

Thursday, January 26, 1989

## Optimistic Metcalf hopeful about future

By Doug Walker

SPORTS EDITOR

In 26 years as a college basketball coach, Shelby Metcalf has seen a lot of changes in the college game.

Following a loss to Texas Christian earlier this month Metcalf changed his offense in response to one of those changes.

PART TWO OF TWO

Few changes in college basketball had as big an effect as the decisions to institute a three-point shot and a 45-second clock for the 1985-86 season.

These changes made it harder for less talented teams to compete with the perennial powerhouses. Where it was once possible to stay close to superior competition by slowing down the tempo and working the ball around for a high-percentage shot, the talent gap between the haves and have-nots in college bas-

ketball grew.

Teams in the middle fought for big guards who could nail the three-point shot and forwards and centers who could not only rebound, but handle the ball in the open court.

Metcalf, who had been successful from the late 1970s to the early 80s with a succession of talented big men, saw no need to change his formula for success.

A&M had its two winningest seasons ever in 1978-79 (24-9) and 1979-80 (26-8) with a trio of big men who earned national recognition by forming what was known as "The Wall."

Six-foot-nine forward Vernon Smith joined forward Rynn Wright (6'7") and center Rudy Woods (6'11") to form probably the most formidable inside game ever in Southwest Conference basketball.

Claude Riley, Jimmie Gilbert and Winston Crite followed as the Aggies maintained the tradition of a strong

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## Aggies nipped by Cougars, 71-67

By Tom Kehoe

SPORTS WRITER

Led by sophomore Craig Upchurch's career-high 34 points, the University of Houston Cougars pulled out a tough 71-67 win over the Texas A&M Aggies.

A&M coach Shelby Metcalf had high praise for the Houston forward.

"He may be the best player on this floor since Olajuwon," Metcalf said referring to the former Cougar All-American.

The score was tied seven times in the second half as the two teams battled back and forth until with 5:05 remaining Upchurch raced down the lane with a layup to give the Cougars a lead they wouldn't surrender.

The Houston lead was stretched to five when Aggie guards David Williams and Tony Milton scored back to back, bringing A&M within two, 67-65.

After timeouts by both teams, Houston guard Horace Chaney hit two free throws to extend the Cou-

gar's lead by two.

A&M countered with two of their own with 1:05 remaining on a layup by senior forward Donald Thompson.

The Aggies pressed and forced Houston to turn the ball over. A&M promptly turned the ball back over and Houston went to a spread offense.

The Cougars were able to avoid A&M's attempts to foul until a Thompson foul sent Upchurch to the line with 19 seconds remaining. Upchurch canned the pair and two more with one second left to ice the win for Houston.

It was Houston's fourth straight win over A&M.

A&M shot 37.8 per cent from the field for the game. This was compounded by leading scorer Thompson hitting only four of 14 in the first half. The Cougars hit 50 per cent of their shots led by Upchurch's 13 of 19 from the field.

Despite their low shooting percentage, Metcalf was pleased with his team's performance.

"It was probably our best game,"

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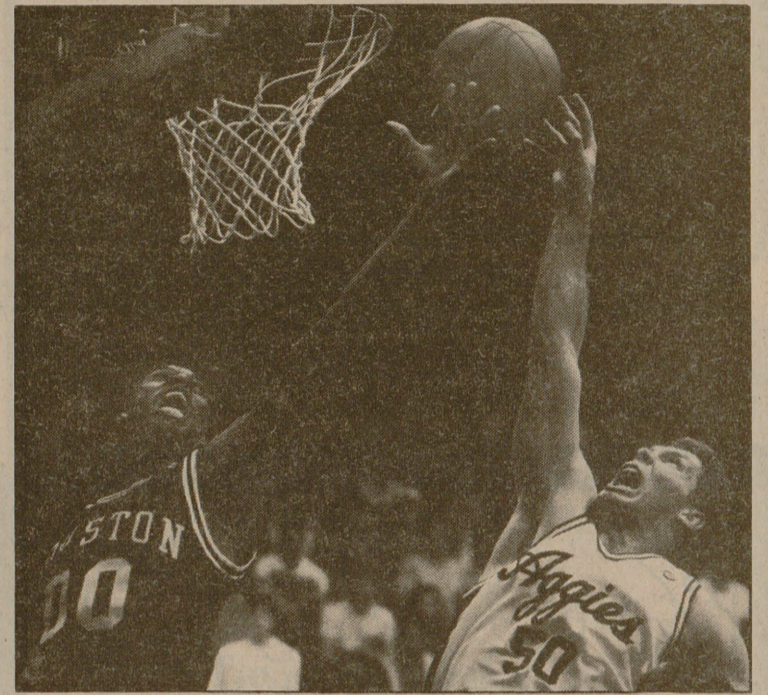


Photo by Jay Janner

A&M's Doug Dennis (50) battles Houston's Richard Hollis (00) for a rebound during the Aggies' 71-67 loss.

## Enough is enough! TV announcers' talk detracts from games

I recently watched an excellent basketball game between North Carolina and former No.1-ranked Duke, a game that was well played, well coached — but terribly announced.

What was the big reason for the poor announcing job? Dick Vitale.

Vitale, a former head coach at the University of Detroit, started with just ESPN, now he's not only on the sports network but has invaded sports programming at ABC.

I'll save the bashing of Vitale for later and go on to my subject: the effectiveness of color commentary in basketball, both college and professional.

The early days of sports broadcasting for all events were obviously limited by the absence of widespread use of television, not that this was all bad. Radio gave the listener the opportunity to imagine for themselves what Mickey Mantle's homer or Bob Cousy's last second shot looked like.



Steven Merritt  
Assistant Sports Editor

Broadcasting pioneers such as Jack Buck, Harry Caray and Vin Scully were basically one-man shows, they didn't need a sidekick to fill in the dead spaces of the broadcast with anecdotes. They did it themselves. It was radio, the listeners weren't going to be easily bored.

Then along came television, and suddenly the play-by-play announcer wasn't relied on as much. Fans could see the

obvious foul or the receiver's foot that was just out of bounds. It would seem redundant to place emphasis on something fans could judge for themselves.

Thus, the color commentator was born.

The color commentator mold then, as well as today, had to fit the same form — an ex-jock or former coach who was able to intelligently analyze a game. It seemed simple enough, but as we all know, many who have taken the job have failed miserably.

Now, back to basketball. I enjoy watching both college and professional basketball. But if I had to choose one, it would definitely be college.

That tolerance has recently been tested by Vitale's sports jargon. When he first joined ESPN, his off-the-wall style was a refreshing change from the predictable player profiles and coach's comments on opposing players.

But enough is enough.

Vitale has now become abrasive, almost to the point of being ridiculous. The "shake and bake" moves of a guard or a bench player's lack of "QPT" (quality playing time to you and me) has passed its prime and just isn't unique anymore.

Vitale's knowledge of the game is unsurpassed, that's not the problem, but his style needs to change.

The two color men that are at the top of their field in college basketball right now are Billy Packer and Al McGuire.

Packer has an excellent basketball mind and has the ability to explain team strategy in a way that is easy for anyone to understand. No "shake and bake" here.

McGuire, the former head coach at Marquette, is more vocal than Packer. But his knowledge of teams, especially those in the Big Ten Conference, is his greatest asset. His use of the college atmosphere surrounding a game also makes it more enjoyable to watch.

Now we move to professional basketball, where the color man has to work harder because pro games can be boring at times.

Tom Heinsohn and Billy Cunningham are at the top of the heap here, primarily because of their coaching and playing experience.

Heinsohn, the former Celtic player and coach is the John Madden of professional basketball. Heinsohn gets into the game. He raises his voice, he jumps on the referees, acting like a real fan at the Boston Garden would.

Cunningham, the former coach of the Philadelphia 76ers, has the ability to analyze every aspect of the game and create a summary of what has happened, what will happen, and why.

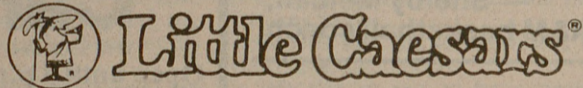
Becoming a good color commentator takes more than just a great knowledge of the game, it takes an ability to relate team strategy to the listener or viewer without hitting them in the face with it.

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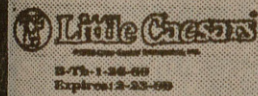
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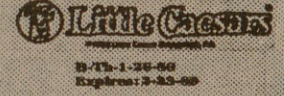


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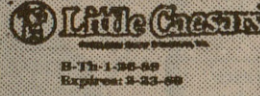
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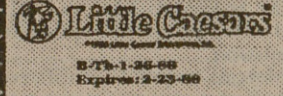
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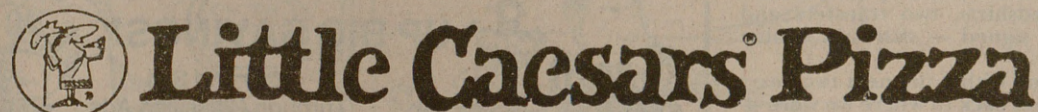
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