

Freddie ready to give Aggies needed boost

Just ask Texas A&M basketball player Freddie Ricks where he got the nickname "Ready Freddie."

There's a good chance Ricks won't hesitate to dig deep inside and pull out his best impersonation of his former coach and mentor Shelby Metcalf.



Scott Wudel Sports Writer

"Well...are you ready, Freddie...?" Ricks would imitate Metcalf's slow, low trembling voice, and then acknowledge agreement.

"Well come on in..." he'd finish. Ricks got the nickname as Metcalf's first player off the bench in his first three seasons on the A&M basketball team.

He was supposed to play his most important role yet this year as a senior under first-year coach Kermit Davis Jr. But Freddie ran into some off-the-court problems and his plans were put on hold.

Ricks returned to the A&M lineup Wednesday after sitting out the Aggies' first 12 games.

And Davis' team couldn't have needed him more.

Freddie found the surroundings to be quite the same in his first game back. The Aggies were hosting Texas Christian University at G. Rollie White Coliseum. Freddie patiently waited and watched from the bench.

This time he wasn't the first player Davis called on, but it didn't take the coach long to decide the Aggies needed Ricks' help off the bench.

One could only guess what Davis said to Ricks as he pulled Freddie from the bench and inserted him into the lineup.

Ricks made almost an immediate impact on the court for the struggling Aggies. He converted five of his first seven shots in the hard-fought loss, and finished the night with 11 points.

Most importantly, he showed A&M fans he was ready to play basketball again.

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Problems continue to plague Davis regime

By DOUGLAS PILS
Of The Battalion Staff

The Texas A&M basketball team's season is just over half gone and already the Aggies have endured more trial and tribulation than most teams would care to handle in a decade.

Signs that this would be a rocky season began to show last summer.

David Harris, a returning 6-10 center, was declared academically ineligible, as was forward David Peterson.

Two transfers that would have been eligible immediately and two incoming freshman never made it to the first day of practice.

Another returning 6-10 center, Carlos Marrero, could not return from a knee injury. Then, to top it all off, guard Freddie Ricks, one of head coach Kermit Davis Jr.'s two remaining returning seniors, was arrested and subsequently suspended from the team.

Davis started the season with nine healthy scholarship players, seven of which received most of the playing time. The Aggies then lost little-used guards Cody Blake and Darrin Terry, a transfer from Carl Albert Junior College, who had been averaging 5.2 points and 2.8 rebounds. Blake quit the team to pursue his degree and Terry failed to meet academic standards during the fall.

The Aggies fought their way to a 4-4 record after a victory over Texas College on Dec. 20. However, that A&M win was not the news of the day.

Earlier that day, news of possible recruiting violations committed by the Aggie basketball program appeared in the Syracuse Post-Standard.

The Post-Standard had been investigating violations in the Syracuse program when it discovered the possible Aggie violations involving Tony Scott. Scott transferred to A&M last May and is currently sitting out a year to gain his eligibility.

Davis refused to make any comment on the matter on Dec. 20, saying that Robert Smith, A&M's vice president for finance and administration and the head of the school's athletic compliance office would conduct a full investigation.

To compound the matter, Scott publicly admitted in the Post-Standard story that all the allegations were true and that he felt he had been pushed into attending A&M — even to the point of being sold.



JAY JANNER/The Battalion

Texas A&M basketball coach Kermit Davis Jr. has had plenty to be upset about this season.

The Aggies then fell into a six-game losing streak. In three of those games, the A&M blew opportunities to win. The team had a chance to tie South Alabama at the buzzer and was tied with both Texas Tech and Texas Christian late in the game.

"We (the coaching staff) knew coming in that we were going to have a rebuilding stage," Davis said. "We've been in a lot of games. We're 5-10, but we could also very easily be 8-7, so it's a fine line."

The drain of players from the team has left the Aggies short on depth and because of this Davis said the team can ill-afford to not be emotionally into every game.

"Our team is such a fine line," he said. "Because of our depth situation and our physical talent that if we're not on edge every night, I mean really ready to pop and play, then we can be really bad. But if we play on that edge, and we do everything we've got to do then we play as a decent team and play together."

As the spring semester gets underway Ricks is once again in an Aggie uniform after serving what was, in essence, a semester-long suspension. Davis said that after talking with students, former students and players, the consensus was that Freddie Ricks had been punished enough.

Then, Monday night, A&M broke that six game slide with a 103-82 victory over Centenary, with all five starters scoring in double figures.

With a 5-10 record, the focus of attention on any basketball program would be on how the team will turn things around. But for Davis and the rest of the team the attention is being focused on the possible recruiting violations.

If the violations turn out to be true, the consequences could lead to A&M losing its program for up to two years.

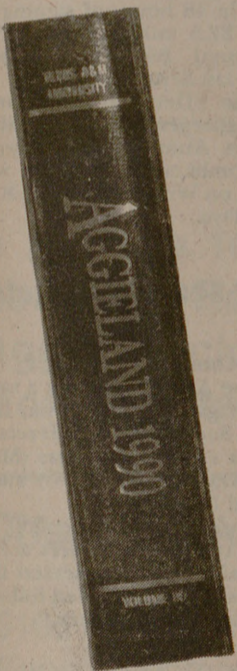
Under NCAA rules, if any sport at a school where another sport has been on NCAA probation within five years, that sport could receive the death penalty if found guilty of a major violation.

Based on the A&M football team's probation in 1988 for recruiting violations, conviction of a major violation in the basketball program could bring that penalty upon Kermit Davis and his squad.

News of possible violations coincided with the Aggies' six-game losing streak, and many wondered if the outside distractions of the investigation was having an adverse effect on the team. Davis was quick to point out that nothing could be farther from the truth.

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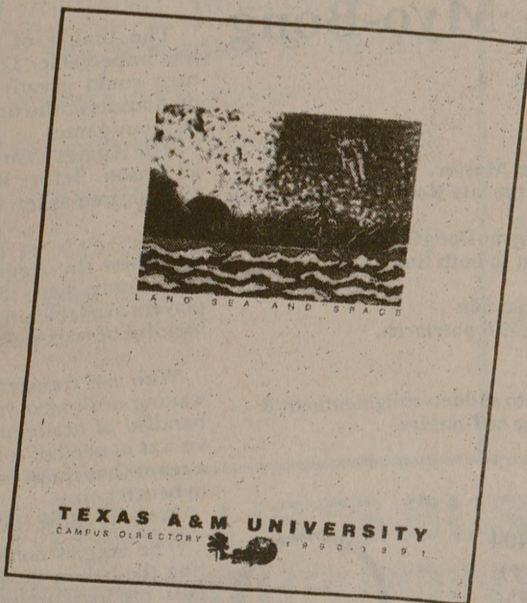
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