

# Sports

## Ricks' fortunes parallel success of teammates

By Anthony Wilson  
Sports Writer

The Texas A&M basketball team has made a meteoric rise up the Southwest Conference charts, sporting a 3-0 record entering tonight's 30 contest against Rice at G. Rollie White Coliseum.

Paralleling the Aggies' good fortunes has been the success of red-shirt freshman guard Freddie Ricks.

Ricks played sparingly in the first two games, but has been a major contributor to the team since then. He is averaging 25 minutes and 8.4 points per game this season and is second on the team in steals, with 23 and assists, with 38.

In conference play, he is averaging 25 minutes, 7.3 points and 3.0 assists per game. He played his best game of the season Saturday against Arkansas when he garnered 16 points, seven assists and three steals.

Ricks said most people didn't expect him to be playing as well as he is early in his career.

"Freshmen are supposed to be a little scared and not adjust to the system as quickly," he said. "But by getting to play in the summer leagues in Houston with other college players, I adjusted to the system real well. I just proved to Coach (Shelby Metcalf) I could play with the big guys."

Ricks has especially improved the team's three point shooting. Ricks has connected on 10 of 25 three pointers this season, for a 40 percent shooting average that leads the team.

Ricks said he works on the three pointer more than anything else in practice and that daring A&M to shoot them is now a big risk.

"Earlier it was a smart thing to do

because we were working so hard on trying to work the ball inside and weren't keying on shooting from the outside," Ricks said.

"But now it's a great big mistake. We've had shooters all along. If you lay back on us now, we're going to shoot it. I know I am."

Confidence in his outside shot is one thing Ricks' game definitely does not lack.

"I feel like I'm a very good shooter," Ricks said. "I don't shoot as much as I should because I've accepted the role of a passer right now. I would love to shoot, but I'm a better passer than I am shooter. A lot of people don't realize that."

Ricks said one of the keys to his improvement this season is the presence of backcourt mate Darryl McDonald.

"D-Mack (McDonald's nickname) has passes and moves that are unreal," he said. "He has one pass where he goes behind his back, catches it with the same hand and then throws it to the person behind him. Oh, man! When I first saw that move I said, 'Hey, this guy's got to be something special.'"

"I'm trying to steal some of his moves for when he leaves. A lot of things he's doing, I'm practicing them myself. He's a great teacher. He brings out the best in me."

The 6-foot-2, 175-pound Ricks was an All-State and a USA honorable mention All-America selection his senior year at Humble High School.

He was recruited by several schools, but decided to come to

A&M, which was not too close and not too far from home. He said he also declined offers to go eastern schools with great basketball pasts because "I came to A&M because of what I want to do in the future."

"I want to live in Texas and I understand that if you graduate from A&M, you can get a good job in Texas," Ricks said. "My mother wanted me to come here also. I was going on basically what she wanted."

"I'm dedicated to my mom and family. That's why I'm really going to school — because of my mother. I want her to be happy. I really enjoy school here."

A lot of that enjoyment comes from the surprising success the team has recently experienced.

Before conference play began, captains McDonald and Paul Crawford called a team meeting to work out some team problems.

"We're all jelling at the same time," Ricks said. "We're shocking everybody. We're a much better team than people gave us credit for."

However, that lack of credit doesn't bother Ricks. He even realizes that because he's a freshman, he'll be doubly overlooked.

"I love a challenge," he said. "I like being an underdog. I want them to feel that since I'm a freshman, they can do anything they want, so I can go out there and prove to them that it doesn't matter how old you are. It matters what kind of heart you have."

"I love basketball. If I wasn't playing here, I'd play in some little church league."



Photo by Jay Janner

A&M guard Donna Roper brings the ball up court as Rice's Leslie Tassin hurries back on de-

fense. The Lady Aggies won the game 71-59 for their third straight victory in conference.

## Lady Ags cruise past Owls for third straight SWC win

By Cray Pixley  
Sports Writer

The Texas A&M Lady women's basketball team coasted to a 71-59 victory over the Rice Owls Tuesday night at G. Rollie White Coliseum.

The Lady Aggies dominated the Owls throughout the game and did not trail in a win that boosted the team's record to 9-4 overall and 3-1 in the Southwest Conference.

The Owls, known for their success with the three-point field goal, struggled to put away two-point shots. Only one three-point shot was made by the Owls.

"We did an excellent job of cutting out their game plan because they rely on the three-point shot and spreading a team out to get on the

inside. We were trying to cut out their rhythm and get them off track," A&M Coach Lynn Hickey said.

"We stayed behind them and they made mistakes. They were unable to work together and pass the ball. We took their center Edith Adams out of the game, and I had expected her to be more of a threat," Hickey said.

The Lady Aggies finished the first half with a 13-point lead that grew to 21 points with 6:09 left in the second half.

The Owls closed the gap to nine points toward the game's end but it was too late and the Lady Aggies easily closed the game.

"It would have been nice to finish the game with the 20-point lead but we were trying to use several people

toward the end, and we may have lost some concentration," Hickey said.

Four Lady Aggies scored in double figures with junior guard Donna Roper leading the game by contributing 21 points, and junior center Lisa Jordan added 14 points. Senior forward Evelyn Sanders and sophomore guard Lisa Herner chipped in 12 and 10 points respectively.

"This was an important game for us to win, and it will cushion us for the coming week of two road games back-to-back," Hickey said. "Within the next six days we will face the three toughest teams in the conference: the University of Houston, Texas Tech University and the University of Texas."

## Pugh denies rumors he's leaving

Texas A&M wide receivers coach George Pugh says he is not leaving A&M as rumor would have it.

Pugh gave the statement to A&M Sports Information Director John Keith Tuesday over the phone from Atlanta International Airport. Keith said Pugh had not released a statement earlier to avoid giving credence to the rumors.

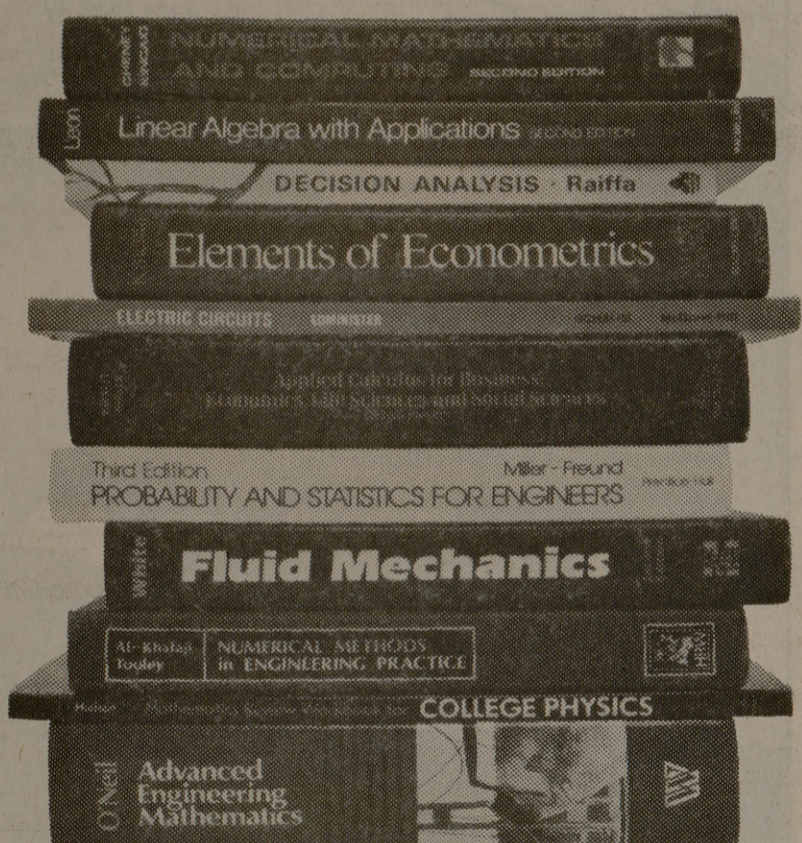
Pugh's statement reads, "When rumors kept circulating that I planned to leave A&M to go someplace else, it was time to set the record straight."

"I'm happy where I am. I've had other coaching offers through the years, but after I thought about them they don't compare with the kind of job, the staff and facilities we have at A&M."

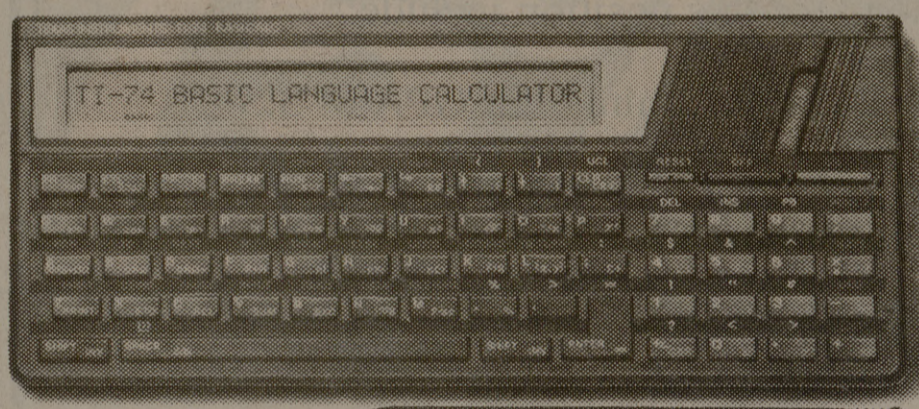
"Coach (Jackie) Sherrill has been great to work for. He runs a first-class program, and I'm happy to be here."

Pugh was rumored to be under consideration for jobs at the University of South Carolina and the University of Florida, where former A&M offensive coordinator Lynn Amedee recently announced he was going.

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