

SPORTS

Ags hoping to corral un-stable Mustangs

By BRANDON BERRY
Sports Writer

"We're gonna be the dog, no doubt about it," said Texas A&M Head Basketball Coach Shelby Metcalf about tonight's showdown against No. 9 SMU in Dallas. "But why bother to play the game if there's not the chance of an upset."

"What I want everyone to understand about the game is that it's an important game, but it's February and it's an important game. People can't lose sight of the fact that the guys had to play well in December and January to play in a big game in February."

"It's an important game, but our guys just need to level off and play well the rest of the way, regardless of whether we win the game or not."

The question of an A&M victory could be far more important in late February and early March. The Aggies' currently occupy second place in the Southwest Conference standings with a 7-3 record, 15-6 overall. A win over the Mustangs would catapult A&M into first place with only five games remaining in the regular season.

NCAA tournament bids are automatically extended to conference champions and at-large bids are given to the runners-up with the best season records.

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"I'd be lying if I said it wasn't an important game. But what's even more important is that it would give our players a real confidence boost." — A&M's Shelby Metcalf's thoughts on tonight's SMU game in Dallas

important game," Metcalf said. "But what's even more important is that it would give our players a real confidence boost."

"But it's a real important game for SMU, too." These days, every game is important for SMU. The two-game conference lead it enjoyed a week ago has been reduced to a mere half-game after close losses to Arkansas and last-place Baylor.

Sandwiched in an overtime defeat to North Carolina State on national television and the Mustangs are in the midst of a three-game losing streak. Those are much tougher times than SMU, ranked No. 2 a few weeks ago, is accustomed to.

"They've been on the road for all three games," Metcalf said. "They still haven't lost at home this season."

"They're a fine ball-club, a real fine ball-club. They have a seven-footer (Jon Koncak), and Carl Wright and Larry Davis are outstanding. And that Butch Moore is just a stud for them. He's the glue that keeps that team together."

But Koncak is usually the Mustang that tears his opponents apart. Koncak averages 17.8 points and 10.9 rebounds per game. He scored 31 points against traditional powerhouse North Carolina and almost single-handedly beat the Aggies down the stretch in College Station.

"We were able to keep him under control for most of the game here, but we were helped by Carl Wright missing his outside shots," Metcalf said. "You can't count on that to happen twice."

"We need to plan on SMU being ready to play as well as they are capable of playing, and we have to be just a little bit better. They may be upset about losing to the last-place team in the conference, but I saw that game and SMU didn't play badly. Baylor just played a great game."

"But that game is indicative of what the entire league is like this year," he continued. "Everyone's tough, from top to bottom. You can't slow down or somebody's likely to reach up and bite you. Maybe we can do it to SMU."

Anything's possible, especially if every dog truly does have his day.

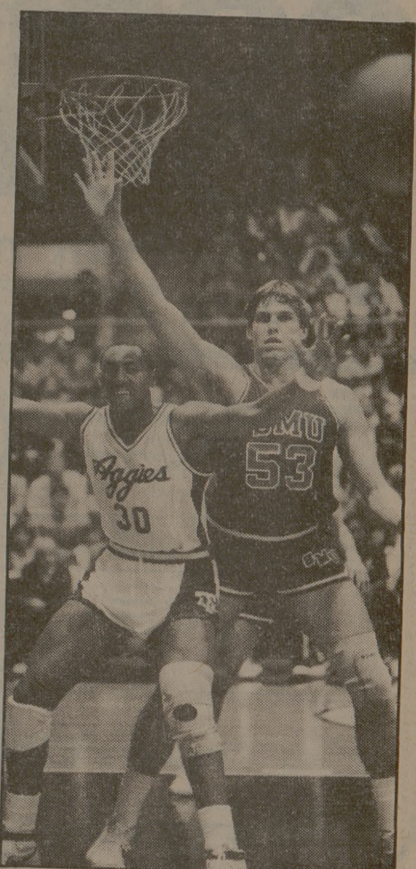


Photo by DEAN SAITO

Texas A&M center Jimmie Gilbert (30) will get to match-up once again tonight with one of the nation's premier college centers, SMU's 7-foot Goliath, Jon Koncak (53).



Photo by DEAN SAITO

A&M's Don Marbury (3) takes a baseline jumper between three Baylor defenders during last Wednesday's game.

TCU cashing in most blue chips in recruiting game

Associated Press

TCU, with commitments from four Texas blue chip football players and a chance at a fifth player from the elite list, held the early recruiting lead over the other eight Southwest Conference schools going into today's NCAA national signing day.

TCU Coach Jim Wacker, whose Horned Frogs were the surprise team of the SWC last season with an 8-3 record and Bluebonnet Bowl appearance, has carried that same momentum into the recruiting season.

But the state's No. 1 blue chip

prospect, Bay City wide receiver Hart Lee Dykes, is expected to extend the suspense right down to the wire with recruiters from Texas A&M, Illinois and Oklahoma still hoping for his signature.

Today is the first day under NCAA rules that colleges can officially sign high school athletes to scholarship agreements. Schools are able to obtain non-binding commitments prior to Feb. 12.

Wacker has commitments from a list of 28 recruits headed by Jasper wide receiver Reggie Davis, Huf-

finan running back Greg Moore, Houston Madison quarterback Ronald Jiles and Fort Worth Eastern Hills defensive tackle Mitchell Benson.

The Frogs, who have never signed four blue chippers in the 20-year history of the Dallas Times Herald's annual list, also are still in the running for a fifth blue chipper, wide receiver Jarrod Delaney of Houston Madison.

Delaney reportedly was still considering Miami and TCU. SMU, the only SWC school with

more than one blue chip commitment, is hoping to sign a pair of Corsicana players, running back Bill Jones and linebacker Robert McDade.

The remaining five SWC schools, Arkansas, Houston, A&M, Rice and Texas Tech, went into the signing date with no blue chip commitments.

Out-of-state recruiters once again have drawn heavily on the state's schoolboy talent, gaining verbal commitments from three blue chip talents and they have a chance to get three others today.

Blue chippers already committed to out of state schools include Aldine MacArthur tackle Michael Babinieux, Louisiana State; Houston Westbury defensive back Kevin Thompson, Oklahoma and Houston Madison defensive end Broderick Thomas, Nebraska.

The three remaining uncommitted blue chippers all have non-Texas schools on their shopping lists.

In addition to Dykes and Delaney, Gainesville's Dante Williams is con-

sidering Ohio State, Nebraska and Oklahoma.

Moore, who rushed for 5,578 yards and scored 59 touchdowns during his high school career, was the latest member of the schoolboy elite to verbally commit to the Horned Frogs.

"I think they are going to explode in another year or two and when they do, I want to be in the middle of it," Moore said.

Thomas said he picked Nebraska because he felt he'd have a chance to play early in his career.

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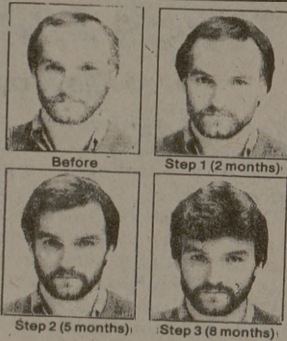
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