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A&M looks to 'streak' past Tech

Ags hope to halt 3-game losing skid against Red Raiders

By **KEN SURY**
 Assistant Sports Editor

The last time Texas A&M and Texas Tech faced each other on the basketball court, both were trying to extend four-game Southwest Conference winning streaks. But when the two teams meet at 7:30 tonight in G. Rollie White Coliseum the Aggies will be trying to end a three-game string of defeats. Those losses have pulled A&M down from the top of the SWC standings to a third-place tie with SMU. The Aggies, 14-10 overall, were riding high with an 8-1 SWC record a mere 1½ weeks ago when they hosted SMU, and looked destined to notch another win as they led the Mustangs 37-33 at halftime. But SMU had other plans and switched from a man-to-man defense to a zone, forcing the Aggies and the SWC's leading scorer, Don Marbury, away from their game plan. The Mustangs rallied and escaped G. Rollie White with a 58-56 win.

When A&M hit the road against TCU and Texas, it was again greeted by a packed zone defense and again suffered losses.

But A&M Coach Shelby Metcalf said the Aggies haven't lost due to a lack of effort. "We're playing hard," Metcalf said. "We're just not shooting well. The game that really hurt us was SMU, here. We lost that in the last six minutes."

Metcalf said the Aggies aren't going to do anything special to try to open up the zone they'll probably see tonight against the Red Raiders (6-6 in the SWC, 11-12 overall).

"If you put five men in the (lane)," Metcalf said, "there's no way to entice them to come out. The only thing you can do is play hard."

"Our outside shooting has been picking up in practice and we just have to move the ball a little better (on offense). But we still have to work the shots that we can hit."

The most obvious effect the zone has had on the Aggies is a drop in point production. A&M's last three losses account for three of the team's four lowest point totals this season.

And the zone hasn't done wonders for Marbury.

Although he is still averaging 22.5 points a game for the season, Marbury's average has dropped over the past three games to 16.7.

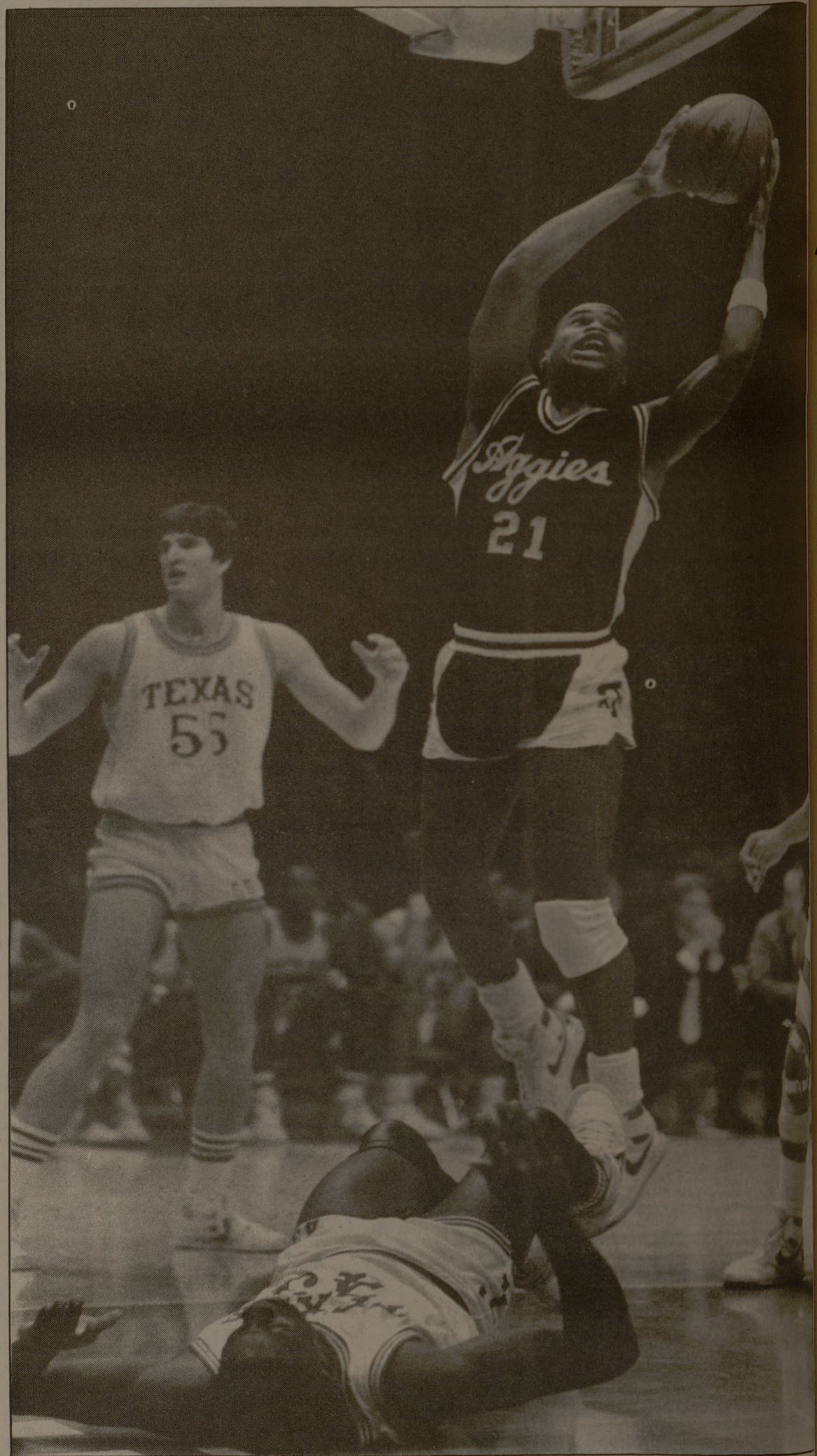
Even though A&M has three SWC games and the postseason tournament to worry about, Metcalf said his main concern lies elsewhere.

"We need to win a ball game," he said. "You have to take care of the business at hand. Every team has a slump sometime in the season, since a basketball season is so long. It's just that our timing was poor."

But despite the three-game skid, Metcalf said not to bury the Aggies yet.

"Mathematically, we're still in the (SWC title) race," Metcalf said. "Realistically, we're probably playing for third place. Of course third is where we were picked at the start of the season."

"It's a very competitive conference. We just need to play well and the winning will take care of itself. And when the dust clears, we'll be there near the top."



A&M's Winston Crite (21) charges into Texas' Dennis Perryman (below) during the Aggies' 58-

47 loss. A&M will try to snap its 3-game losing streak tonight when it hosts Texas Tech at 7:30.

Photo by DEAN SAATHI

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