

# Sports

## Aggies stun SWC, rock favorites to grab early lead Hogs latest A&M victim

By Anthony Wilson  
Sports Writer

The Texas A&M men's basketball team sent a message that rang loud and true to the rest of the Southwest Conference Saturday afternoon with a 74-67 victory over Arkansas in G. Rollie White Coliseum.

The Aggies, who were picked to finish near or at the bottom of the SWC but now are alone in first place with a 3-0 conference record, refuse to be taken lightly this season.

To prove it they have begun an assault on a conference that has seen its top three teams, SMU, Baylor and Arkansas, fall to them.

These guys' toughness could be compared to one of Sly Stallone's most popular movie characters. Just call these guys the Slambos of the SWC.

"I just hope we can keep it going," A&M Head Coach Shelby Metcalf said. "We've got a good chemistry on this team, and we've played hard. But we've got to bust our tails to compete, and so far we've been able to do that."

Four Aggies scored in double figures, led by junior center Doug Dennis' 22 points on a blistering 7-of-8 shooting from the field and 8-of-8 from the free throw line.

Donald Thompson chipped in 17 points and 10 rebounds, Freddie Ricks got 16 points and 7 assists, and Darryl McDonald added 10 points, including two crucial second-half three-pointers.

A&M looked to be in over their heads early when Arkansas jumped out to a 12-4 lead five minutes into the game. But A&M's defense

toughened, holding the Razorbacks to six points over the next five minutes and forcing Arkansas' 6-foot-11, 250-pound center Andrew Lang to pick up his third foul.

During that same stretch, the 6-foot-8 Dennis scored 10 of A&M's 13 points, including a 12-foot jumper to give the Aggies their first lead, 17-16.

A&M seemed to be in trouble again at the 7:58 mark when McDonald slithered into the lane between defenders and was whistled for his third foul when he went up for the shot.

But the Aggie offense didn't miss a beat with "D-Mack" on the bench. Dennis and Thompson combined for eight of A&M's final 13 points in the first half. A&M trailed 37-33 at halftime.

The Hogs dominated inside and improved their lead to 43-35 with Lang back in the game to start the second half.

Ricks closed the gap to four points a minute later by canning a three-point shot. At 12:13 Arkansas' Ron Huery hit a 21-foot three pointer, putting the Hogs up 52-46. McDonald responded 20 seconds later with his own 22-foot three pointer.

A&M garnered its first second half lead, 55-54, at 8:18 on a pair of Ricks free throws. Arkansas never had another lead, but the two teams were tied three times in the next three minutes.

The Aggies moved ahead for good at 4:59 on a 10-foot baseline jumper by Dennis. McDonald followed with his second three pointer to seal the game.



Photo by Robert W. Rizzo

Texas A&M forward Doug Dennis looks to pass the ball in the Aggies' 74-67 upset of Arkansas Saturday at G. Rollie White Coliseum. Dennis scored 22 points in the game, as Texas A&M completed a sweep of the three Southwest Conference favorites.

## How? Anyone's guess

By Hal L. Hammons  
Assistant Sports Editor

Southern Methodist, Baylor. And now Arkansas. Let's face it, sports fans — Aggie basketball is alive and well and raising . . . well, eyebrows.

For those of you who may have been in Aspen the past few weeks — or those who stop keeping up with college spots at about 11:30 p.m. New Year's Day — let me explain: a budding juggernaut is forming in G. Rollie White Coliseum.

Maybe the Aggie hoopsters think they're at the Cotton Bowl.

Practically everyone who thought they knew what they were talking about figured Texas A&M would sweep its first three games in conference, all right. With three losses.

Can you blame them? Remember the teams under consideration.

SMU was the one that beat Top 10 team Florida and almost beat North Carolina as well. It was the one that trounced A&M in Hawaii the week before conference started.

Baylor was the one that returned practically everyone from the team that almost won the SWC last year.

Arkansas was the one everybody admitted had more talent than anybody else.

And yet the Aggies beat them. They beat them all.

It wouldn't be strange if the team had turned out to be substantially different from the one projected to finish anywhere between fifth and eighth in an admittedly average conference. Let's face it: A&M was not

exactly a lock in the war for the Southwest Conference crown. More like obvious competitors in the battle for the basement.

But is the team that much different from the one people expected to see?

Before the season people saw the Aggies as a team with: no age, no experience, no height, no rebounding, no shooting, no ball-handling (other than Darryl McDonald), no depth, no leadership and, in a nutshell, no chance.

Now, tell me what of that doesn't apply now? And yet the team is the only unbeaten team in the conference.

The best thing you can say about A&M's offense is that it doesn't look

"Whooda thunkit?"

— anonymous Aggie after the A&M-Arkansas game

absolutely terrible very often. Frequently it looks organized, and the stupid turnovers are getting fewer and further between.

Pretty hefty praise, huh?

The shining aspect of the team is definitely its defense. Against Arkansas, ranked second in the conference with a 52 percent field goal rate, the Aggies looked like the NCAA on Razorback football.

The NCAA on SMU football, including a 34.3 percent ratio in the second half. They were 8 for 31 from more than 10 feet outside.

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## Top 10 of '87

The year's headliners in Texas A&M sports

By Hal L. Hammons  
Assistant Sports Editor

Well, 1987 is over, and it was an unprecedented one in terms of Aggies in sports news. In sports ranging from softball to draft-day politics, Texas A&M athletes found their names springing up in newspapers and magazines across the nation.

It was not easy, but I have chosen

my "Top 10 Headline Makers of 1987." Your rankings may vary.

### 10. Scott Livingstone

Livingstone led the Aggie baseball team to the Southwest Conference tournament championship and within a game of the College World Series in Omaha, Neb. The team was eliminated by eventual champion Oklahoma State.

Livingstone was taken by Oakland in the draft and starred on the U.S. Pan American Games baseball team over the summer, which won the silver medal.

"Stone," after stating he would not return for his senior year at A&M, announced later he would play for the Aggies in 1988 after all.

### 9. John Roper

Even A&M Defensive Coordinator R.C. Slocum was surprised at the progress the junior linebacker made this year. Roper earned the full-time job after sharing it with Steve Bullett in 1986 and proceeded to terrorize opponents' backfields all year.

ESPN viewers across the country will not soon forget the picture of Roper driving Louisiana State quar-

terback Tom Hodson to the ground in the second quarter of the Aggies' season opener. Hodson wobbled off the field groggily, and Roper popped off the ground with blood gushing from his face. Roper received four stitches in his nose and played the entire second half.

Roper was the consensus choice for SWC Defensive Player of the Year and made many first-team All-America lists.

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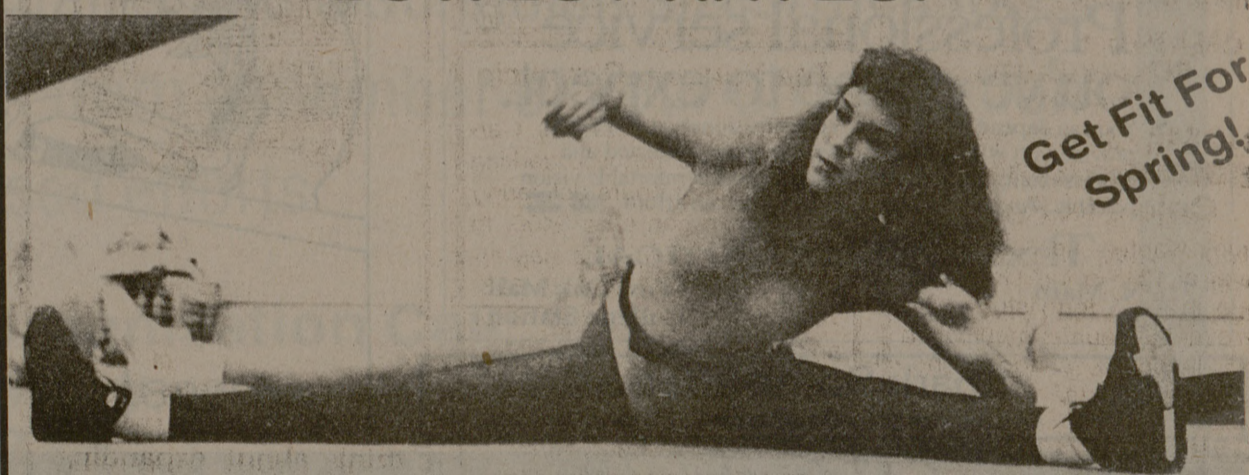
### Analysis

## Spring All-University Night

- \* Introduction of Athletes
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