

A&M rips Alcorn State:

Habits haunt Aggies, despite 82-69 victory

By BRANDON BERRY
Sports Writer

The Texas A&M men's basketball team has developed quite a few habits for a team so early into its season and all were on display Tuesday night in G. Rollie White Coliseum when the Aggies defeated Alcorn State, 82-69.

The bad habits of the Aggies — paraded almost exclusively in the first halves of their games — are poor transition defense, lack of inside position on rebounds and total lack of direction in the passing offense.

The good habits of the Aggies — seen by demand only in second halves of games — are great passing, ferocious rebounding and a tenacious, trapping zone defense.

So why does Dr. Jekyll play like Mr. Hyde only in the second half in Aggieland?

"I think we were trying too hard in the first half," said A&M forward Winston Crite, who led the Aggies' charge from a 38-32 halftime deficit with 16 second half points. "I just loosened up out there and started playing basketball instead of thinking so much. In the first half, we came out and tried hard, but we just didn't get the breaks."

The Aggies also didn't get the shots. In the first half, A&M had taken only 19 shots, compared to 37 for Alcorn State.

Crite loosened up the Braves' defense with rolls to the basket and pinpoint passes to center Jimmie Gilbert, who had one of his best shooting nights at A&M with 18 points.

"That's what I like to do," Crite said of his inside passing. "I know what it's like to be on the inside and not get the ball. I'll take the shot if it's there, but it's always better to get the ball inside if you can."

One of the reasons the Aggies penetrated Alcorn State's zone defense in the second half was the crisp passing of point guard Todd Holloway.

Holloway, who was ineffective against Alabama-Birmingham in the Aggies' season opener and against Alcorn State in the first half, teamed up with backcourt-mate Don Marbury (who once again led A&M scoring with 23

points) to give the Ags speed and quickness against the Braves' fast break.

A Marbury short jumper from the right baseline gave the Aggies their first lead of the game, 45-44, with less than 14 minutes remaining in the game. A&M then built on its lead, never letting Alcorn State get closer than four points the rest of the way.

"We've got a lot of work ahead of us," A&M Coach Shelby Metcalf said. "I did it to us the first half. Probably the big line-up we started (Marbury, Crite, Gilbert, Mike Clifford and David Thompson) couldn't go against all the speed and quickness they (the Braves) put on the court."

"In the second half, we played much better. We had good, smart passing and defensive intensity."

For the game, the Aggies shot 61 percent from the floor and 79 percent from the free throw line. Alcorn State, meanwhile, hit on only 38 percent of their shots from the field and 65 percent of their free throws.

A&M out-rebounded Alcorn State, 44-32, with Crite snaring 11 and Gilbert adding nine.

"People came up to me after the game and said 'Wow, coach, Jimmie had a great game,' but he plays like that all the time in practice," Metcalf said. "The guys have just got more confidence in his shot now. They know that if they get the ball to Jimmie, he'll score."

Metcalf said he was concerned about the Aggies' lack of preparation time before they take on Stephen F. Austin at home on Thanksgiving Day at 1 p.m.

"We know they (the Lumberjacks) can shoot the ball really well," Metcalf said. "They're 2-0 and they beat Louisiana Tech, at Tech (in Ruston, La.), by 12 points and Louisiana Tech's a real basketball school."

"I can't really pinpoint one thing we need to work on. The passing is there sometimes and the rebounding is there sometimes — those things all go together."

Like night and day. Or first halves and second halves.

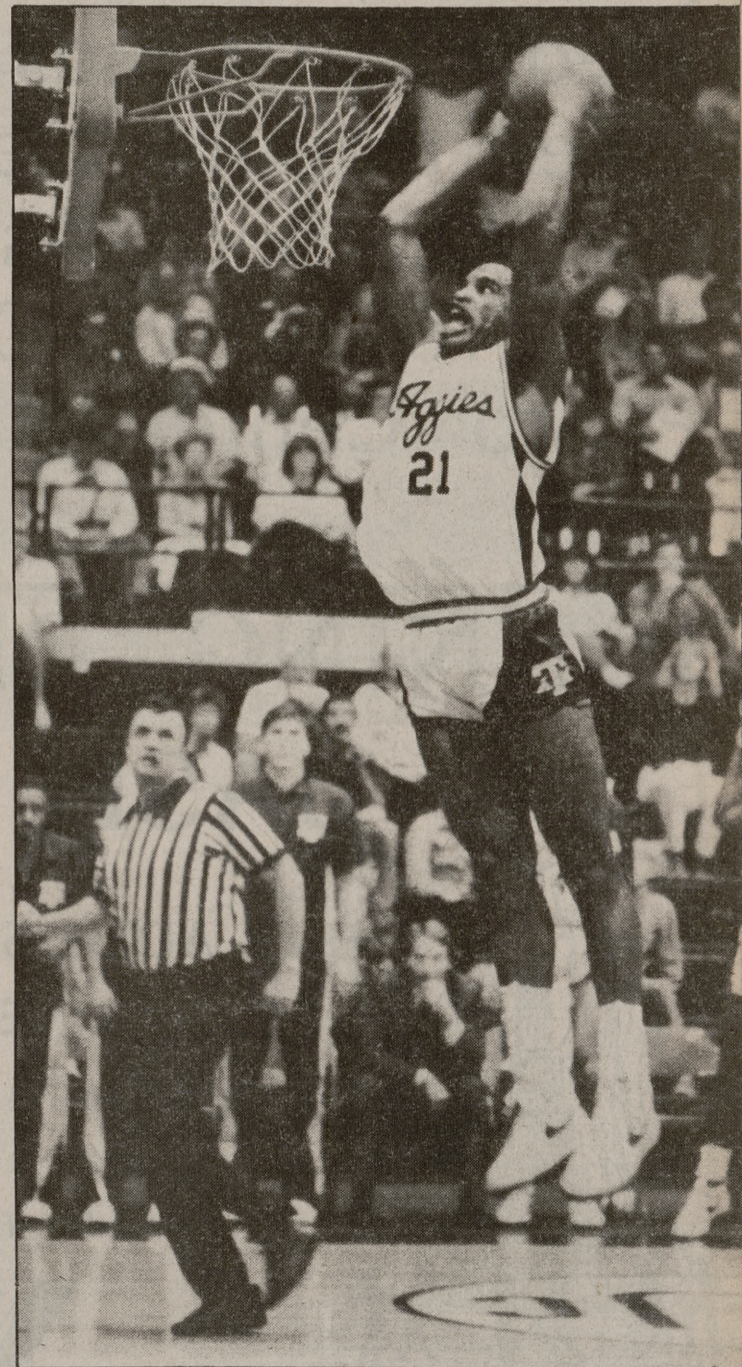


Photo by ANTHONY S. CASPER

Texas A&M forward Winston Crite ends Tuesday night's game with a bang. Crite led the Ags with 11 rebounds and scored 19 points.

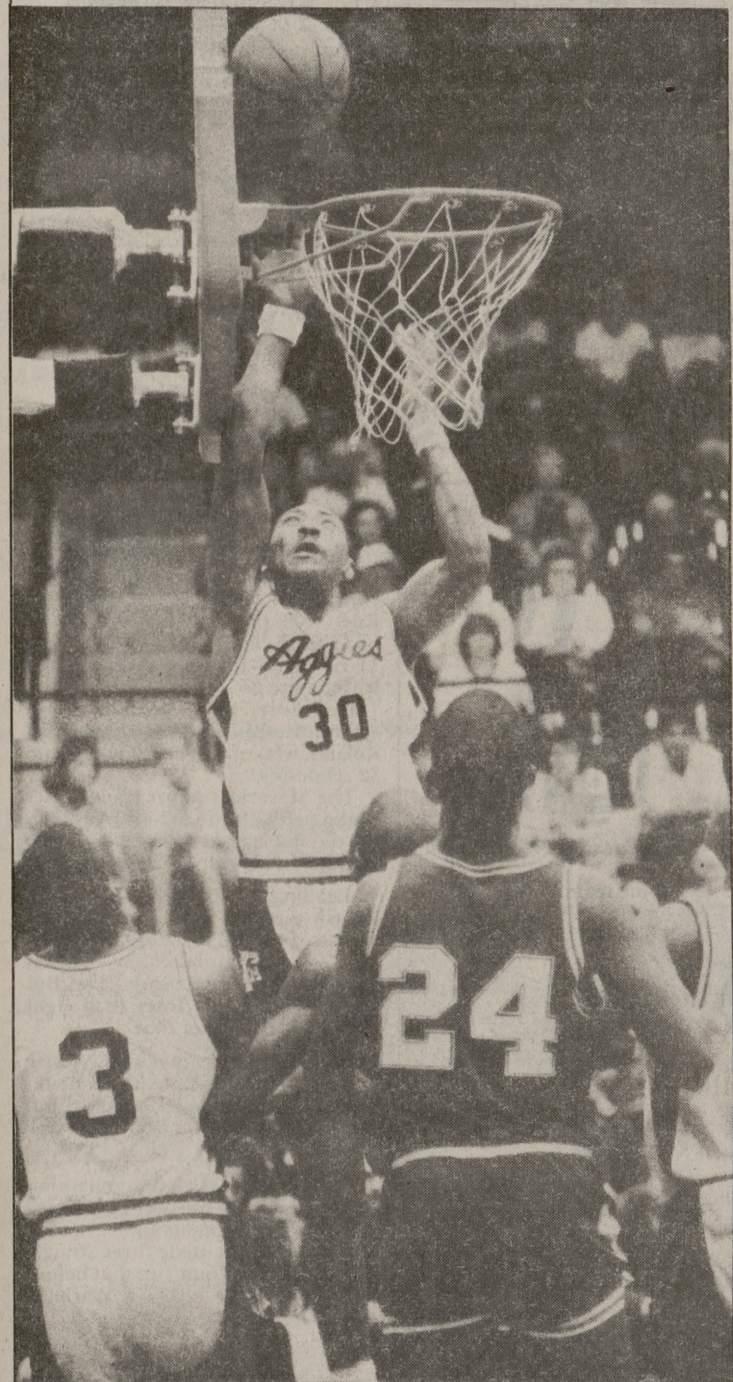


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Texas A&M's Jimmie Gilbert (30) puts up one of his eight field goal attempts. The Ags' center had 18 points and nine rebounds.

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