

Sports

A&M gets tough with Sam Houston

Winning season now within reach of Aggies

By DOUG HALL
Sports Writer

It wasn't Texas A&M Coach Lynn Hickey's idea of a perfectly executed win, but Tuesday night's 91-74 victory over Sam Houston State nevertheless will go down as the Lady Aggies' 12th victory of the season.

"That's No. 12," Hickey said. "And at this time of the season, I don't care if it's pretty or if it's ugly, it's a win."

The Lady Ags now stand at 12-9 on the season. Barring any major upsets in their remaining seven games, the Ags should finish over the .500 mark for the first time since 1980.

Hickey, in only her second year at A&M, is obviously pleased with the progress her young team has made.

"The main thing is that this time last year, that game would have been a real struggle," Hickey said. "This year, we're disappointed it wasn't a 30-point victory. That's a big step."

Tuesday night the Lady Ags combined a tough full-court press with 59.3 percent field goal shooting and strong rebounding to hand the Bearkats their 11th loss in 20 games.

"We had some good games offensively," Hickey said. "We stayed in our press the whole game and really worked hard."

A&M's all-time leading scorer, Lisa Langston, paced the Ags with 23 points and nine rebounds. Paula Crutcher pitched in 20 — 16 of those coming in the first half.

The Lady Ags trailed Sam Houston twice in the opening minute, but took the lead for good with over 18 minutes left in the first half when Lisa Jordan hit from inside to tie the score at four. In the process, Jordan was fouled and given the chance for a three-point play.

Her free throw was short, but Crutcher came up with the rebound and promptly put the ball back up for two.

Using Crutcher's strong shooting and 12 Sam Houston turnovers, the Lady Ags opened their lead to 17 with less than seven minutes remaining.

Despite the fact that the crowd of 250 was sensing a blowout, Sam Houston used some accurate shooting of its own to draw within eight (49-41) at the half. Sam Houston was led by sophomore forward LaVoyanna Nelson who scored 18 points and A&M Consolidated product Julie Thomas who contributed 16.

Hickey was somewhat disappointed the Bearkats were able to score 15 points in the final five minutes of the half. Similar lapses this season have led to defeats against Southwest Conference teams such as Arkansas and Houston.

"We scored really well in the first half," she said. "But in the last part of the first half, we just didn't play defense. We did a much better job in the second half."

Hickey said much of the trouble the Aggies experienced was a result of playing a non-conference team with a sub-.500 record.

"That was a tough game to play," Hickey said. "It's hard to get up for a team like that because they're going out there for everything. Sam Houston worked hard. They had a real good effort."

She went on to say that playing a team like Sam Houston or UT-San Antonio was similar to the Texas game for A&M.

"That makes the whole season," she said.

Sam Houston came within six points of making that "season" when they closed to 53-47 with only 1:49 gone in the second half.

However, that was as close as the game would get. Buckets by Crutcher, Donna Roper and Lisa Jordan in the next three minutes shot the Aggie lead back up to 11 points.

Lady Ag Notes:

A&M Coach Lynn Hickey said sophomore forward Holly Hodges broke out with chicken pox in the locker room after practice on Monday. She also said seven of her players, including starters Roper and Crutcher have not had the pox and were exposed at the most susceptible time.

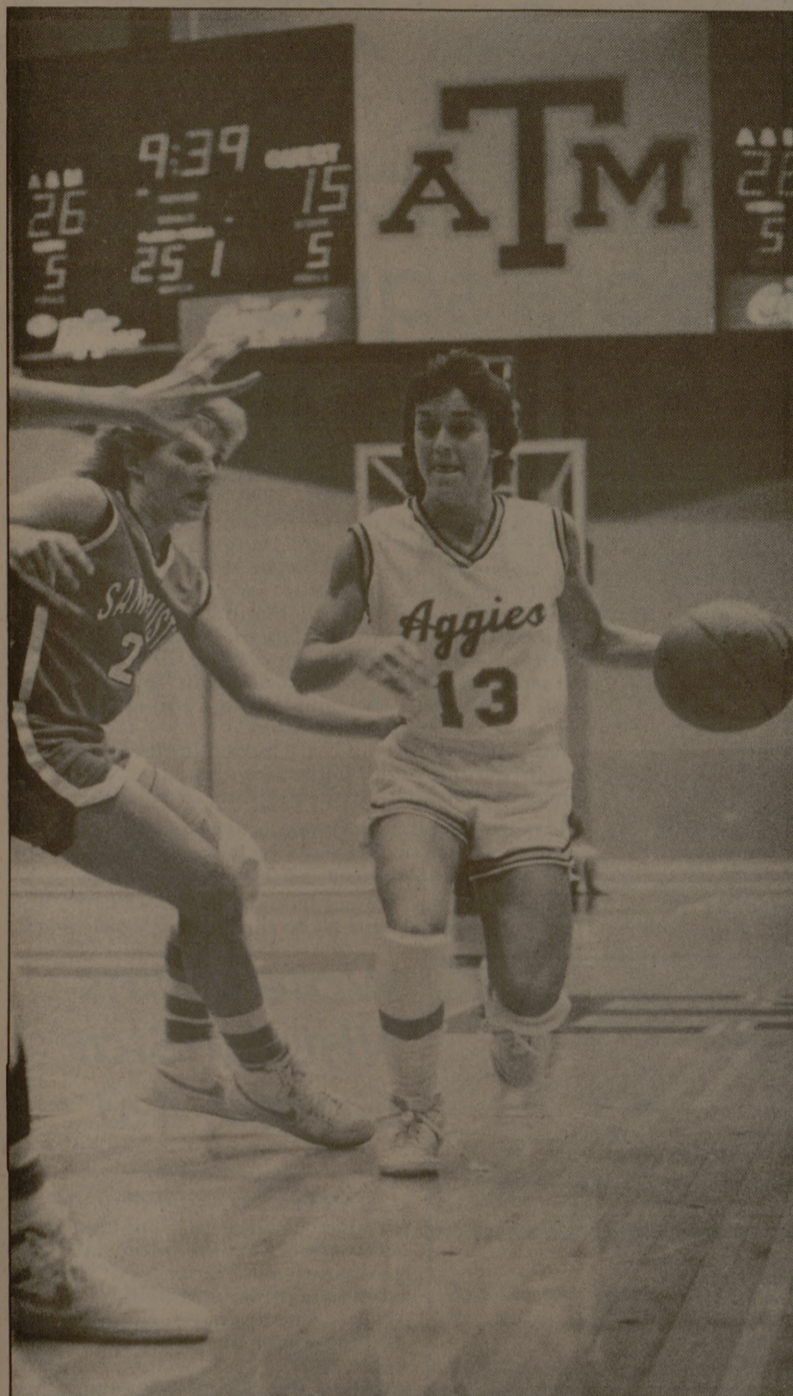


Photo by MIKE SANCHEZ

A&M's Beth Young (13) drives the ball down the court and past Sam Houston State's Brenda Greer during Tuesday night's action.

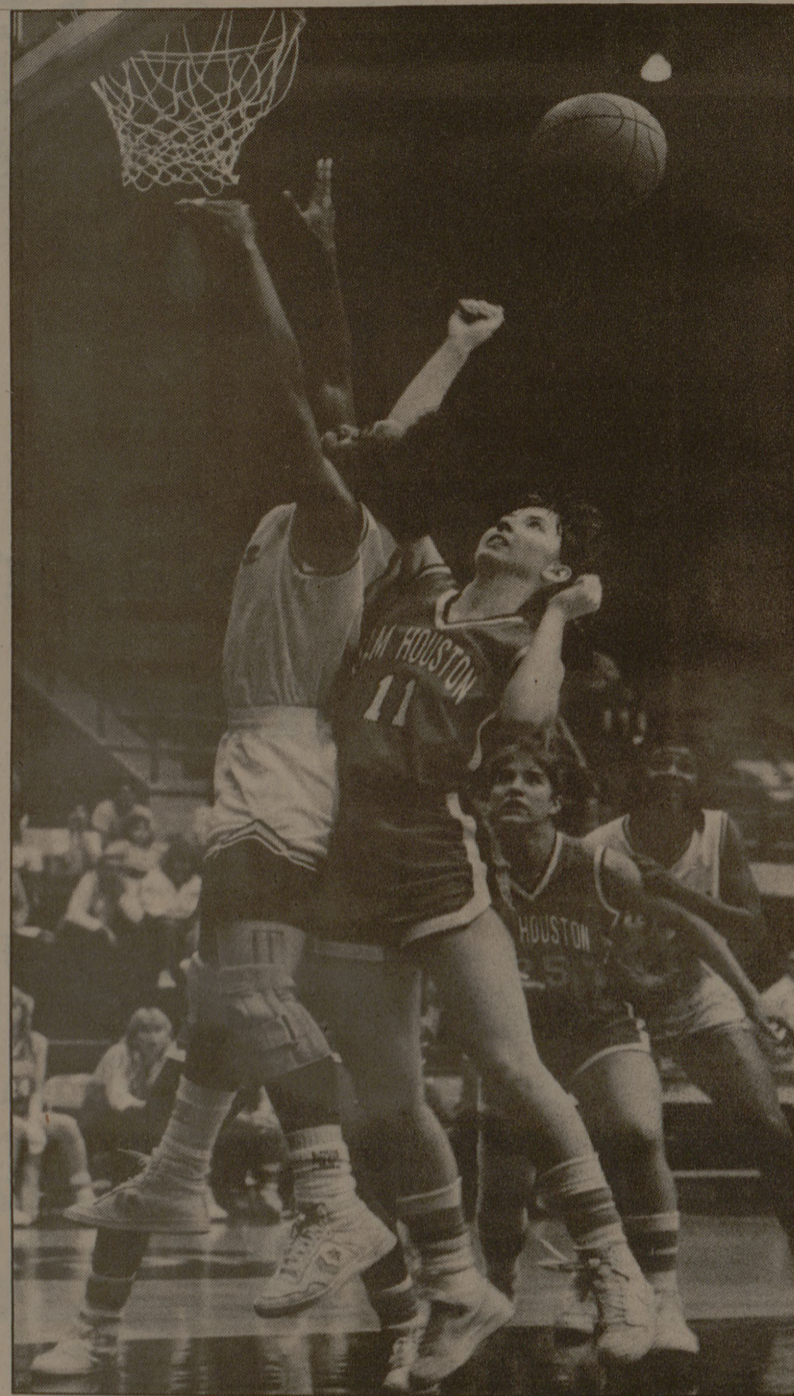


Photo by MIKE SANCHEZ

A&M's Lisa Langston (left) battles Sam Houston State's Donna Giles for a rebound. The Lady Ags downed the Bearkats 91-74 Tuesday.

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