

Sports

Ags aim to return to winning ways

By CHAREAN WILLIAMS
Assistant Sports Editor

The Texas A&M basketball team got some good news and some bad news Wednesday night.

The bad news came when the Aggies lost their first Southwest Conference game, 76-69, to the University of Houston.

The good news came when A&M received word that TCU and Texas Tech also lost, leaving the Aggies (11-7 overall, 5-1 in SWC) alone in first-place in the conference.

"We lost," A&M guard Don Marbury said, "but, hey, we're still on top of the conference and control our own destiny. We'll get ready to play Rice and keep on going hard."

With UH stopping A&M's win streak at five, the Ags will get a chance to start a new one when they host Rice Saturday afternoon at 3 p.m. in G. Rollie White Coliseum.

The Owls (8-9, 1-5) are tied with Arkansas and Baylor at the bottom of the SWC standings.

Just who is the worst of the three teams?

Well, Rice beat Houston for its only win. But in UH's defense, it was struggling when the teams first met Jan. 11.

Both Arkansas and Baylor got their only conference win against the Owls.

Rice's latest loss was to a Baylor team that has had players suspended, dismissed and its program put on probation for recruiting violations.

Did the 53-49 loss in Waco Wednesday night earn the Owls the cellar dweller title for the second straight year?

Maybe. But don't award them the only ticket home for the SWC Tournament yet.

And don't count on an easy A&M win.

"It will be another tough game," A&M Coach Shelby Metcalf said. "No doubt about it. Rice will be ready for us. They will come in and give us a good game. I'm just glad it's at home."

The Owls are led by 6-foot-7 center Terrence Cashaw and 6-3 forward Greg Hines.

Cashaw, a senior from Houston Lamar, is eighth in the SWC in scor-

ing at 15.9 points a game, and ninth in rebounding at 6.3.

Hines, Rice's top performer last year, is right behind Cashaw in scoring at 14.7 points a game, and is pulling down 4.9 rebounds.

"Those two guys can kill you, if you let them get going," Metcalf said.

But the Rice unit grows thin from there, and inexperience seems to be the reason why.

Sophomore guard Mike Girardi is averaging only 5.7 points and 3.2 rebounds a game. Freshman guard Mike Cooper's numbers read 2.5 points and 2.2 rebounds. And sophomore forward Jeff Crawford is getting only 7.3 points and 2.8 rebounds.

The Ags should be able to take advantage of both the Owls' lack of experience and lack of height.

While the Owls start a freshman, two sophomores and a junior, the Aggies start three juniors and two seniors.

A&M guard Marbury is undoubtedly the best player in the SWC. The 6-3 senior is leading the conference in scoring at 22.7 points per game.

But Marbury does more with the ball than just score. He is eighth in the conference in assists, dishing off 4.0 a game.

Despite playing with a virus and fouling out with more than five minutes left in the UH game, Marbury still managed 18 points.

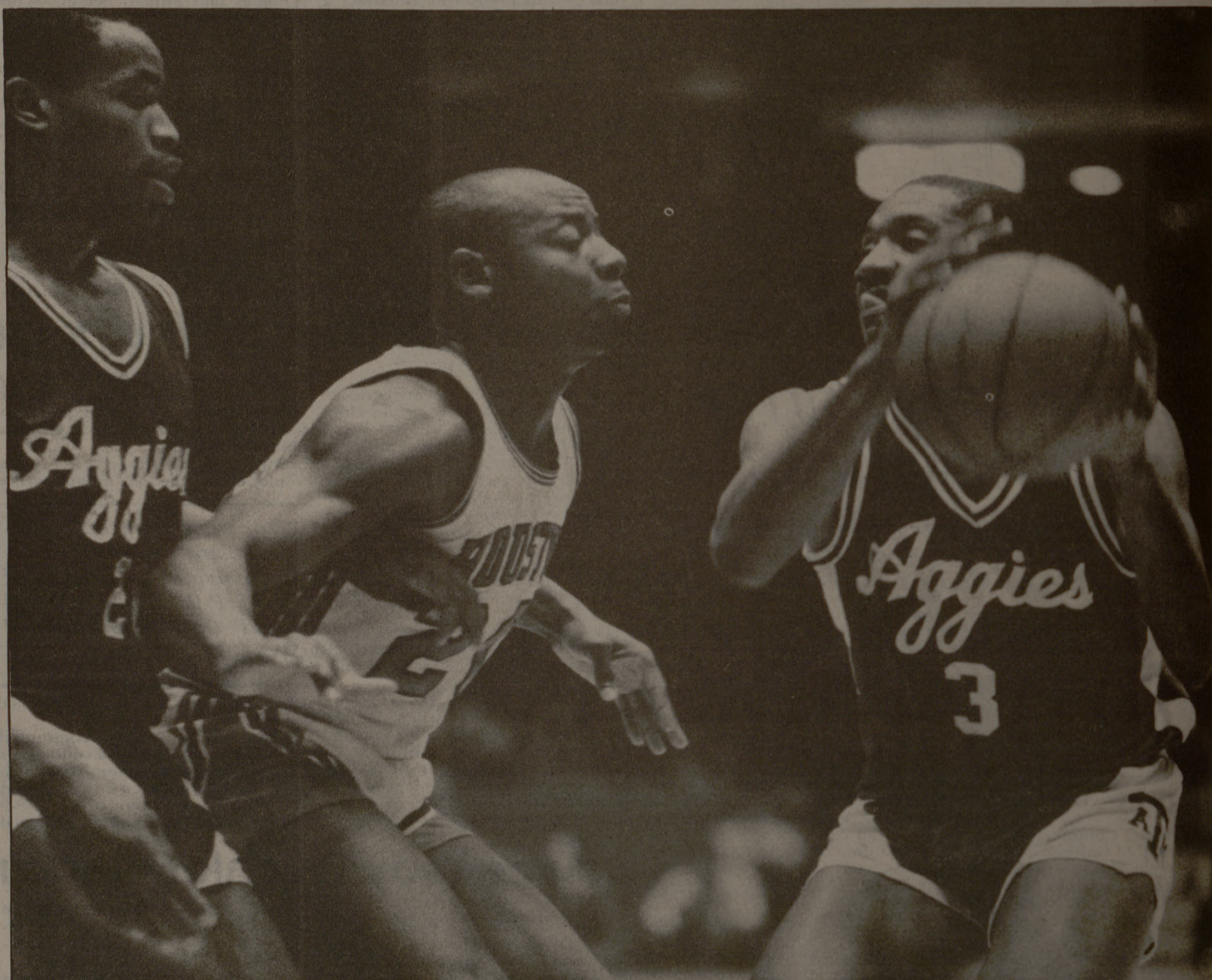
"As Marbury goes, so goes A&M," Houston guard Renaldo Thomas said. "Last year, Don scored a lot of points against us and it really hurt. He reminded me during lay-ups and really got me fired up. But he is an outstanding player."

A&M forward Winston Crite also has given opposing teams a headache.

Crite is second in both scoring and rebounding for the Aggies. The 6-7 junior is fifth in the SWC in rebounding at 7.5, and his 12.7 points per game ranks him 15th in scoring.

However, the Aggies' top player of late has been center Jimmie Gilbert.

Gilbert won the SWC Player of the Week honor last week after leading the Aggies to last-second wins over Texas and Texas Tech.



A&M forward Don Marbury (3) keeps the ball out of reach of Houston's Alvin Franklin with help from teammate Winston Crite. The

Aggies, who lost to the Cougars Wednesday night, attempt to return to their winning ways Saturday afternoon when they host Rice.

Photo by DEAN SAITO

Texas A&M University PHI SIGMA KAPPA

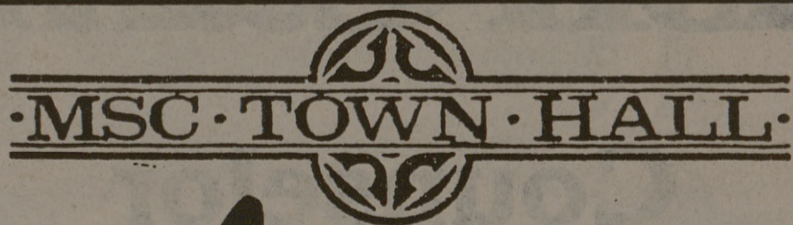


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