

Lady Ags stumped Texas continues domination

By Doug Walker

SPORTS EDITOR

DALLAS — Two technical fouls combined with turnovers keyed a 20-2 Texas run in the second half and the No. 6-ranked Lady Longhorns downed the Texas A&M Lady Aggies 74-59 in a Southwest Conference Tournament semifinal game Thursday night.

The Lady Aggies finished the season with a 17-12 record and are hoping for an National Women's Invitation Tournament bid. Texas (24-4) faces Arkansas, a 79-72 winner over Texas Tech, Saturday in the SWC finals at 2 p.m. in Reunion Arena.

With A&M leading 36-33 early in the second half Texas forward Vicky Hall keyed a six-point run to give the Lady Horns a 39-36 lead with 13:04 to go. A few seconds later A&M's Louise Madison fouled Hall and slammed the ball to the floor. She received a technical for the outburst.

Hall made the freethrow and Texas ran off seven more points to lead 47-36 with 11:55 left.

At this point, A&M Head Coach Lynn Hickey received a technical foul for leaving the coaches box. This was shortly after a clock malfunction ticked 17 seconds off.

Hall converted this technical freethrow, and a jumper by Catarina Pollini gave Texas a 13 point lead (49-36) with 11:30 to go.

Texas eventually led by 15 (53-38) with under 10 minutes remaining and the game was virtually decided.

Hickey did not discount the importance of the technicals. However, she did not blame the loss solely on them.

"To say that the two technicals hurt us wouldn't be fair," she said. "But it did hurt us."

LaTanya Irving had 19 points to lead A&M. Lisa Jordan added 10 points and 13 rebounds and Nette Garrett had eight points.

Donna Roper managed only seven points while hitting two of 11 shots from the field.

Hickey expressed her hopes for NWIT bid and felt that, if the NCAA chose them, A&M would be a good representative of the conference.

"I definitely think we would be a good team to represent the conference," she said. "We should have been a team that had 20 wins. We might get an NWIT bid, but I don't think our record will get us into the NCAA tournament."

"I had hoped for a cinderella finish for our seniors, but that didn't happen. Our seniors have laid a foundation for a big-time women's basketball program at Texas A&M."

A&M led by as much as four early on (9-5). But Texas went on a 10-0 run to lead 15-9 when Davis scored on a jumper with 10:45 left in the half.

Davis picked-up her second foul moments later and remained on the bench for the rest of the half.

A&M responded with a six-point run to tie at 15, but Texas, despite Davis' absence and poor shooting, managed to build a five-point lead 27-22 at the half.

Davis picked-up her second foul moments later and remained on the bench for the rest of the half.

Softball team falls to Tech in 10 innings

By Stan Golaboff

SPORTS WRITER

The ninth-ranked Texas A&M softball team lost an extra-inning game to fourth-ranked Louisiana Tech 3-1 at home Thursday.

The Lady Aggies were victims of their own mistakes as they committed five errors, two coming in the 10th. Four of the five errors led directly to Tech runs.

"Errors are killing us," A&M Head Coach Bob Brock said. "Dana (Mitchell) pitched a great game. Every one of their runs came from errors."

A&M (8-4) scored first in the second. Carrie Heightley, who went three for four, led off the inning with a single and then stole second. Catcher Erika Eriksson sacrificed Heightley to third before Erin Newkirk flied out to left, allowing Heightley to score.

"I thought Heightley played a great game along with Michelle Mayfield, who didn't even know at the start of the season that she would be playing third," Brock said.

Heightley and Mayfield combined for 15 of the 30 Tech outs.

A&M then let Tech back in the game by committing two errors in the top of the third. The errors coupled with a wild pitch by Dana Mitchell allowed Sue Stewart to score and tie the game.

The game then turned into a pitcher's duel, as neither team could get anything going.

Mitchell limited Tech to just one hit, but got into a jam in the seventh

when Kristie Arrant singled and Jennifer Smith walked with one out. After a sacrifice by Stewart, Mitchell got Timber Keys to ground out to end the inning.

Mitchell (8-4) struck out three, walked four and failed to give up an earned run.

A&M scattered eight hits over nine innings and didn't mount another scoring threat until the bottom of the ninth.

With two outs in the ninth, Heightley singled to center and Eriksson singled to left. However, Tech pitcher Debbie Nichols got Erin Newkirk to ground out and the game went into extra innings.

Under international rules, softball games that go into extra innings start with a runner on second.

Tech took advantage of the rule and two A&M errors, taking a 3-1 lead.

"There were two brutal calls at the end of the game and this is a tough way to lose," Brock said.

Tech scored its first run of the inning on a throwing error by Rene Blaha that saw second baseman Barbara Kajs collide with the runner at first.

Tech's second run came when Stewart attempted to score from third on a grounder to the mound. A throwing error to first by Mitchell allowed Stewart to advance, but right fielder Tory Parks threw home to Eriksson who had the plate covered.

The umpire called Stewart safe because of catcher interference.

In the bottom of the 10th, Brock was thrown out by the umpire, despite never arguing the interference call. The umpire said he did.

"It's hard to coach from the stands," Brock said. "I was never told why I was ejected."

A&M went down in order to end the game.

"We are still young, but we are maturing," Brock said. "We are not as concerned with the wins and losses right now. We are letting those fall as they may."

A&M's next game will be this weekend when they host the second Aggie Invitational. Louisiana Tech is also playing in the tournament. The tournament will be held at Bee Creek Park.



Photo by Phelan M. Ebenhack

A&M's Carrie Heightley slides home safely for the Lady Aggies against Louisiana Tech.

A&M women's tennis team defeated by 10th-ranked OSU

By Steven Merritt

ASSISTANT SPORTS EDITOR

The Texas A&M Lady Aggie tennis team dropped to 8-2 on the year at home Thursday as they suffered a 7-2 loss to 10th-ranked Oklahoma State.

A&M top seed Lisa Keller won the first set of her match with OSU's Monika Waniek before dropping the next two en route to a 2-6, 7-6, 6-4 defeat. The match was well-played on both sides, as Keller consistently kept Waniek on the baseline with strong backhand returns, but wasn't able to overcome the consistent play of the OSU top seed.

Second-seeded Susan Williams lost a 6-2, 6-3 contest to OSU's Sally Goodman, while A&M third seed Lynn Staley had no problem in defeating OSU's Danielle Jones, posting a 6-1, 6-2 victory. Staley used an impressive backhand to keep Jones off balance throughout the match.

Sophomore Cindy Churchwell was defeated 6-2, 7-5 by OSU's Caroline Delisle in the fourth-seeded match while A&M fifth-seed Robyn Mawdsley fought back from an early

set loss to take her match with OSU's Jackie Booth to the three-set limit before losing 6-2, 3-6, 6-2. Junior Jennifer Jones got the second win of the match for the Lady Aggies, posting a 6-3, 6-1 win over OSU's Wendy Parker.

The doubles matches were not any kinder to the Lady Aggies, as the top-seeded pairing of Keller and Mawdsley was defeated 6-4, 6-3 by

OSU's Waniek and Parker while A&M's second-seeded team of Churchwell and Staley dropped a 6-1, 6-2 contest to OSU's Booth and Jones.

The third-seeded team of Derryn Haygarth and Williams suffered its first doubles loss of the season to OSU's Goodman and Delisle, 6-3, 6-0.

A&M Coach Bobby Kleinecke said the overall team effort was better in Thursday's match, and that playing top-10 teams like OSU will only help the Lady Aggies.

"You have to play the good teams to get any better," Kleinecke said.

'Hot' Ags no surprise to SWC

DALLAS (AP) — Texas A&M swept through the Southwest Conference post-season tournament two years ago, winning three games as the No. 8 seed by an average of 15 points and securing the conference's automatic NCAA tournament bid.

There will be no such surprises this weekend, however; the Aggies enter Friday night's quarterfinal game against Houston as perhaps the SWC's hottest team.

They rebounded from a 1-7 start by winning seven of eight games in the second half. The fast finish vaulted the Aggies from a tie for last place into a tie for fourth. Only regular-season champion Arkansas had comparable success in the second half, but even in a head-to-head meeting A&M prevailed 82-71.

"They're hot and playing very well," Houston Coach Pat Foster said matter-of-factly.

So, Coach Shelby Metcalf, how does it feel to be considered among the favorites for the tournament title?

"I don't know how they're going to react," Metcalf said. "Deep down, I hope we'll play like we've been playing, but I just don't know."

"I think it really helps for a player to get excited and have a good tournament. A team has to be hot, but usually a player has to be hot."

The Aggies' candidate this year could be Donald Thompson, a 6-7 senior forward from Chicago. Thompson averaged 21.6 points over the last five games and had 22 points and 11 rebounds in the regular-season finale, a 106-89 victory over Texas.

It was in the first meeting with Texas — an 85-80 loss — that Metcalf first saw A&M turning the corner. A difficult non-conference

schedule had the Aggies playing Nevada-Las Vegas, Oklahoma and Oklahoma State away from College Station. Then they opened the conference season with a 58-51 loss at Texas Christian.

"We lost our confidence," Metcalf said. "We opened the conference at TCU, and we were bad."

In the six games that followed the loss to TCU, the Aggies struggled as they adjusted to the new system.

"We just didn't get proficient with it," Metcalf said.

The Aggies averaged 64 points in the first seven conference games, but in the nine that followed the average soared to more than 79 points per game.

"We've laid the foundation for a good team," Metcalf said.

But their stumbling block during the regular season is the same one that awaits Friday night. Houston defeated Texas A&M twice during the regular season, handing A&M its only loss in the second half, and the Cougars have won the past five meetings. And, if history means anything, the Cougars have won both tournament meetings between the two teams dating to 1977.

"We bring out the best in Houston," said Metcalf, now in his 26th season at A&M. "Pat goes into a slump and he calls up and wants to schedule a practice game."

But Foster was in no joking mood about Friday's match-up. The Cougars' fortunes against Texas A&M hinge on the status of senior forward Richard Hollis, a senior forward who averages 17.3 points per game. Hollis, who scored 37 points in two four-point victories over A&M, is listed as questionable with cartilage damage in his left knee.

It's a report to which Metcalf

turns a deaf ear. Instead, he wonders how his own players will react to the pressure of tournament play.

Perhaps lost in the Aggies' success of late, Metcalf reminded, is the fact that A&M starts three players with no SWC tournament experience, and the tournament experience of the other two starters totals two games.

"I don't know about my team," Metcalf said. "I really don't."

Baseball team hosts tourney

Coach Mark Johnson will lead his top-ranked Texas Aggies into the Aggie Invitational as they host Iowa, Maine and Kentucky at Olsen Field. The round-robin tournament will start tomorrow and end Tuesday.

Play begins at 1 p.m. tomorrow when Kentucky meets Iowa. A&M will play at 7 p.m. against Maine.

The Aggies other games will be: Sunday at 5 p.m. against Kentucky and 8 p.m. against Iowa; Monday at 7 p.m. against Kentucky; Tuesday at 5 p.m. against Iowa and 8 p.m. against Maine.

A&M will try to extend their school-record, 18-game winning streak.

John Byington leads the Aggie regulars in several categories. He is hitting .480 with an .840 slugging percentage and has 26 runs batted in.

Johnson's team will travel to Shreveport, La. to participate in the Dixie Classic March 17-19.

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