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Ags stink up Jollie Rollie

Let's not mince words here, people: the Aggies stank Sunday.

Practically any other team in the Southwest Conference would have driven the Aggies into the hardwood floor. Texas, with a poor outing, managed to keep the game close.

But oh, how the Aggies tried. To help out the Horns, that is.

Peruse this: Freddie Ricks inbound the ball to Darryl McDonald after a Longhorn basket. But McDonald — the senior team captain — turns away from Ricks at the last minute. Ricks is caught off balance and steps over the baseline.

There's literally not a Longhorn within 50 feet, and the Aggies turn the ball over.

When A&M finally reclaims the lead in the second half, Travis Mays — a Texas guard who is 6-2 on a tall day — steals a free-throw rebound from one of several Aggies, puts up a shot and gets fouled.

He hits the shot and the free throw. Texas is back on top.

That was with 1:15 remaining. The Aggies scored two points the rest of the way.

But then, long droughts were the rule and not the exception for the Fightin' Texas Aggies Sunday. How about going from 12:28 in the first half to 17:13 in the second (almost 15 minutes) and getting one field goal?

How about three minutes and 29 seconds without scoring at all?

How about shooting five of 18 from the field in the first half, with Chris Cokinos leading the team with five points?

And those impressive statistics were not easy to compile — the Aggies had to work hard to miss five shots under the basket. For cryin' out loud, at least they shot 33.3 percent from three-point land! They were 3 of 15 — 20 percent in two-point attempts.

OK, they improved a little in the second half. Their stellar 12-of-27 performance in the second stanza raised their overall average to 37.7 percent. Much better.

A&M Coach Shelby Metcalf tried to shed some light on the game afterwards by saying some players had done well, like McDonald.

When he said that I looked at a local radio announcer, and we gave each other that look. You know — the one that silently asks, "What in the world is he talking about?"

This "good performance" by the team leader consisted of 4-of-14 shooting (1-of-4 from three-point land), 50 percent free-throw shooting, 12 total points and seven turnovers.

In the final six minutes he made one free throw out of four attempts — including two with 14 seconds left that killed any A&M hopes — and missed all three of his field-goal attempts. Oh yes, he also committed an offensive foul with 1:19 left on a possession that could have given A&M the lead.

This is supposed to be the best player in the conference. He is, when he decides to play well.

It wouldn't be so horrible if Texas had played decently. But the Horns weren't satisfied with beating A&M in shooting (UT shot 52.6 percent), free throw percentages (63.2 to 60), rebounding (32-26) and assists (14 to 12). They even beat them 22-17 in turnovers!

The only way the game could have been worse is if it had gone to overtime. Five more minutes of that would have had everyone screaming about the Eighth Amendment. You know, cruel and unusual punishment.

Thankfully I saw the game, went to the interview room, listened to Shelby Metcalf and the one player who showed up — Paul Crawford — and was home throwing up in well under three hours.

And the Athletic Department complains that no one watches basketball at Texas A&M.

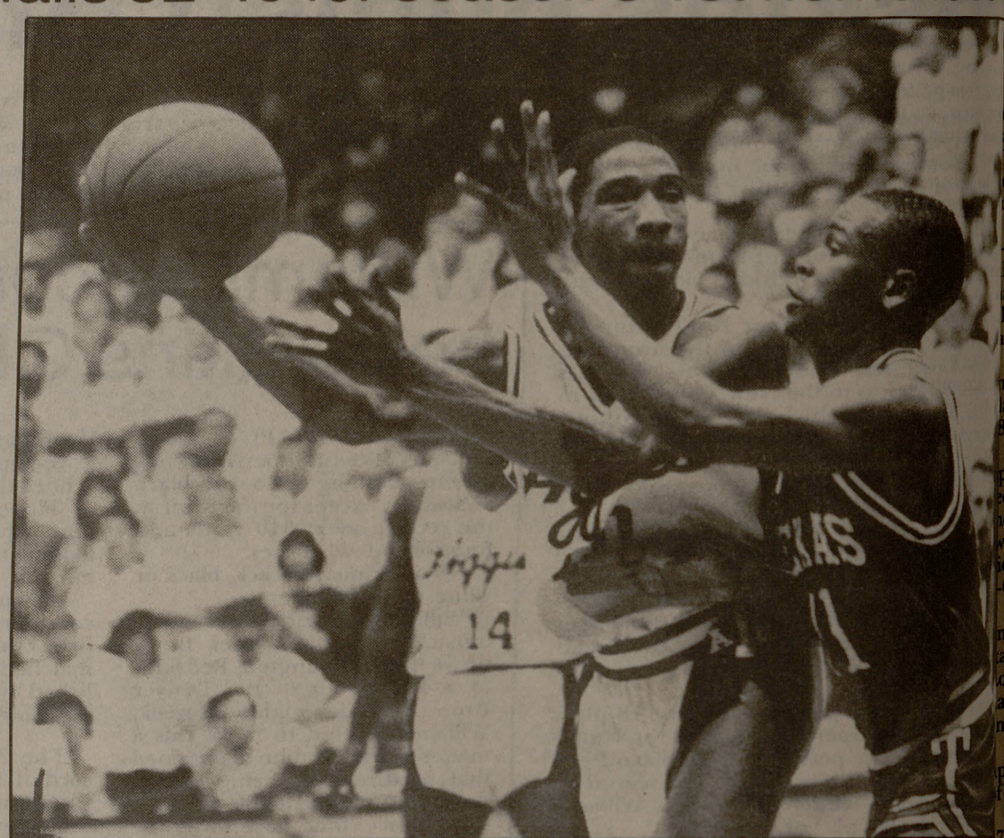
Well, there's something to be said for school spirit and all that, but let's not get too idealistic. Fans like to see a good showing by the home team if they pay to see it.

Sunday I got in free, and I wanted my money back.



Hal L. Hammons
Assistant Sports Editor

Ags drop 3rd in a row
A&M comes up short against Horns, falls 52-49 for season's 1st home loss



A&M guard Darryl McDonald attempts to pass the ball as Texas' Courtney Jeans defends. McDonald had 12 points in the game as A&M fell to UT 52-49.

By Anthony Wilson
Sports Writer

A three-point play with 1:15 in the game by University of Texas guard Travis Mays on a follow of a missed free throw was the turning point in Texas' 52-49 win over Texas A&M Sunday afternoon in G. Rollie White Coliseum.

Mays rebounded the miss by teammate Alvin Heggs and was fouled by A&M's Paul Crawford on the follow. Mays made the shot and the free throw to give UT a 48-47 lead.

A&M had two opportunities to regain the lead in the last minute, but guard Darryl McDonald missed a running one-handed jumper and was called for a charging foul on consecutive trips down the court.

"They made the play down the stretch to win it," Crawford said. "The one guy we didn't block out got the rebound and made the big play. That turned the momentum. We've got to learn to suck it up down the stretch."

A&M Head Coach Shelby Metcalf said, "To fight back like we did and take a two-point lead, then miss a free throw and let a guard take the rebound away from our top rebounder — that was the game."

"I thought both teams played hard, but not particularly well. If we get that rebound, we win the game."

"The disappointing thing is that we had a chance to win and let it get away from us. We've played better. Maybe we played over our heads in the beginning, but we'll have to wait and see."

The loss was A&M's third straight conference setback and its first loss at home this year. A&M started the season with four consecutive wins, including victories over Southwest Conference favorites Southern Methodist, Baylor and Arkansas.

"I don't know what's gone wrong," Crawford said. "We beat the three conference contenders in a row and now we've lost to three who were not expected to be the top contenders."

A&M dropped to 12-9 on the season and 4-3 in conference play. The Longhorns improved their mark to 3-4 in SWC action and 9-10 overall.

Texas should have been easy pickings for the slumping Aggies. The Horns entered the game with an 8-10 record, 2-4 in the SWC. Rumors are spreading in Austin that UT Head Coach Bob Weltlich will be fired at the end of the season.

UT's bench has also been depleted by injury.

Only two of the Horns' four reserve players on scholarship. Walk-on Kevin Bridges played only 11 minutes all season before being benched.

But against A&M, Bridges played 25 minutes and connected on all three of his field goal attempts.

The Aggies played atrociously the first half. A&M made only five of its 18 field goal attempts for 27.7 percent and committed 10 turnovers.

Texas jumped out to an early 5-3 lead. 13:09 Chris Cokinos hit a 20-foot three-point shot, giving A&M a 6-5 advantage. Heggs came, as called for a pushing foul inside on the play and the ball back to the Aggies.

A&M took advantage of the turnover stoppage later when Doug Dennis hit a jump shot.

A&M's biggest lead of the game came at 13:09 when McDonald spun 360 degrees and drove in a short one-hander in the lane giving the Aggies a 10-5 lead.

Texas regained the lead at 8:11 and led 12-10 at the intermission. A&M hit only one field goal in the final 12:28 of the half and didn't score until the final 3:33.

The Horns maintained their lead in the second half until 2:04 when Crawford hit a turnaround jumper to tie the game at 45. Aggies took the lead 47-45 at 1:27 when Doug Thompson hit a short jumper in the lane.

After Mays' three-point play, A&M had sort to fouling quickly, but Texas converted four of its free throws in the last minute. A&M couldn't connect on three three-point shots.

For the game, A&M shot 37.7 percent from the field, on 17-of-45 shooting. From the stripe, the Aggies made only 12-of-20 free throws. Texas hit 20 of its 38 field goal attempts — a 52.6 percentage — and 12 of its 19 free throw attempts.

Thompson led A&M with 13 points and 10 rebounds. McDonald added 12 points, seven assists and three steals.

"It was a tough loss," McDonald said. "I didn't have any flow whatsoever. I don't know what the problem is. The little things that come back to haunt you. Blocking out on free throws and hitting our free throws was the difference."

A&M's next game will be Wednesday night 7:30 against Texas Christian in G. Rollie White Coliseum.

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Razorbacks taking command in SWC race

From the Associated Press

The Arkansas Razorbacks are living up to their preseason billing.

They were the favorites to capture the Southwest Conference basketball title because of a deep, talented squad.

With only a loss to Texas A&M at College Station, the Razorbacks have dominated the first half of the SWC season, which they conclude Wednesday night at home against Texas Tech.

The Razorbacks ripped the Houston Cougars 71-62 Saturday night before a throng of 9,264 fans in Barnhill Arena.

It impressed Houston Coach Pat Foster enough to say the Hogs were the best team in the league.

"They are stronger and better than the other teams," Foster said. "They wore us down. Mario Credit is tremendous, and they have the best depth of anybody."

Arkansas bench outscored Houston's reserves 38-3.

Arkansas improved its overall record to 14-4, while Houston dropped to 3-4 in the SWC and 8-8 overall.

The Baylor Bears, second in the SWC standings last year, have rallied from a 1-3 start, winning three straight league games including an 81-63 thumping of Texas Tech in Lubbock on Saturday night.

In the other SWC games Saturday, Southern Methodist stayed in second place with a hard-earned 51-48 victory over Texas Christian. La-

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