

Ailing Aggie basketball team time to heal

Somebody call a doctor.

The Texas A&M basketball team is ill. It has lost 10 of its last 11 games and is searching for a cure to a sickness only time can heal.

For now, the Aggies must endure a tension headache for which no aspirin can alleviate the pain.

But A&M coach Kermit Davis Jr. refuses to admit the team's real problem. When you mention the word "rebuilding" to the coach, he shies away from the term like a child would awful-tasting cough medicine.

Instead, Davis insists the situation is just the opposite, that the team is in the early stages of something bigger to come. Much like the sniffles and then the cold.

The fact of the matter is the team is bed-ridden until nature can take its course.

From the very start the Aggies have been snowed under a load of problems that would make the healthiest person a little dizzy.

The team's problems may have started last year with the removal of Shelby Metcalf as the Aggies' long-time head coach, and then the subsequent replacing of interim coach John Thornton.

The hiring of Davis was supposed to be the remedy that would cure the team's problems for years to come. But this cure has proved to have many side effects.

From the first day of school, players have dropped from the team as if there was an epidemic.

Some never played a minute for the Aggies before being declared ineligible because of academic problems or sordid pasts.

A storied past or just quite a story made up by a transfer player who didn't feel like going to school here anymore has added to A&M's affliction.

And the team has had to deal with a number of near-misses that could have put W's in the win column rather than L's in the loss column.

"If you think we're having fun losing, that's not the case," the coach admitted. So what can the 11 players who wear the maroon and white do now?

Play through the pain. If it's any consolation to players or fans, there have been some teams that have made miraculous recoveries after agonizing through losing seasons.

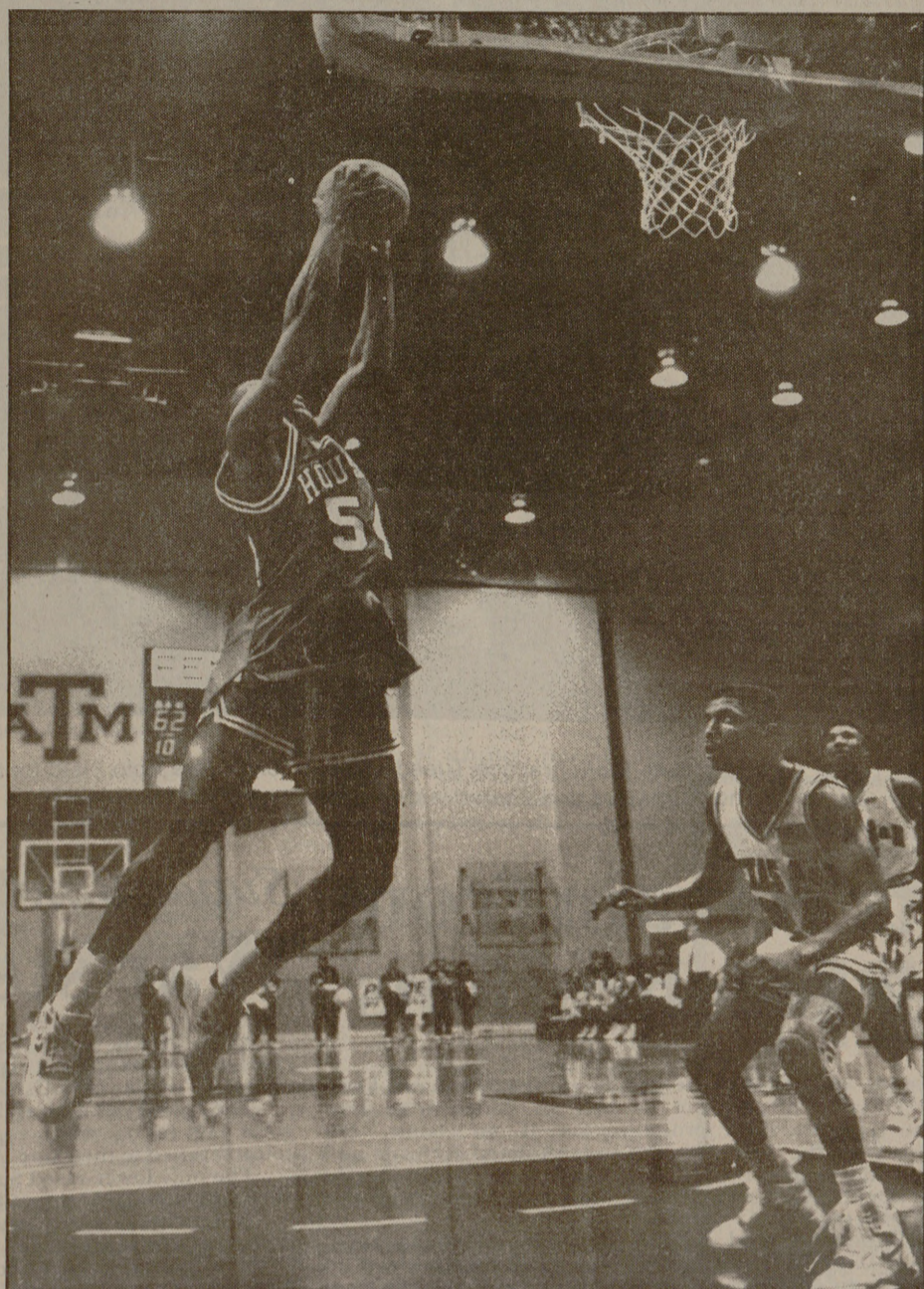
Most Texas sports fans are familiar with the trials and tribulations of the San Antonio Spurs and most recently the Dallas Cowboys.

Two years ago the Spurs were in the midst of a miserable 21-61 season, marked by a handful of players coming

See Wudel/Page 11



Scott Wudel
Sports Writer



KEVIN IVY/The Battalion

Houston's Derrick Smith goes for a dunk while A&M's Lynn Suber watches.

Ags fight hard, still fall to Coogs 77-64

By SCOTT WUDEL
Of The Battalion Staff

It's the same old song, eighth time around. Eight Southwest Conference games, eight losses.

The Texas A&M basketball team equaled its worst SWC start since 1954 by losing to the University of Houston, 77-64.

The broken record also typified A&M's personnel.

The Aggies were without starting center Shedrick Anderson and starting guard Isaac Brown, who were suspended for the game for violating team procedures, A&M basketball coach Kermit Davis Jr. said.

Davis said he needed to discipline the players for careless mistakes they make that inhibit the progress of the program.

Because of the lack of depth, three Aggies were forced to play all 40 minutes of the game. But Davis said he was pleased with the effort of all the players.

"I'm as proud of our team as I've been this year," Davis said. "I thought they really tried to do the things that we asked them to do."

"It's encouraging because those guys got nothing to hang their heads about, they played really hard," he said.

Rashone Lewis and Lynn Suber each scored 18 points while playing the entire game. Lewis remained optimistic about the team after the loss.

"I don't look for any moral victories," he said. "We're all collegiate athletes, so we expect to win every night."

"I think we did the best we can do under the certain circumstances that we played, and I think we did a pretty good job."

Lewis said the team needs to play through the adversity.

"It was a little disappointing," Lewis said. "But you just have to overlook those things and just try to play as a team, it's a team effort."

Suber said the team could have used the two suspended players.

"I can't say that we would have won with

them, but I know we would have had a shot," Suber said. "They are two starters and we definitely needed them."

Despite the lack of depth, the Aggies refused to let the Cougars run away with the game.

Lewis and forward Anthony Ware kept A&M close in the first 10 minutes of the game as they combined for the Aggies' first 12 points.

A&M point guard Brooks Thompson found Lewis for two alley-oop baskets in the early minutes, and the Aggies eventually tied the score at 16 on a Lewis free throw with 10:28 left in the half.

But Houston ran off 12 straight points in the next six minutes to give the Cougars a comfortable buffer headed into halftime. Houston increased their 13 point half-time lead to as much as 16 points with 15:42 left in the game.

Suber's three-pointer started the Aggies' rally to close the gap.

Freddie Ricks helped the Aggie cause with defense. The senior guard stole a UH inbound pass and scored an easy layup. He then drew a charge on the next inbound pass and converted two free throws to move A&M within seven points with 8:59 remaining.

Davis drew a technical foul after his reaction to a call against the Aggies with 2:03 left. Suber was called for a foul after reaching around UH guard Derrick Daniels while heading for a layup.

Davis found himself halfway across the court after referee Jim McDaniel gave Houston the basket when the guard was clearly fouled on the floor.

"I didn't question him getting fouled," Davis said. "I just thought there was a huge continuation on the play."

"That's just the heat of the moment. I'll look at it on TV and wish I hadn't done it," he said.

The Cougars would let the Aggies get no closer the rest of the way. Suber's three-pointer from the right side pulled A&M to within nine, but the Aggies ran out of time in the final minutes.

Lady Ags host Houston tonight in key SWC tilt

By CRAIG WILSON
Of The Battalion Staff

Seeing the Texas A&M women's basketball team play for fourth place might not be high on many peoples' priority lists.

However, those brave souls that visit G. Rollie White Coliseum Wednesday night at 7:30 p.m. may be in for a real treat.

The Lady Aggies will host the University of Houston Lady Cougars in what has been an exciting matchup in the past.

The Lady Cougars (12-6, 4-3) boast four players averaging double figures in scoring, and are coming off of an 81-55 drubbing of SMU in Dallas Saturday.

The Lady Aggies (9-8, 4-3) had their second highest scoring output of the season Saturday at Rice when they won 87-78 and shot 50.7 percent from the floor.

The home court has proven nothing more than a neutral battle site for these two teams.

Last season, Houston won at A&M, 94-76, and A&M won at Houston, 88-67.

The Lady Cougars, who outscore their opponents by an average of almost 17 points, are led by senior guard Arlene Brown who averages 13.2 points.

In a balanced UH attack, junior post Darla Simpson (13.1 ppg), junior guard LaShawn Johnson (12.7 ppg), and senior forward Mildred Williams (11.6 ppg) are major contributors.

Simpson is coming off a 17 point, 12 rebound performance against SMU.

Houston is also outrebounding their foes by six boards per game. Simpson leads the team in rebounding at 8.6 per game, while junior post Kellye Jones averages 7.4.

04005301 The Lady Aggies are led in scoring by senior forward Yvonne Hill, averaging 15.8 points and 5.2 rebounds per game. She has scored in double figures in six consecutive games.

Junior forward Dena Russo is also playing well, averaging 13.9 points and 7.4 rebounds a contest.

Hill scored 18 points and grabbed six rebounds against Rice.

Lady Aggie coach Lynn Hickey, who is four victories away from the 100 victory plateau at A&M, is not afraid to go to her bench, which is averaging over 20 points a game this season.

The big gun off the pine is senior three-point shooter Wendy Jennings, shooting 37.5 percent from the bomb zone in conference play.

Sophomore guard Tish Basha is averaging 19 minutes a game, averaging 8.6 points.

A most pleasant surprise for the Lady Aggies has been the return to the starting lineup of junior center Vanessa Edyards, who had seen limited action with a knee injury. She scored 14 points at Rice Saturday.

In the Lady Aggies' critical win over Rice, they outrebounded the Lady Owls 38-25. They will undoubtedly need to keep their feet moving and block out on the glass to be successful Wednesday, as coach Hickey noted.

"Houston is a very good athletic team," Hickey said. "This will be the first team we have faced that can get up and down the floor as well as anyone."

"They have two of the best centers in the SWC and they also have a good three-point shooter. Houston is just a well-rounded team."

Hopefully, the Lady Ags' concentration will be at its highest, as Texas comes in Saturday for their annual visit to College Station. Naturally, preparation will be a key for Wednesday night's affair.

"We must be prepared to play an intense, physical game," Hickey said.

The Lady Cougars lead the all-time series 23-17 since the two teams first met in 1975.

There should be some extra incentive for the Lady Aggies Wednesday night, though. The last time these two teams met, in last season's SWC tournament, the Lady Cougars eliminated the Lady Aggies, 77-69.

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