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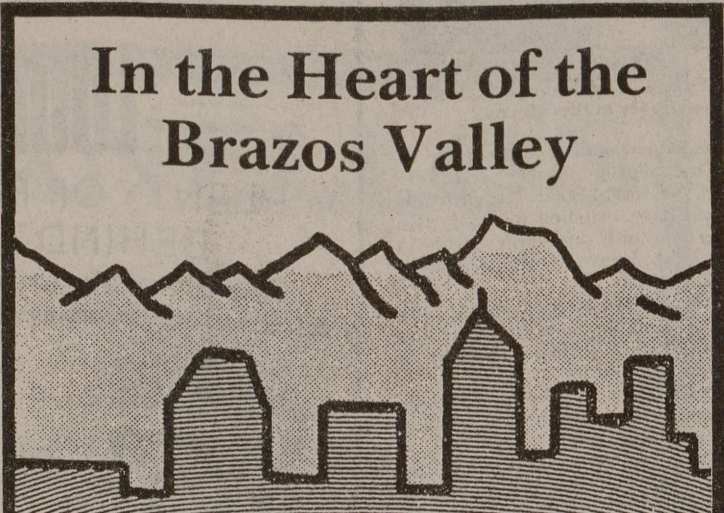
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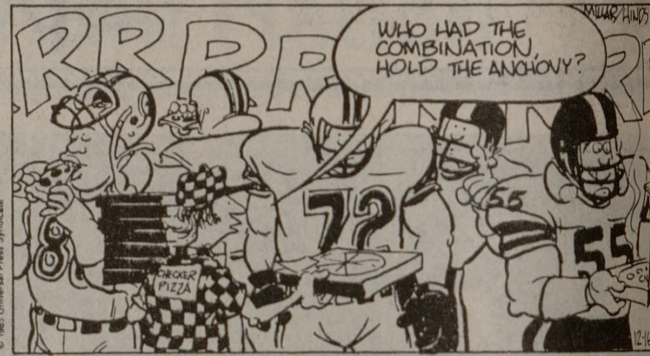
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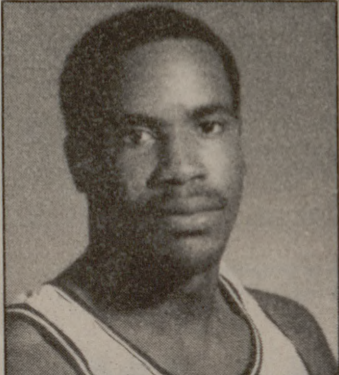


Ags get needed spark, but No. 5 'Jackets next

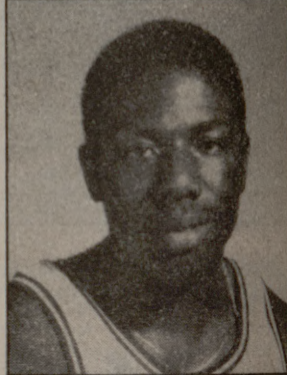
By KEN SURY
Assistant Sports Editor

Texas A&M's strong second half in its 81-75 win over Oral Roberts Saturday night in Tulsa, Okla., may be the spark the team will need when it faces No. 5 Georgia Tech Friday in the opening round of the Gator Bowl Basketball Tournament.

"They (the A&M players) are really looking forward to playing Georgia Tech," A&M Assistant Coach John Thornton said. "Like all players, they want to play the best (teams). And it's going to be a great challenge. Hopefully, we'll give them a good game, but they are a great team."



Winston Crite



Todd Holloway

The Aggies, now 5-3, didn't face a ranked team Saturday, but found themselves in trouble at halftime with the ORU Titans, who led 40-33.

"They (the Titans) kept getting the second shot and hitting it," Thornton said of the Aggies' poor first-half rebounding. "And their outside men were getting the open shots and making them."

But A&M turned things around quickly as the team changed their defensive alignment at the start of the second half, bringing two men up on the outside guards and leaving three to play a zone defense under the basket.

"We turned the tables on them when we did that," Thornton said. "They had us in foul trouble in the first half, but then we started to put them in foul trouble by changing defenses. It really got them rattled."

Thornton said team play won the game for the Aggies.

"The guys hung together," Thornton said. "They had the resolve to make the difference in the second half. It's always tough to come back, especially on the road, but they gave it a good shot and did it."

A&M shot a blistering 68 percent

from the field and 82 percent from the free-throw line in the second half to take control of the game.

"Every free throw was crucial," Thornton said. "Hitting them really showed our confidence and maturity."

Don Marbury, Todd Holloway, Winston Crite and Jimmie Gilbert poured in 44 of the 48 second half points for A&M. Marbury hit 19 of his game-leading 32 points in the final 20 minutes.

"Don did an outstanding job of hitting baskets," Thornton said. "He was consistent with the points and played good defense too."

Holloway had six points at intermission, but added 11 in the second period, most of those points coming from a seven-for-eight free-throw performance.

"He (Holloway) was a clutch free-thrower," Thornton said. "As the point guard, he's the guy who's got the pressure on him all the time. He did a super job of handling the basketball."

"He got the ball into the people underneath and we were really under control with our offensive game. Our first half we had nine turnovers,

but only two in the second. Todd played a very heady second half of basketball."

Crite finished with 12 points, eight in the second half, before fouling out with 2:54 left in the game. Gilbert scored 11 points for the game.

"That was as good a half as we played all year," Thornton said.

But it's going to take more than just one half of good basketball to compete with Georgia Tech and its All-America guard, Mark Price. Thornton said if the Ags are healthy, it could make a difference.

Game preparations will be hampered by this week's final exams, but Thornton said A&M will enter Friday's match ready to face the challenge.

The Aggies and the Yellow Jackets are scheduled for a 7 p.m. tipoff Friday. Southern Mississippi and Jacksonville play at 9 p.m.

Dec. 27 and 28 the Ags are in New Orleans for the Sugar Bowl Tournament. A&M's first opponent is Pittsburgh. Southern Louisiana and Tennessee also are in the tourney.

Lady Ags' road show bombs

By DOUG HALL
Sports Writer

Five games into her second season, Texas A&M Women's Basketball Coach Lynn Hickey and her Lady Aggies, a team stocked with young talent, owned an impressive 4-1 record.

Unfortunately for Hickey and her Ags, the good times seemed to have gone on vacation at the same time they began a tough three-game road trip.

Friday night in Baton Rouge, La., exactly one week after getting bombed 93-62 by No. 17 Oklahoma, the Ags suffered their second loss to a nationally ranked team.

This time it was No. 13 Louisiana State who administered a 72-54 lashing.

"It's a tough time for the girls to go through," Hickey said. "But we have to be realistic and impress upon them that we're in a learning stage. We just ask them to go out and compete."

Before the game with LSU, Hickey said the Lady Ags would need at least four people to score in double figures and have two people pull down 10 or more rebounds.

She got neither.

Paula Crutcher finished the game with 18 points and nine rebounds. The next highest Aggie scorer, Lisa Langston, contributed only eight points and grabbed four rebounds. Langston, A&M's career scoring leader, is averaging 15.5 points and six boards.

LSU, however, took Hickey's advice to heart. Four Tigers, led by 16-point performances from center Alisa Jones and forward Natalie Randall, finished in double figures.

"We played really well the first 10 minutes of the game," Hickey said. "But there was a five-minute span in there where we went cold. Against a team like LSU it's really hard to catch up."

One of the Lady Ags biggest problems this season has come from a weak inside game. Against LSU, who had three players 6-foot-2 or better, A&M was out-rebounded 38-31.

"We are still having problems with our centers," Hickey admitted. "Lisa Jordan (stress fracture in foot and Nette Garrett (shin splints) are both hurt. That hurts us because we can't keep them on the floor very long."

A&M finishes its three-game trip Thursday night against Louisiana Tech, who earlier this season was ranked No. 4 in the nation but has since fallen to seventh.

"Tech is another challenge," Hickey said. "Maybe they don't have the speed of LSU, but they do have the size underneath."

Aggie spikers lose to No. 8 'Horns

(continued from page 7)

when current seniors Brinkman and Beakley were freshmen.

In the last regular season match of this year, A&M came close to upsetting UT by winning the first two games, but then folding in the next three. That Nov. 20 match gave the Ags confidence they could beat the Longhorns.

So Friday night's match promised to be one of the closest in the 12-year series between the two schools.

But it didn't take long for promise

to turn into disappointment, proving that the third time's not always a charm.

"Maybe we tried too hard," Brinkman said. "Maybe we were too loose and too confident."

Brinkman and Beakley were especially disappointed because they ended their collegiate careers against the team that had prevented them from Southwest Conference Championships for the past four years.

"It's a pretty sad way to go out," Brinkman said. "I wish our team

could have given them a better fight. It was one of the worst games we've played."

For the other 11 Aggies, they'll have a long time to think about the three losses to the 'Horns this year, the 26-8 record, the No. 19 ranking that got as high as No. 10 and the first round NCAA win over Texas-Arlington that put them among the top 16 teams in the country.

And they'll also have a long time to think about the could-have-been's, would-have-been's and should-have-been's.

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