

Metcalfe enters 25th season as A&M's basketball coach

By Tom Mulos
Reporter

Texas A&M Head Basketball Coach Shelby Metcalfe sounds like a government advertisement for the armed forces when talking about his job.

"With me, coaching at Texas A&M is not just a job, it's a way of life," Metcalfe said.

A way of life adds up to 30 years at Texas A&M and 25 years as head coach of the Aggie hoopsters.

This basketball season is being coined as the "Silver Anniversary of the Silver Fox" because it is Metcalfe's 25th season as head basketball coach. Will 25 years be enough for the silver-haired, witty and laid-back coach who has been termed the "Dean of Southwest Conference coaches"?

"As long as the thrill of coaching is there, my health is there, and I can give the Aggies the kind of basketball they want, I'll keep coaching," Metcalfe said. "I'm not coaching to retire. I'm coaching to keep from retiring."

In fact, just this summer, Metcalfe signed a new four-year contract. Metcalfe was the starting point guard at East Texas State University for three years. He led ETSU to the NAIA National Tournament three years and finally won the championship his senior year in 1955. That same year, Metcalfe graduated with both his bachelor's and master's degrees in philosophy.

He spent one year coaching in Cayuga where he led it to a 33-10 record and a district championship.

From 1956-58 he was an athletic officer in the Air Force in Germany. He coached a team to a 78-17 record and an All-Germany championship twice.

When he came back from Germany, he became the freshman head coach and assistant varsity coach for A&M. He was 41-19 in five years before Bob Rogers left and Metcalfe was promoted to head coach.

His first varsity team, in 1964, went 18-7 overall and 13-1 in SWC play and won the conference championship for the first time in 41 years.

"I had four players that I coached as freshmen the year before and I brought in two junior college guys from Lon Morris," Metcalfe said. "Those two additions added to what we already had, made for a good basketball team."

Since 1964, A&M basketball teams have had winning seasons 21 of Metcalfe's 24 years and never back-to-back losing seasons. They have won the conference title six times and gone to the NCAA playoffs five times. Metcalfe's overall record is 397-267, a 59.8 percentage, which places him 20th on the list of winning active coaches in Division I.

Other accomplishments include the SWC record for years at one school and a conference record of 221-139, the most wins by an SWC coach.

With just three wins this season, Metcalfe will surpass the 400-win mark, a milestone that he never really thought about.

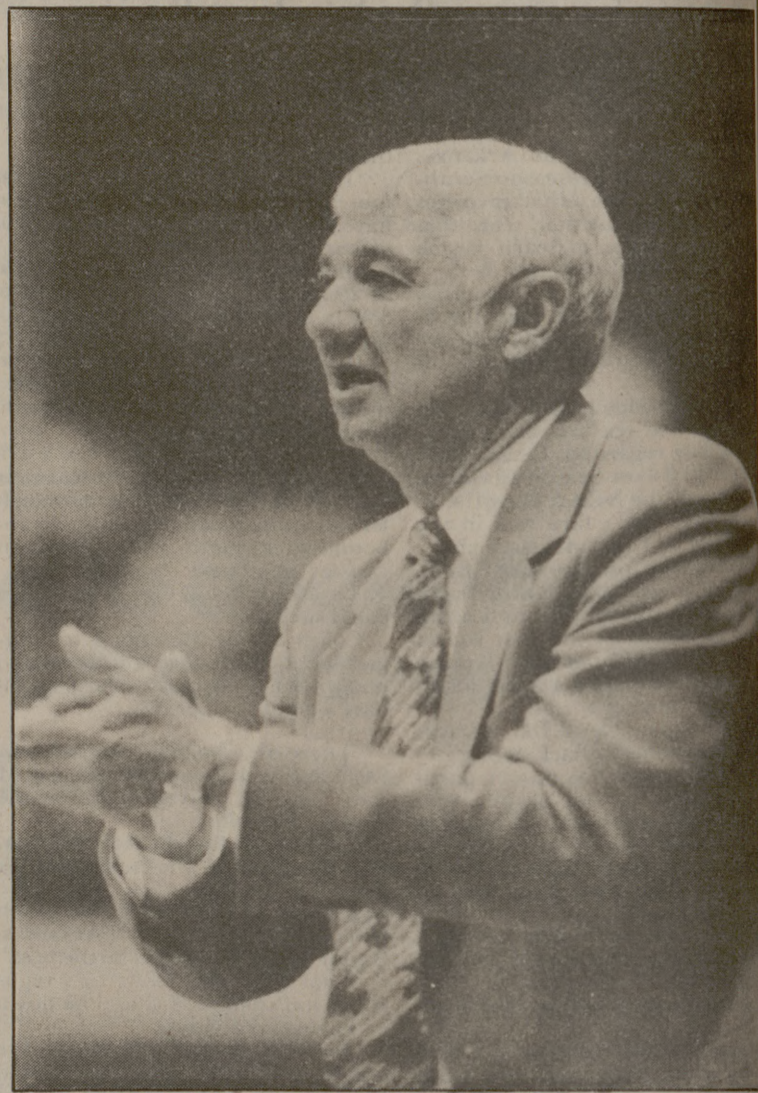
"Up until this year, I never really thought about, or cared about, how many wins I had," Metcalfe said. "It's something that others figure up, but not me."

The satisfaction that Metcalfe gets from coaching is the success that his players have after they graduate along with the lifelong friendships that he gains.

"When a player comes here, I'm gaining a lifetime friendship," Metcalfe said. "I try to keep up with all players and see their success in life."

To some, success after college basketball means playing in the National Basketball Association, but that is not the way Metcalfe sees it. He has coached only one player before this year that ended up in the NBA, and that was Sonny Parker who played for seven seasons. This year, though, Winston Crite was the third round pick of the Phoenix Suns, survived all cuts and will play this season.

Metcalfe's teams have a history of



A&M Basketball Coach Shelby Metcalfe

not having a lot of talent but playing above their heads and defeating opponents with more talent. To him, it's also a sign of the whole University.

"I think it's kind of a trademark of A&M teams and not just the basketball team," Metcalfe said. "This whole University takes pride in overachieving. The school can take a loss, but not a lack of effort and that is what I try to get our teams to do. I just want my teams to go out and give it their best."

Last season, A&M finished 17-14 overall and just 6-10 for an eighth place finish in the conference. But the team overcame adversity and won the conference tournament advancing to the NCAA tournament for the first time since 1980.

"Last season was tough. We had injuries and illnesses all through the season. How many times do you have a player go out with chickenpox? We also had to suspend one player for missing classes," Metcalfe said.

"That team went through a lot of adversity. They never complained or stopped working hard. It was a just reward to win the tournament," Metcalfe said.

In the tournament the Aggies went to Indianapolis to play in the first round of the Midwest regional against Duke, who was a Final Four team the year before. A&M kept the game close in losing 58-51.

"We were a little awed going into the Hoosierdome, especially when Indiana had 20,000 people just to watch them practice. It's tough to shoot in a big arena because of all the open space behind the basket."

"The big factor was the fact that Duke had a lot of tournament experience from the year before," Metcalfe said. "Duke played great pressure defense and really pressured our guards Todd (Holloway) and Darryl (McDonald). They weren't used to that kind of pressure and we didn't have a lot of depth to give them a rest." On the surface this year looks like it will be different. Crite, Holloway, Mike Clifford and John Trezvant all are gone. Metcalfe gained six junior-college transfers, one incoming freshman and four players that were redshirted last year

to join five returning lettermen including one returning starter.

"We had our best practice of the season last week, and I didn't sleep a wink that night because I was so excited," Metcalfe said. "There comes a time before the first game each season when the team really seems to come together and you begin to see little hope. That's what happened last week."

"We will be the smallest team in the league. The conference will be tough this year. It's tough every year, but this year will be better than last. Arkansas has Final Four material, not that they will get there but they have the material. Houston had a real good recruiting season and Texas Tech got a seven-footer along with two players that were lost to Proposition 48 last season."

Will Metcalfe be able to surprise teams like they have in the past? "Different teams have different personalities," Metcalfe said. "No coach has a secret word to get a team to win. All a coach can do is get the team into a position to win, then let the players win."

Metcalfe feels that he has assembled the best group of assistant coaches that he has ever had.

"John Thornton is a great teacher and Larry Cockrum is new, but he has already contacted more players since August than we have in the past three, possibly four years. The next few years, our talent level of basketball program will go up immensely."

To Metcalfe, coaching is the same year after year. He takes coaching as a way of life and in a laid back manner.

"I was born during the depression so nobody could take life too seriously. My attitude goes back to my parents. They enjoyed life and I enjoy life. I'm not envious of anyone. I don't have an ego problem. I feel that it's healthy to be proud of what you have."

"You coach to your own personality. I still get butterflies each time I walk onto the floor for a game. Basketball is very important to me. I love to compete. I feel that I can compete with anyone. I also believe that my best basketball is ahead of me."

Oilers angered at choice of announcers for Sunday's televised game with Browns

HOUSTON (AP) — Houston Oilers officials are miffed that Sunday's NFL game with the Cleveland Browns, with first place at stake in the American Conference Central Division, will feature two Cleveland-based announcers on the NBC telecast.

Jim Donovan of Cleveland NBC affiliate WKYC-TV is slated for the play-by-play with Reggie Rucker, a former Browns wide receiver, doing the analysis.

"We weren't expressing questions about competency of the announcers," Oilers spokesman Chip Namias said Wednesday. "Both of them do a good job or they wouldn't be at the network level."

"The only thing we were talking about is they were Cleveland sportscasters and the game is being seen in large portion of Texas. In no way are we questioning their abilities as announcers."

Namias said it was unlikely NBC would change their announcer team for the game in Houston.

"As far as I know, it's a fact of life," he said. "Once they make the assignment, that's it."

NBC spokesman Kevin Monaghan said Oiler General Manager Ladd Herzog called network football coordinator Ted Nathanson on Wednesday to complain about the announcer assignments but was told NBC would not change.

"I think they would have bigger things to be worried about," Monaghan said of the Oilers. "I've never heard this one before. It's a first."

Both teams are 6-3. The game is being touted in Houston, where the Oilers in recent years have been among the league's worst teams, as the club's most important since 1980, when the Oilers challenged the Pittsburgh Steelers for the division title.

"NBC Sports is disappointed the Oilers have publicly complained about Donovan and Tucker," Mike Weisman, executive producer of NBC Sports, said.

"Our announcers are not biased toward one team versus another. We don't tell the Oilers who to play quarterback. They shouldn't tell who to put as announcers."

Monaghan said the Oiler complaint was the first ever lodged against the network and said other NBC games had similar situations where both announcers are from the cities of one of the teams.

"This weekend, we have the Buffalo-New York Jets game, using Marv Albert, who is from New York and worked for WNBC in New York, and Joe Namath (former Jets quarterback)," Monaghan said. "We haven't heard one thing from Buffalo."

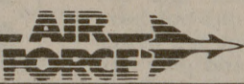
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