

Sports

Aggies continue to roll in SWC McDonald, Ricks lead team to win over Rice

By Anthony Wilson
Sports Writer

A rendition of the Wabash Cannonball by the Aggie Band before A&M's game with Rice Wednesday night at G. Rollie White Coliseum was perfect foreshadowing of things to come.

The Aggie Cannonball continued to roll with a 75-70 win over the Owls, raising A&M's conference record to 4-0. However, the win was not an easy one.

A&M shot 33.3 percent from the field in the first half, while Rice hit 47.6 percent of its shots. Rice center

Andy Gilchrist was a perfect 6 of 6 from the field and scored 17 first-half points, equalling his career high.

Gilchrist finished with 29 points to lead all scorers. It was the second game in a row an Aggie opponent tied his career high in the first half and went on to break it in the second. Mario Credit of Arkansas did it Saturday.

But the Aggies improved their shooting to a 65.6 percent clip in the second half with guards Freddie Ricks and Darryl McDonald leading the way. Ricks scored 17 second-half points, including three three-pointers, and Darryl McDonald added 11 points after being held scoreless in the first half.

"Rice is a much better team than we gave them credit for," Ricks said. "I think in the end we wanted it more than they did. That's why we won it."

The two teams played evenly the first half with A&M's biggest lead being four points, which it achieved twice in the half. The score was tied seven times with Rice pulling ahead by six at halftime, 31-25, when A&M failed to score in the final 3:36 of the half.

The Aggies missed 11 shots within 10 feet—seven in the paint—in the first half and had five shots rejected by the only team in the Southwest Conference smaller than A&M.

However, the second half was a different story. Ricks and McDonald put on an offensive display, dishing out assists and hitting an assortment of long-range jumpers.

Ricks hit a three pointer from the right side, assisted Paul Crawford for two layups on consecutive trips down the floor, and hit another three pointer from the right side to even the score at 35 at 17:28.

The Owls regained a three-point lead and held it until 11:13 when McDonald made a spectacular play that turned the momentum in A&M's favor.

McDonald scooped up a loose ball on a missed free throw by David Willie and with his back to the basket heaved a blind, overhead, down-court pass to Ricks who converted the layup.

"I think that was a turning point," McDonald said. "I knew Freddie was breaking, so I just grabbed it and

threw it back. I think that really got us going."

McDonald then made a backcourt steal and threw down a monster dunk to give A&M a 53-52 lead.

Rice never led again and was behind by 10 at 3:36 when McDonald and Ricks canned consecutive three pointers.

Rice came storming back and had an opportunity to tie the game with a three-point shot with five seconds left. But Ricks knocked the ball loose to McDonald who passed it back to Ricks for an easy layup and the final points.

"In the Southwest Conference, every game is a neighborhood brawl," A&M Head Coach Shelby Metcalf said. "They're all big for us. It's good to learn a lesson and pick up a W instead of an L."

"The lesson was we've got to bust our tails. The first half we played at three-quarter speed. The second half we played the way we did in the first three games."

Ricks finished the game with 20 points, eight assists and three steals.

"I felt much better than I have the whole year tonight," Ricks said about his shooting. "I felt like someone had to get the team going, and I just took it upon myself and did it."

Metcalf said, "Freddie, before it's all over, is going to be a good basketball player."

Donald Thompson contributed 14 points and nine rebounds, McDonald and Keron Graves each finished with 11 points. McDonald also added 10 assists and five steals.

Rice Head Coach Scott Thompson said a crucial five minutes in the second half turned the tide in A&M's favor, creating an Aggie lead that would never be relinquished.

"That five-minute stretch was the difference," Thompson said. "They scored on us about eight straight times. Other than that I thought it was one of our best outings."

"That's the difference between where we are and the top of the conference. It comes down to those stretches."

A&M raised its record to 12-6 on the year and 4-0 in conference. Rice fell to 5-10 and 2-3.

A&M's next game will be Sunday at 1 p.m. against the University of Houston, 2-2 in conference play, at Hofheinz Pavilion in Houston.

Rockets not yet ready to conquer the world

By Loyd Brumfield
Sports Editor

Supposedly, the entire National Basketball Association has lived in fear of them since some time in 1985.

Even Pat Riley, coach of perhaps the ultimate NBA team, the Los Angeles Lakers, has spent a few nights worrying about them.

Viewpoint

Yep, soon teams would be begging to face the soon-to-be-senile Boston Celtics in the humid, rat-infested Boston Garden. Just as long as they didn't have to face them.

The Houston Rockets were going to make patsies out of the Lakers, the Celtics, the Hawks, the Pistons, the Mavericks and any other team that would dare challenge them.

Drug problems, injuries and squawking between players and coaches held the Rockets down last year, and they died an ignoble death in the second round of the playoffs at the hands of the Seattle Supersonics.

So then everyone said it was this year the Rockets were to catch fire. Ralph Sampson was supposed to be in the best shape in his life, and the Rockets had acquired a few new faces in the guises of Golden State veterans Purvis Short and World B. Free.

But the squabbling between Sampson and Coach Bill Fitch continued, and once again the Rockets found themselves mired in mediocrity. Teams like New Jersey and the Los Angeles Clippers, not to be confused with real basketball teams, were beating them and making it look easy.

The Rockets tried to convince Golden State to take Sampson, who let boys smaller than him push him around night after night, and Steve Harris, a third-year guard who always excelled in the exhibition season but was lame once the wins and losses started counting.

As you know by now, the poor Warriors bought it and stupidly sent Eric "Sleepy" Floyd and Joe

Barry Carroll to Houston, strengthening the Texas team immeasurably.

Oh, no, Riley and the rest of the league must have said, are we ever in trouble now!

But things started slowly for the new Rockets. They were blown away on the road against Denver, and then lost to the measly Clippers in the last seconds of that game.

A home loss to Denver was next, but then, just when the NBA was about to forgive itself for ever thinking such ominous thoughts about the Rockets, Houston won a game.

They didn't just win, they destroyed Atlanta, the team most people were picking to dethrone Houston as "the team of the future." The Rockets' backcourt, previously non-existent, scored more than 65 points in the win.

The big test would come a week later on the road against always-tough Detroit and Milwaukee.

Surprise, surprise, the Rockets beat both of them by 10 and nine points, respectively. A tough road loss to Dallas followed, but then Houston returned home and toyed with the Mavericks before letting them get close at the end.

The Rockets were back, all right. Akeem Olajuwon was averaging 19 points a game and the duo of Allen Leavell and Floyd were third in the NBA in combined assists.

But then those old foagies, the Lakers, came along to bring the Rockets back down to Earth with a 121-110 demolition on the strength of an incredible first quarter in which the Lakers made 18 straight shots.

It's okay, Olajuwon said, this loss will make us hungrier. Wee unto the lowly Kings, the Rockets next opponent.

Surprise, surprise, the Rockets weren't hungry enough. Sacramento beat them. The Kings are just one of the worst teams in the league, along with the Clippers and New Jersey, who have also beaten Houston.

In short, the NBA will have to wait for the Rockets to emerge as its conqueror.

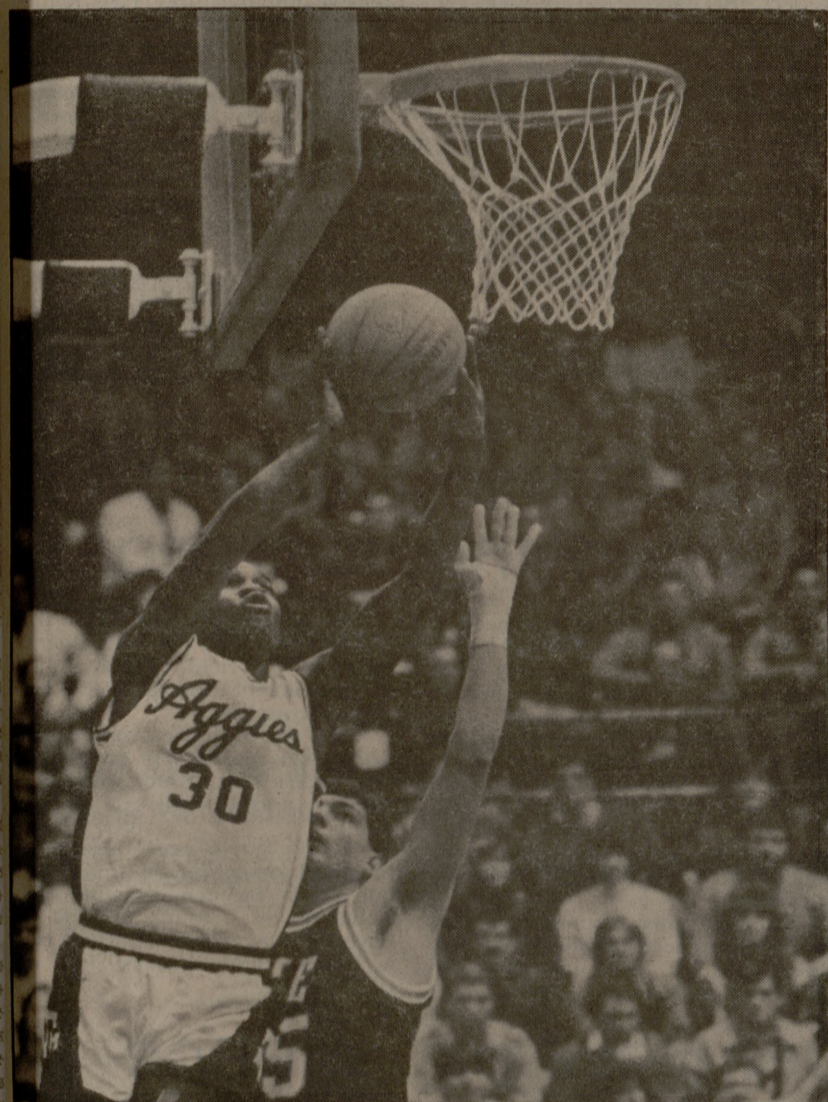
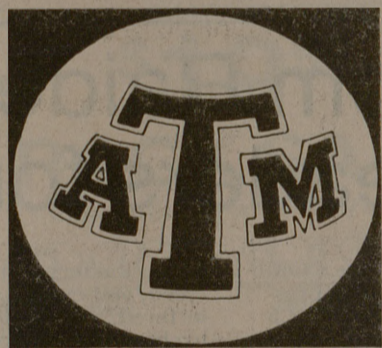


Photo by Mike C. Mulvey

Aggie center Donald Thompson goes up for a layup against Rice as Owl forward Richard Holmes defends. The Aggies won 75-70.

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