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Sports

The A&M Attendance Myth Aggies could use more support from fans

By Tim Stanfield
Sports Writer

Editor's note: this column does not include statistics from the current season.

"Aggie football fans always follow their football team, regardless of its record."

Nothing could be further from the truth. Indeed, the above is one of the biggest myths concerning Texas A&M either in or out of athletics.

While Kyle Field has undergone a tremendous expansion since 1971, at no time at any point has it been filled anywhere near capacity on a regular basis.

Attendance between the years 1971 and 1986 inclusive has averaged a pathetic 51,280, which would have filled our home stadium before the initial expansion took place in 1975.

Inasmuch as it now holds about 76,000, one can readily see that neither A&M students nor its proud alumni have been interested in filling it each game.

What's the big deal, you say? How many other colleges pack them in all the time, regardless of their team's record, or the opponent, or the weather, or anything else?

Well, for one thing, teams like Nebraska, Michigan, Ohio State, Oklahoma, Georgia, and Clemson always play before crowds that exceed their stadiums' listed capacities.

When Texas A&M played Michigan in 1977, a crowd of 104,802 watched in glee as the Wolverines pounded the Ags 41-3.

Yet it was no big deal to them because they had a waiting list of about 30,000 fans who yearned to attend the games but couldn't.

However, the main reason it is a big deal to this long-time A&M fan is that my football team deserves to play before sellout crowds too, and yet the very people who say that they follow the team don't.

The years 1971-1986 coincide with A&M's explosion from a university of about 13,000 students to one of 36,000.

Such a tremendous growth of people who either live in or near the Bryan-College Station area should alone have been enough to handle Kyle Field's expansion, but it didn't.

The corresponding huge increase in Aggie graduates with the resulting increase in the number of families following the Ags could have also handled it.

Even the fact that A&M won two outright Southwest Conference titles plus one tri-championship during these years didn't fill it up, though it did increase the crowds.

As one who attended each and every one of the last 89 games, I can attest to the fact that unless the University of Texas was the opponent, the chances of packing the place were slim and none.

Games against the Longhorns have provided three of the four crowds here that have exceeded 70,000, having the top two crowds of

77,607 and 76,751 in 1985 and 1986 respectively.

The Baylor Bears drew an incredible 74,739 for one of the most exciting games ever played here (which A&M won 31-30 after trailing 17-0).

Texas has had four of the top crowds, followed by Baylor with three, including 69,588 who were drenched by a cold downpour as the Bears humiliated A&M 46-7 in 1981.

The top nonconference draw was Penn State in 1980, as Joe Paterno's squad defeated A&M 25-9 before 66,783 fans at the first game after the final expansion had occurred.

Houston drew 66,569 in 1980 and Texas Tech closed out the year with 65,379 in 1980.

Within the SWC UT has averaged 64,287 — 9,000 more per game than any of the other six SWC schools who were in the SWC before 1976.

Baylor, Tech and Arkansas averaged 55,244, 54,805, and 54,209 respectively, while Houston, which entered the SWC in 1976, has drawn 58,247 in five games here.

Further down the list are SMU at 50,554, Rice 46,596, and TCU at a pitiful 43,598.

Those numbers belie the Ag claim that they always stand up for their team, since one cannot stand up for something when he or she isn't there in the first place.

So Ags, drop the charade that you pack the house for Jackie's boys every time they play — or even better fill it up for both Arkansas and Texas!

Excellent season from McDonald crucial to A&M basketball success

By Anthony Wilson
Sports Writer

Darryl McDonald, Texas A&M's star guard on this year's basketball team, is 6-foot-4, 175 pounds and has an Olive Oil build. His legs are so skinny that A&M Head Coach Shelby Metcalf once quipped, "Darryl is proof that we don't use steroids."

But ironically, if the Aggies are to have any chance of having a respectable season, it will have to be McDonald who carries the team on his back.

"Of course Darryl's going to have to have a big season," Metcalf said. "But, we've got to figure that's not a variable, but a constant. We're just figuring on him having a big year."

Last season the Aggies finished the season with a 17-14 record. They were 6-10 in the Southwest Conference, finishing eighth in a nine team conference. But they became the first eighth place team ever to win the SWC Classic by beating TCU, Texas Tech and Baylor, earning them an automatic bid to the NCAA Tournament. They lost to Duke 58-51 in the first round.

However, gone from last year's team are four starters, Winston

Crite, Todd Holloway, Mike Clifford and John Trezvant, who became academically ineligible after he "had a problem getting to class" when the coaches left town to recruit, Metcalf said.

McDonald, the lone returning starter, is predicting another winning season for A&M despite the personnel losses.

"From how we practice and play, I think we're going to be good," the senior said. "We've got some good players who play hard and work hard. If we play like we practice, go out and work hard, and do what we have to do, I think we're going to win a lot of games."

To bolster the other starting positions, Metcalf, who is beginning his 25th year as A&M's head coach, is looking to two transfers, one redshirt and one returning part-time starter.

Transfers Doug Dennis and Donald Thompson will man two positions in the front court.

Dennis, a 6-foot-8, 235-pound junior, will play center for the Aggies. Thompson, 6-foot-7, 225 pounds will replace Crite at one of the forward positions.

"I'm happy with Donald," Metcalf said. "He's a good player. He's like Winston. Winston

worked hard every day and Donald works hard every day. Donald's jumping is improving. He jumps well, but he doesn't jump with the power Winston did. But he's a little better shooter and passer than Winston."

Redshirt sophomore James McGhee, 6-foot-1, is slated to start at the other guard position alongside his former juco backcourt partner McDonald. McGhee and McDonald played together for one year at Westchester Community College in New York. The pair visited A&M together two years ago and decided to sign with the Aggies. McGhee was redshirted last season after injuring an ankle.

"McGhee plays bigger than he is," Metcalf said. "He and McDonald have good chemistry. They play well together. McGhee's our most improved player this year."

Senior Paul Crawford, who started four games last season, will start at the other forward position. The 6-foot-5 Crawford averaged 4.4 points and 2.2 rebounds per game last season.

Although A&M lacks a legitimate big man in the middle, Metcalf

See Aggies, page 10

'D-Mack' steps into familiar role of leader as season approaches

By Anthony Wilson
Sports Writer

For one night, Texas A&M guard Darryl McDonald joined an elite group of basketball players who can capture the country's imagination with a move. Not just any move mind you, but a spectacular move. An astonishing move. A Cable News Network Play of the Day move.

On Jan. 19, in a home game against the University of Houston, McDonald made a move that won't soon be forgotten. McDonald drove to the left side of the basket, only to find Cougar center Greg Anderson blocking his path. McDonald elevated just as Anderson did, faked a shot, brought the ball down and around Anderson's body and scooped the ball into the basket.

"Cadillac (Anderson) — he's that type of player who likes to jump and block shots," McDonald said. "I said, 'Well, once I get him in the air going that way, I'll just bring it down and put it right back behind him.' It's not like it was planned. I just did it."

Later that night, CNN featured McDonald's move as its Play of the Day.

"I thought it was great," McDonald said laughing. "I watch CNN every night. I just happened to be watching it and the man on TV said, 'Let's go down to College Station.' When he said that I said, 'What are you talking about?'"

"Then he showed me and I just started breakin'. I was happy. I ain't ever been that happy. And it came on at one o'clock (a.m.) again and I caught it. Then it came on at four and I watched it again. That made me feel real good."

McDonald, a senior point guard, transferred last season from Westchester Community College in New York. His path from the playgrounds of Harlem to Texas A&M has been an unusual one.

McDonald dropped out of high school in the ninth grade and never played high school ball. He earned his GED four years later. At that time he was playing basketball on playgrounds and in summer tournaments with collegiate players when someone took notice of his considerable talents.

"I was handling myself and somebody saw that and asked me if I wanted to go to school and I said 'No,'" McDonald said. "Then he asked me if I wanted to go back to school. I said, 'Yeah, why not?'"

McDonald earned junior college All-America honors his second year after averaging 18 points and seven rebounds per game. His team went 61-9 during his stay at Westchester.

When it came time to sign with a major college, McDonald was eager to leave New York City.

"They (A&M coaches) brought me and (teammate) James McGhee down for a visit," he said.

"They showed me a good time and I liked it here. And I wanted to get out of New York. There's a lot of stuff like drugs and murders happening and I don't particularly like to be around that stuff. I can deal with this. I like it here."

"I like the city. I've been there all my life and grew up there. But, when I was in junior college, I said to myself, 'If I get a chance to go away, I'm leavin'.'"

Last season, McDonald averaged 8.8 points and 3.4 assists per game. He set the SWC season record for steals with 44 and school records for steals in a season, with 83, and in a game, with nine. He was named to the All-Tournament team in the SWC Classic after averaging 19.3 points per game and, with Winston Crite, led the Aggies to the championship.

Along the way, McDonald earned the reputation of being the conference's most exciting player.

"He's the flashiest player we've had since I've been here," A&M Head Coach Shelby Metcalf said. "He sees the floor better than any player who's been in the Southwest Conference since 1958. He's really something special."

"When he first came down here, he wasn't under control. You don't want him totally under control because you don't want to kill that and take his individual life."

See McDonald, page 10

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