

# A&M 'Twin Towers' making own SWC name

## Crite, Gilbert to lead Aggs' inside game against Hogs

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Put the Texas A&M basketball team in G. Rollie White Coliseum, and the Aggies are virtually unbeatable (8-0 this season) — a la the Houston Rockets.

And the Aggies have even copied the Rockets with their own version of the "Twin Towers."

While A&M guard Don Marbury is leading the Southwest Conference in scoring, the Aggs wouldn't be leading the conference without the play of their inside men.

Center Jimmie Gilbert and forward Winston Crite have been the catalysts for the Aggies this season, combining to average 25-points and 14 rebounds a game.

"The coaches are looking inside more this season," Crite said. "I think they want a more complete game than we had last year."

Indeed, what a difference a year makes.

One year ago, Gilbert was being criticized for his lack of aggressiveness, his poor shooting touch and his "brick" free throws.

Now, almost everyone in the conference wants to stay away from the Aggies' 6-foot-9 center — especially the folks in Lubbock.

A week ago against Texas Tech, Gilbert had a thrilling last-second three-point play that gave A&M a 58-57 upset over the Red Raiders.

"I think I've improved a lot (since last year)," said Gilbert, who is averaging 12 points and 6.7 rebounds a game. "I've gotten the ball a lot more than last year."

"This season, we're lacking that one great outside shooter like we had in Kenny Brown last year. Mike's (Clifford) more of a passer. That gives us more of an opportunity to get the ball."

As for Crite, the present season got off to a shaky start. He severely sprained his ankle in preseason practice and missed the first game.

"I was worried (about my ankle) for a long time," Crite said. "I didn't think it would be the same again. I think I'm almost 100 percent now."

Although the ankle still gives him some pain occasionally, it hasn't slowed him down. Crite is averaging 12.7 points and 7.5 rebounds per game and has blocked 27 shots.

"I've improved (from last season)," he said. "It hasn't showed in the stats, but I have definitely improved individual-wise."

On the court, Gilbert and Crite are just alike.

Whether it's going up for the slam, snagging the ball off the boards or rejecting a shot, the Aggies can count on either Gilbert or Crite to be in the vicinity.

But off the court, they are anything but twins.

Gilbert, who is quiet, reserved and straightforward, stayed within 30 miles of his hometown to play collegiate basketball. Crite, who is witty, open and talkative, traveled more than 1,500 miles to play for the Aggs.

"I wanted to stay close to home (Huntsville)," Gilbert said. "I was recruited by other schools, but I came here and saw the traditions and fans and knew this is where I wanted to play."

Crite came to A&M from Bakerfield, Calif. His recruiting story is "a long and complicated one."

"I drove to LA, jumped on a plane and here I am," Crite joked.

Actually, A&M football coaches were in Bakerfield scouting eventual signee Rick McLeod of opposing East High School, when they spotted Crite.

"I knew I wanted to get away from home," he said. "If I stayed in California, I knew I was in trouble."

Although their routes to A&M were different, together, the two are becoming troublemakers.

Arkansas (10-8 overall, 2-5 in SWC) will be the next to get a shot at stopping the "Twin Towers" and ending A&M's home winning streak. The Aggs host the Razorbacks at 7:30 tonight in G. Rollie White.

"I don't think they're a last-place team," Gilbert said. "They have some good athletes. The chemistry just isn't there right now. They're hurting without (Joe) Kleime (who is now playing for the NBA's Sacramento Kings). They have the quickness, the shooters, the rebounders — they just don't have the experience yet."

And what does the rest of the season hold for the first-place Aggies?

"We're in excellent shape," Crite said. "We have to continue to play team ball. We haven't won anything yet."

But Gilbert, who is in his final season at A&M, has higher hopes than just winning the SWC.

"The Final Four," Gilbert nodded, "that's what I'd like. We ordered our tickets already — just in case we miss it."

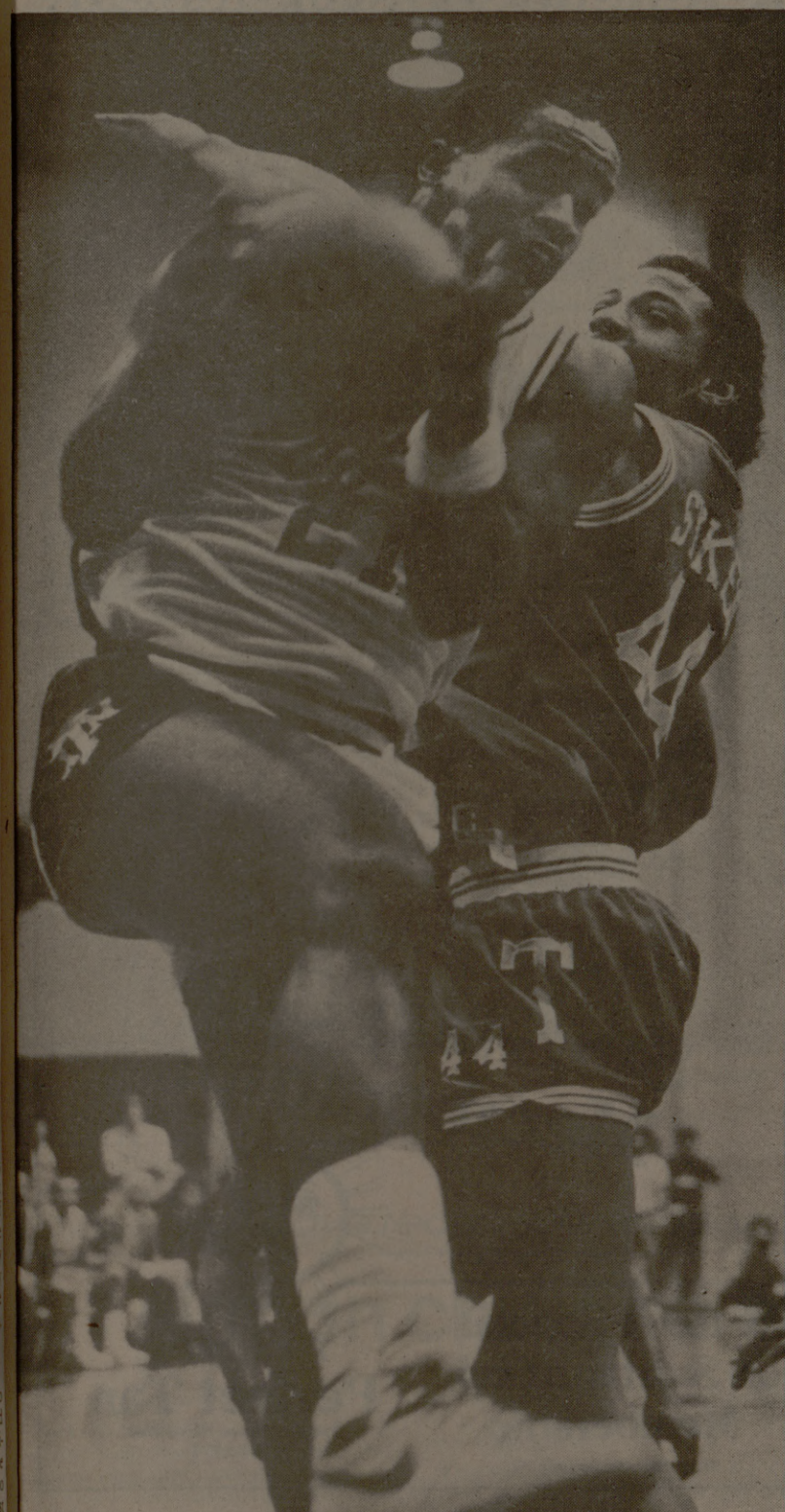


Photo by ANTHONY S. CASPER

A&M forward Winston Crite (21) is leading the Aggies in rebounding at 7.5 a game, heading into tonight's game with Arkansas.

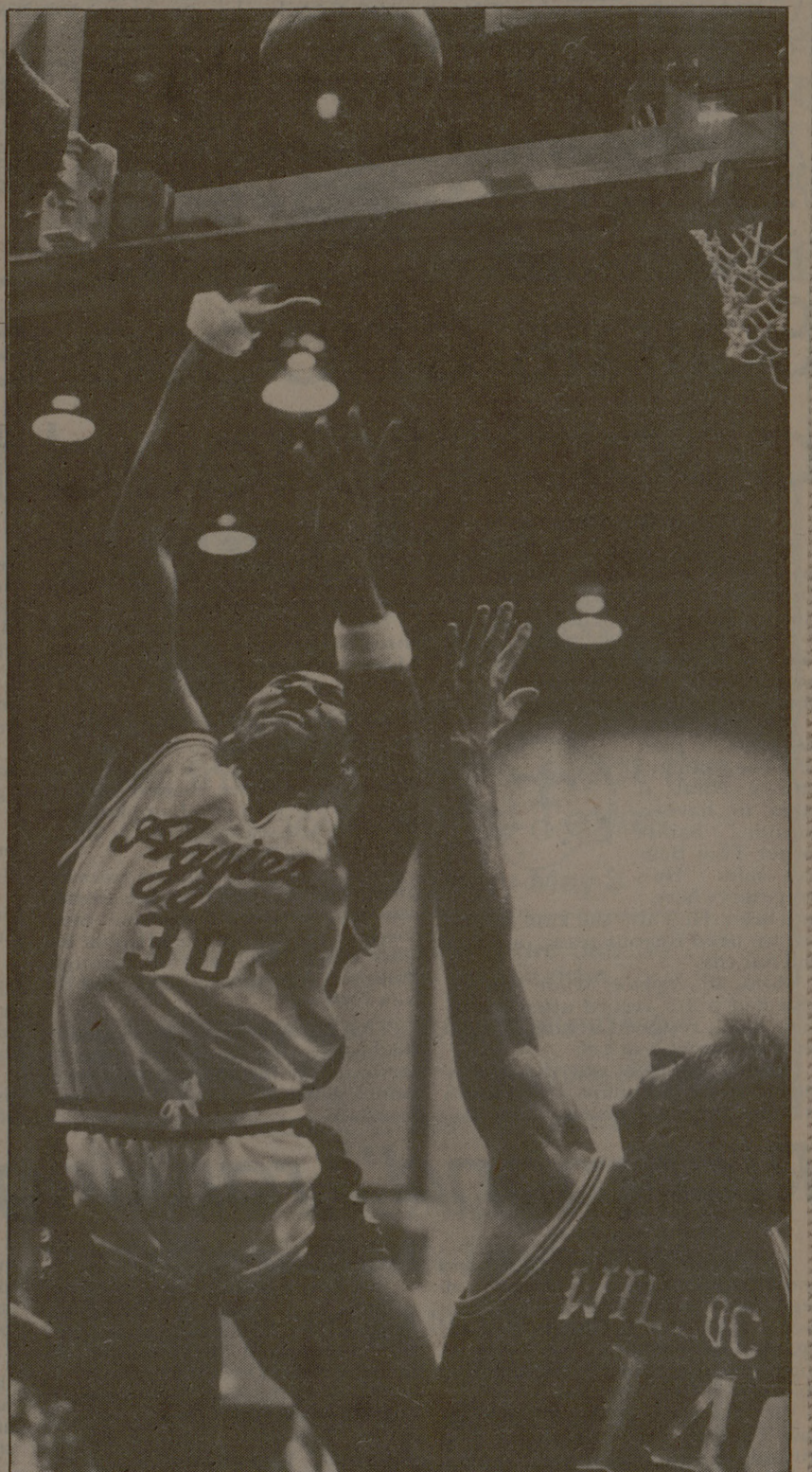


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A&M center Jimmie Gilbert (30) has become an inside force for the Aggies. Gilbert is averaging 12.0 points and 6.7 rebounds a game.

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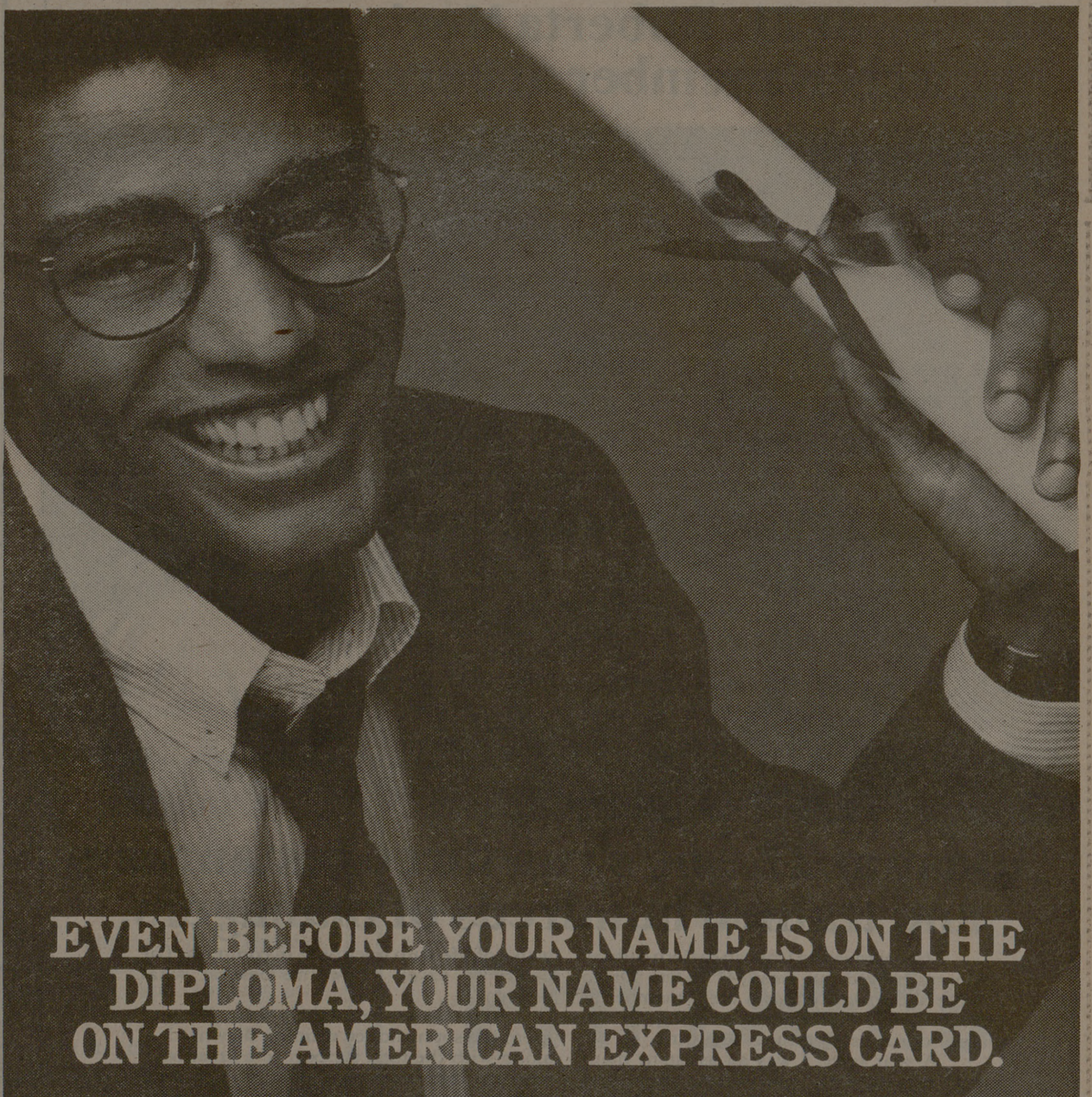
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