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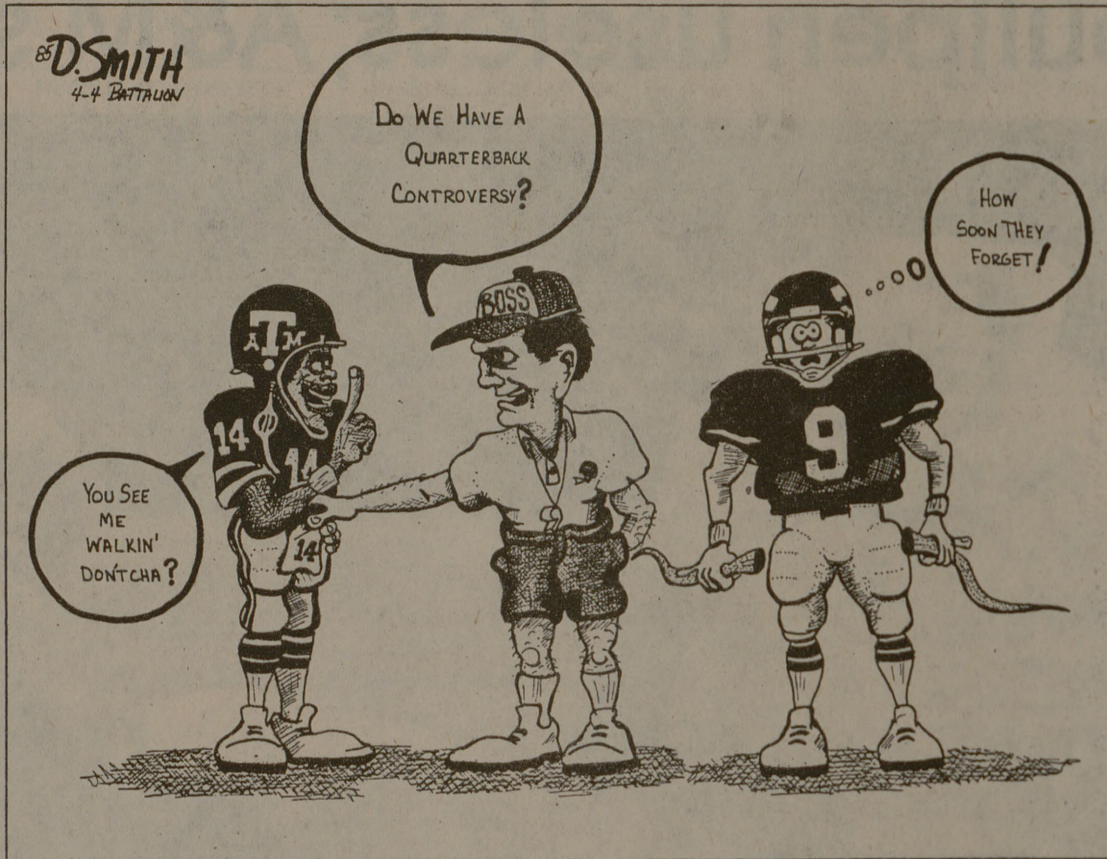
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Basketball no longer like chess

Shot clock destroys thinking man's game

By HAL BOCK
 Associated Press Sports Writer

Villanova's gallant overachievement sprang one swell April Fool's joke: powerful Georgetown in the night, but it was nothing compared to the knee-slapper college basketball's Rules Committee has pulled the entire sport.

On the day after one of the greatest upsets in the game's history, the rulesmakers decided to move against future underdogs with legislation that will make Villanova-type snipers more difficult to achieve.

And the irony is that it was done with the approval of the population most effected — the college coaches. Armed with survey results supporting the move, the NCAA has put the clock in the college game which is about the last thing the sport needed. Now a team will be forced to shoot within 45 seconds of possession, with no option for other strategies.

The stall is gone. Taking the ball out of the ball to keep a racehorse team from running up and down the court on you is no longer a coaching option. Now, you must shoot the ball, whether you want to or not.

Rollie Massimino, coach of victorious Villanova, thought the Wildcats might have subdued might Georgetown in either of their earlier confrontations this season had it been for the Big East Conference clock, which forced his team to take shots it didn't particularly want.

In Monday night's no-clock tournament game, the option was all Villanova's and Massimino's own smart kids made the most of it.

The intent of the rule change adopted Tuesday is to eliminate the farce game where a team in over a head simply holds on to the ball, keep it away from the other guy. The flip side of that action, however, is to deprive underdogs from whatever slim chance they might have to control their own destiny against powerhouses.

Villanova was the perfect example. The Wildcats did not freeze the ball on Georgetown. They simply controlled the tempo, shooting what they wanted to, being selective of the shots they attempted. Had they been forced to fire within the confines of the clock, you can bet they would have had a much more difficult time achieving that astounding 78.6 percent accuracy.

With under two minutes remaining in the first half and Georgetown clinging to a one-point lead, Villanova's slick point guard, Gary McLain, motioned to his teammates to spread the court. The Wildcats went for the last shot, controlled the ball, and made the basket. It was thinking man's basketball.

With three minutes left in the game and leading by a point, Georgetown tried the same spread strategy. It backfired with a turnover. Had John Thompson gone over the delay too soon?

"I'd have gone with nine minutes to go," said the Georgetown coach, "if it meant I could get them out of their zone."

It was point and counterpoint like a chess game. That is part of the beauty of basketball. Forcing the action with a clock robs the game of that quality.

Aggies find all the news that's fit to print in Waco

By CHAREAN WILLIAMS
 Assistant Sports Editor

WACO — The Texas A&M softball team got some good news and some better news Wednesday. The headlines read, "No. 3 Aggies sweep No. 17 Baylor 2-0 and 2-0," but the inside story was, "The Return of Lopez."

The sideshow found the Aggies' (31-7) pitching, fielding and hitting as good as ever at Marvin Norcross Stadium in Waco.

A&M pitcher Shawn Andaya wasn't clowning around with any dancing Bears. Thirteen was Baylor's unlucky number in the first game — that's the number of batters that struck out on Andaya's fastball. Baylor hitters managed to get three base hits, but they were for a lost cause.

Andaya, now 14-3, did walk the tight rope twice, in the fifth and sixth innings, but she never fell.

"The umpire was really bad," Andaya said. "He wasn't giving me anything. I just didn't agree with a few of his calls. But, I wasn't worried. Baylor has only two good hitters."

A&M Coach Bob Brock has tamed his hitters, but they're now as vicious as lions.

"We're just being real aggressive at the plate," Brock said. "Other teams are trying to pitch us their second best pitchers. If they do that, they sure better make that pitch or it will cost them. I finally made my team understand that."

In the first game, shortstop Liz Mizera led off the fourth inning with a walk. Iva Jackson followed with a single up the middle.

Andaya moved the runners up with a sacrifice fly. Baylor third baseman Misty Davis was the recipient of a Mary Schwind shot. Davis attempted to tag Mizera who was off third base. After that attempt failed to record an out, she overthrew first base trying to get Schwind. That brought in Mizera for a 1-0 lead.

"I took a lead off third base," Mizera said. "I distracted her. She just looked at me too long to make the throw in time."

After Mizera's score, catcher Gay McNutt got an infield single to score Jackson.

All of that excitement was only the preliminary game. The real show came in the second game when Yvette Lopez made her return.

The Aggie pitcher pulled a Houdini during the Aggie Invitational Tournament last weekend. Although she survived the tourney with a 2-1 record, Lopez struggled in all three appearances.

"I was a little frustrated (during the Aggie Invitational)," Lopez said.

"After the last game in the tournament, I started picking back up."

This time the Bears found seven wasn't even a lucky number for them (good thing they weren't in Las Vegas). Lopez fanned seven Bears and allowed only two hits. The first inning took just seven pitches to retire the side. It was perhaps the best performance by Lopez this year.

"She looks more like herself," Brock said. "She was more under control tonight. This is one of the best games I've seen her pitch. She challenged their big hitter and struck her out."

"Yvette is as good as their is around. In fact, she probably pitched better than Shawn tonight. With all the injuries she had last year, it's great to see her play like this. She is back."

Lopez felt like the "strong-man" at the end of the game.

"It felt great," Lopez said. "We were working the outside corner today. I missed a couple, but for the most part I was getting them right in there. I got stronger the last two or three innings. I guess I just woke up. I started working harder."

Catcher McNutt broke in shaking her hand. "I'll say. You were popping the ball."

In the end, the Fat Lady sang "Aggie praises" and "Hail to Lopez".

Texas A&M Sportscope

A&M baseball team heads to Lubbock for SWC series

Mark Johnson's Texas A&M baseball team (25-10, 2-4 in the Southwest Conference) travels to Lubbock this weekend for a crucial three-game series with Texas Tech. The Aggies and Red Raiders play a single game Friday at 2 p.m. and resume the series with a double-header on Saturday beginning at noon.

No. 7 A&M netters battle SWC foes; women face Oklahoma City

David Kent's No. 7 Texas A&M men's tennis team resumes Southwest Conference play this weekend, hosting Baylor Friday and No. 8 Texas Saturday at the Omar Smith Tennis Center. Jan Baldwin's No. 25 Aggie women's tennis team hosts Oklahoma City to a dual-match at the Royal Oaks Racquet Club in Bryan Friday.

A&M men golfers trek to Austin for tournament

Bob Ellis' Texas A&M men's golf team heads to Austin to compete in the Morris Williams Invitational Tournament. The Aggies are coming off an impressive showing at the All-American Intercollegiate Tournament in Houston last week, placing sixth as a team overall. This will be the men's last tourney date of the season before the Southwest Conference Championship Tournament, April 19-21 in Lakeway.

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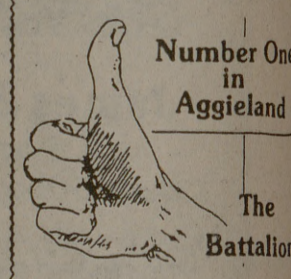
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