

Sports

Crite shows high-flying style on court A&M senior forward down-to-earth off court

By Anthony Wilson
Reporter

The body and the dunks. When watching Winston Crite play basketball for the Texas Aggies, those two things stand out.

The on-court Crite is intense and aggressive. He uses quickness, jumping ability, and a thickly-muscled physique, which has gained the attention of professional football and basketball scouts, to outplay often taller opponents.

At least once a game, he combines all these for a crowd-pleasing, gravity-defying rim rattler.

"I have to admit, sometimes I will get into the open court and I won't try to do just a regular dunk," Crite said. "I'll try to kill it. I'll try to break the backboard. That's the way I am. I feel like if you can do those kind of things, you should do them. That's what people pay their money to see."

But the on-court Crite differs greatly from the off-court Crite, who is modest, humble and down-to-earth.

"I do try to keep it in perspective," Crite said of his playing. "I don't want to appear too flashy. I work hard to be where I'm at. And that's what I want to appear to be, just a person who works hard."

Crite said he doesn't have one favorite move.

"I just like doing it all," he said. "I like blocking shots and dunking about the same."

"In my mind I always try to best my man and any way I can is a thrill to me. If I can block his shot, or get a rebound over him, or beat him to the basket, that's what makes me go."

For most players, maintaining intense exertion throughout an entire game would seem to be emotionally and physically exhausting, but not so for Crite. He consistently plays at least 35 minutes of each 40-minute game.

"I really don't think about it (playing time) 'til the game is over," he said. "During the game I'm so busy. I'm so focused on what I'm doing

out there. I don't really think about being tired or hurt. I'm just out there concentrating on my man, on what offense we're in, and what defense we're in.

"Coach (Shelby) Metcalf has conditioned me pretty well because I don't really get that tired. I love playing and I don't think about things like fatigue when I'm on the court."

"The only times I really come out is when I'm in foul trouble and when that happens, that's my own fault. When Coach takes me out, I sit down and watch."

However, having to take a seat on the bench doesn't bother Crite.

"Maybe it would bother me if I was selfish and wanted better stats," he said. "I like to watch the others play. I like to see (Darryl) McDonald go down the court. He's exciting. And Todd (Holloway) and Trez (John Trezvant) are exciting. I love to play and I always want to be in the game, but I try not to be selfish."

But watching the others play when the game is on the line never sits well with Crite. He said he feels a responsibility to the team to be in a close game in the final moments.

"When it depends on us winning or losing, I feel like I should be in the game," he said. "And usually when I'm not, it's when I've fouled out or when Coach has taken me out for some specific reason. Then I understand."

Crite has established himself as one of the Southwest Conference's better players during his four years at Texas A&M. He has been named to the All-Tournament team in the conference's postseason classic the past two years.

Yet Crite still does not get the media attention some people believe he deserves. But this lack of recognition doesn't seem to bother him much.

"I feel that talent makes itself known," the native Californian said. "I just like to say that I had an impact."

"As far as publicity, I know they publicize the players from Texas

more than the players from out of state. But I never got anything easy. It doesn't matter to me."

Although Crite said opposing players and coaches give him respect, he would rather not talk about that. When it comes to a good game of basketball, he'd rather play it than say it.

"I'm kind of modest," Crite said. "I hate to say I'm a force in the conference. I just like to go out and show it. I don't really like to talk about that much."

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— Winston Crite

good game, but they never go out and play one. I just try to play one."

At 6-foot-7 and 227 pounds, Crite, a post player, is often smaller than the opponents he guards. By using his quickness and jumping ability, he can often compensate for his lack of height.

One man he had to help guard stands out as being nearly impossible to stop — Akeem Olajuwon, an All-Star center with the Houston Rockets.

"He was the toughest because he was so quick," Crite said. "He just dominated the game whenever he was in. He made you feel sort of helpless."

Because Crite is a senior, the A&M fans seem to appreciate him more this year than in the past three years, as he often receives rousing ovations at home games.

"Sometimes I notice it," he said. "It feels good, you know. But like I said, I try to keep it in perspective. I've got a job to do and I can't sit

back and think I'm the best, because nothing ever comes that easy for anybody. But it does feel good and I appreciate it. Really for the first time in a long time I feel appreciated. I really like our fans a lot."

Crite knows the fans play a big role in the outcome of games. He said the fans at A&M can account for at least 30 percent of a win by making noise and firing up the team.

As a college athlete, Crite feels a responsibility, especially to children, to serve as a role model.

"You can't help but have that feeling," he said. "They really admire you and watch everything you do. It breaks a kid's heart when they find out their star player is out for the season because of drugs."

"You become a symbol to them and then you let them down. That is something that would hurt me as much as it hurt the kids if it ever happened to me. That's why I wouldn't let it."

Even at 21, Crite still looks up to the same role model he did as a kid.

"I was a Dr. J (Julius Erving) fan," he said. "I'm still a Dr. J fan. I've always thought he had a lot of character and he was such a spectacular basketball player. He made everybody's imaginations run wild. He made you think he could do anything. He's a great person. He's still a role model for me."

Next season, Crite hopes to get a chance to play professional basketball. Although he tries not to think about it, he knows it will be tough and the odds are against him. If he does make it to the professional level, he vows not to waste the opportunity like many players have by using drugs and playing below their potential.

"I don't have any pity for them because guys like me work really, really hard just to have the opportunity to do something like that," he said. "Then you have guys with such great athletic talent and skill who waste it. I just wish I had the opportunity some guys have. Who knows, maybe I will."

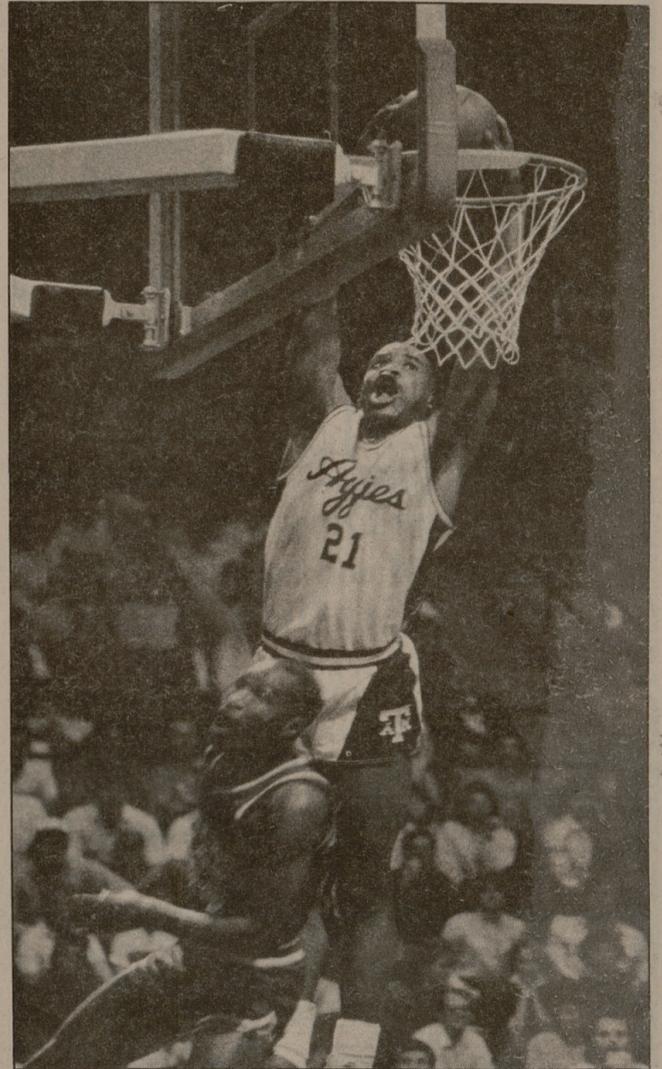


Photo by Bill Hughes

Texas A&M senior forward Winston Crite goes for one of his patented slam dunks over Baylor center Darryl Middleton.

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