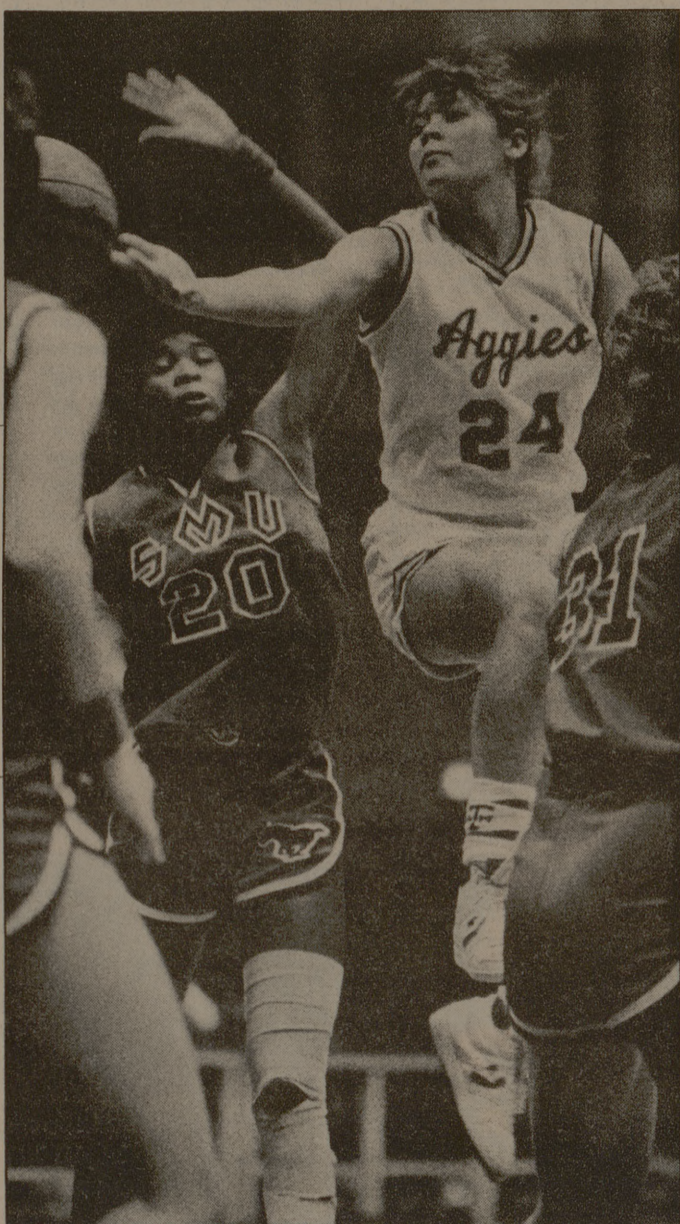


Photo by PETER ROCHA

Texas A&M's Mary Ann Swearngin goes high in the air to feed an underhand pass to a teammate against SMU. The Aggies will attempt to post their first Southwest Conference victory when they battle Texas Christian tonight in Fort Worth.

SMU looking to fulfill prophecy

TRAVIS TINGLE

Sports Editor

Before the Southwest Conference basketball season opened, premiere coaches like Arkansas' Eddie Sutton and Houston's Guy Lewis predicted that Dave Bliss' SMU Mustangs had the starters and the bench to make a clean sweep in the conference race.

That's right. Sutton and Lewis said SMU could go 16-0 without much problem.

Most sports writers thought that Sutton and Lewis were just trying to set up SMU for an eventual fall against their own Hogs and Cougars. They probably were, but, judging from SMU's 13-1 record and 4-0 start in the SWC, it looks like Sutton's and Lewis' prophecy wasn't too far fetched. At least right now it looks that way.

College cage experts said SMU was capable of reaching the Final Four in 1985, especially after center Jon Koncak and the Mustangs gave Patrick Ewing and Georgetown a scare in last year's NCAA tournament.

All those lofty expectations put quite a bit of pressure on the Mustangs to produce this season. But so far, SMU has done nothing but produce. Victories over powerhouses like Kentucky, Oklahoma, Arkansas and, recently, North Carolina is proof of that.

Shelby Metcalf's Ags played their hearts out in front of the largest crowd of the season in G. Rollie White Coliseum (7,346), but it wasn't enough to upset the Mustangs last Friday night. The

Stangs dominated the Ags during the last five minutes, turning a slim 54-56 lead into a 73-60 victory quicker than you could say "Carl Wright's a hot dog."

If anyone has any doubts about how good SMU really is, ask North Carolina Head Coach Dean Smith, or, better yet, just ask Shelby himself.

Metcalf described the No. 3 Mustangs as well as anyone could during his post-game interviews:

"It wasn't so much A&M. It was just too much SMU. They just wore our players down and we tightened up offensively down the stretch. We lost the game on the offensive end late in the game. We just showed (SMU) too much respect towards the end. I'm not happy with the job we did in the last five minutes. They're without a doubt the best team we've played this season."

I know Arkansas' Coach Sutton disagrees with Shelby, but the Razorbacks will get another shot at being the best in Barnhill Arena in a few weeks against SMU. Until then, hang in there Eddie. It's not so bad to have the second best team in the SWC. Is it?

Texas A&M Sportsday

Women's Basketball

Aggies vs. TCU

Fort Worth — Daniel-Meyer Coliseum — 7:30 p.m.

Ticket Sales

100 reserved tickets are available prior to the A&M-Texas basketball game this Sunday (Jan. 20) in Austin — tipoff scheduled for 12:08 p.m. Tickets are \$5 and can be purchased at the G. Rollie White ticket office. Raycom Sports will televise the game regionally.

Connell wins Classic

Texas A&M tennis player Grant Connell won the Milwaukee Tennis Classic Monday.

The Aggie All-American defeated Richie Rennerberd of SMU 6-4, 4-6 and 6-4 in the final before 4,000 in the Milwaukee Tennis Center.

"It was a great win," A&M Tennis Coach David Kent said. "This tournament is the largest tournament besides the NCAA so it's quite a feather in his cap. The only set he lost was in the final. We're just real excited about this one."

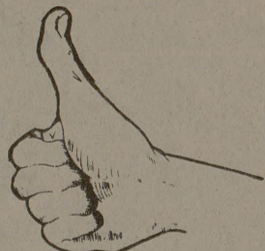
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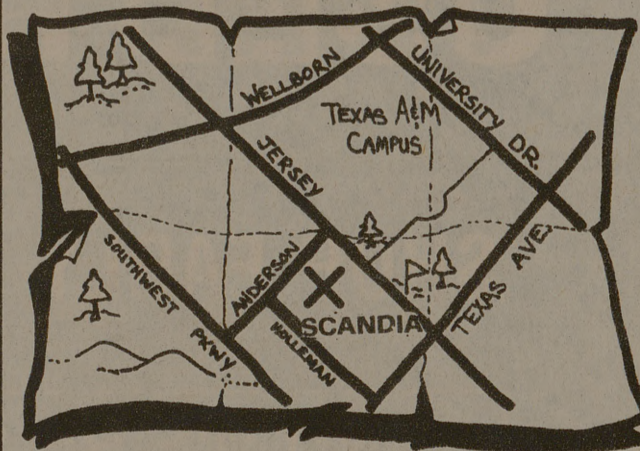
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