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TANK McNAMARA



by Jeff Millar & Bill Hinds

Rockets, Sampson rip Pacers

Associated Press

HOUSTON — Houston's Ralph Sampson broke out of a two-game slump with 26 points, four blocked shots and 11 rebounds to lead the Rockets to a 126-97 NBA victory over the Indiana Pacers Wednesday night.

Houston's Akeem Olajuwon scored 28 points, added 10 rebounds and six blocked shots for the Rockets, won remained unbeaten in eight home games this season.

The Rockets, who have won eight of their last nine games, built a comfortable 72-50 halftime lead and expanded it in a breakaway second half.

Sampson, who scored a season low eight points in Tuesday's loss to Denver, keyed the Rockets' first half surge.

Rookie Wayman Tisdale scored a career high 27 points to lead the Pacers and Herb Williams added 14.

The Rockets broke from a 12-12 tie with 6:58 to go in the first quarter to take a 36-19 lead at the end of the first quarter and continued to pull away from the fading Pacers in the second quarter.

Olajuwon and Sampson each had five blocked shots at the half as the Rockets moved to a 72-50 lead at intermission.

A&M spikers lose

(continued from page 11)

desperately to comeback, Texas setter Jackie Campbell was defeating the purpose. She hit one ball out and another into the waiting hands of A&M middle blocker Sherri Brinkman for the final two points.

In the second game, it was more of the same. It was load, ready, aim, fire, reload for the Ags as one ball after another hit on Texas' side of the court.

Key kills by A&M outside hitter Cheri Steensma and Brinkman put the Ags up 11-7. But before the Ags could say "15," a Diane Watson tap had the game tied at 11-11.

On the next play, Gildner hit one deep into the left corner of the court. When the linesman signaled it was in, Haley jumped off the bench and began arguing.

Haley was given a red card for unsportsmanlike conduct, costing his team a point. That seemed to be the deciding play in game two as UT never scored again.

So in the best three-of-five match, A&M seemed to be in good shape with a 2-0 lead. They had emotionally, physically and mentally outplayed the 'Horns.

"It was a game of momentum," Haley said. "The Aggies did a good job of controlling the momentum in the first two games."

It seemed only appropriate that seniors Brinkman and Lesha Beakley, the only two players on the team who had ever beaten the 'Horns, would end their career in G. Rollie with a win over Texas.

The roses they were given before the match began to smell sweeter by the moment.

But somewhere along the way, they began to droop and wilt.

Texas slowly and methodically began to climb back into the match. In the third game, they jumped to a 2-0 lead, the first time in the match that Texas had led by more than a point.

And before the Ags could re-

cover, the 'Horns had a 12-4 lead. "They just let up," A&M Coach Terry Condon said. "I was sitting there thinking how tired they looked. It's the first time I've ever had a team that tired in the third game."

The Ags also became apprehensive at the net. Instead of playing to win, they began to play not to lose. Instead of spiking balls, they began dinking balls.

"We started to play it safe," Condon said. "You can't do that. You've got to get up there and pound away."

In the fourth game, the Aggies got their motor started too late again. They had to play catch-up after allowing Texas a 12-6 head start. Beakley was instrumental in the Ags' comeback, charging them back into the game at 13-14.

The fifth and deciding game was nip and tug all the way. With Gildner spiking and Beakley digging left and right, A&M went up 10-8. The next four points went to UT for a 12-10 'Horn lead. The Ags scored the next two to tie it at 12.

But crucial mistakes nailed the Ags' casket shut.

Gildner was called for being in the net, giving Texas a 15-14 lead. After surviving four match points, the Ags got the serve back trailing 16-15. Zogata served the ball into the net for the Ags' 12th serving error of the night.

"(We) played pretty well," Condon said. "We made a lot of dumb mistakes. With the score 14-14 or 14-13, you can't afford the errors, and that's exactly what we did."

And that's what she told her players after the game.

"I told them to remember the mistakes," she said, "like Chris serving out and Gildner netting to tie the score. Never forget it, so we'll never make those errors again."

Outside hitters Steensma and Gildner, who Condon criticized for

their play against Baylor Monday, combined for a .268 hitting percentage, 36 kills and 40 digs.

"Gildner played well," Condon said. "And for a freshman playing in her first competitive and important match, Cheri Steensma played very well."

Senior Beakley saved her best for last. She had a .271 setting percentage and 28 digs.

"Lesha played probably the best match I've ever seen her play," Condon said. "Leadership wise and all-around, she was outstanding."

Beakley and Brinkman will more than likely have a chance to play at least one more match in an Aggie uniform.

With their play against Texas, A&M has probably guaranteed itself of one of the 12 at-large bids to the NCAA Championship Tournament.

"I talked to the regional committee people today," Condon said. "They said it looks good. But if we had beat them, we wouldn't have had to play such a high seed."

In fact, Haley thinks the SWC teams will meet again in postseason play.

"They're one of the two best teams we've seen," Haley said. "I don't think there's any question in my mind that they will receive an NCAA bid and I think we're going to see them a third time this year."

After coming so close Wednesday night, the Aggies were left hoping for one more shot at the 'Horns.

"I certainly hope (we get to play them again)," Beakley said. "I think we're a much better team. We just made mistakes at the wrong times."

And those mistakes left the frustrated Aggie fans not only anxiously awaiting word from the NCAA selection committee, but had them slugging it out with the Longhorn mascot and cheerleaders at match's end.

Other Wednesday NBA Scores:
 (home team in capitals)

PHOENIX 121	SAN ANTONIO 100
BOSTON 115	UTAH 106 (OT)
PHILADELPHIA 117	GOLDEN STATE 113
WASHINGTON 101	CLEVELAND 98
ATLANTA 116	CHICAGO 101
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