

## Magic's talent competes with NBA powers

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Asst. sports editor



It took about 12 minutes of basketball on Wednesday night for me to realize that a serious power surge in a certain United States peninsula. Seven hundred and twenty seconds of hoops at the "Orlando" convinced me there is definitely a new force in the NBA.

Although the power of the league still rests in the Western Conference (with Seattle, Phoenix, Houston, San Antonio, Utah and Golden State), the team to beat through the first 12 games makes it home just around the corner from Mickey, Goofy and Donald.

Yes, it's Shaquille O'Neal and his Orlando Magic. Except that it's not just Shaq's team anymore, and that's the reason why Orlando is for real this season.

Oh, make no mistake, O'Neal is still crown prince of the Magic Kingdom, but there is suddenly a veritable Round Table of powerful weapons in coach Brian Hill's arsenal.

For starters, there is second-year point guard Arfennee Hardaway, last year's runner-up in the Rookie of the Year balloting. The 6 foot, 7 inch floor quarterback is having a brilliant campaign so far this season, averaging almost 23 points per game, plus five rebounds and close to seven assists.

Hardaway tore up the Rockets Wednesday night, largely because Kenny Smith was guarding him, but also because he is a solid shooter and has great court vision.

One of the scariest things about the Magic is that besides Penny and Shaq, the Magic still have another player averaging 20 points a game in shooting guard Nick Anderson. Anderson is a long-range bomber, hitting on 40 percent of his three-pointers so far this season. Among those top three scorers, the Magic are getting 73.4 points per game. That's scary.

Oh, but it gets scarier, because even if you can hold down the top three, All-Star forward Horace Grant lurks somewhere in the low post, chipping in his 13.6 points per game and cleaning up the glass for whatever boards O'Neal doesn't haul down. Plus, Grant brings the desperate needed quality of playoff experience to the Magic, who were swept by the Indiana Pacers 3-0 in the first round of last year's Eastern Conference playoffs.

Donald Royal is the Magic's small forward, and although he is not a marquee player like his mates, he is still throwing in a solid 10 points and five boards a night. The bench is the only real question mark for the Magic. Only free agent acquisition Brian Shaw is averaging more than six points coming off the bench and besides O'Neal, the only centers on Orlando's roster are rookie Geert and 15 year and part-time assistant coach Tree Rollins. Come May and June, O'Neal may be too tired to pull down a backboard.

Despite Orlando's possession of four All-Star possibilities, other championship contenders shouldn't

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## Volleyball team returns to NCAA playoffs

### Lady Aggies to play Michigan State

By Stewart Doreen THE BATTALION

It is not everyday that the NCAA gives Texas A&M some good news. This however, was not the case Sunday for the Texas A&M volleyball team. The Texas A&M Lady Aggies, 18-13, found out they will make a return visit to the 48-team NCAA tournament when they host Michigan State University, 17-14, at 7 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 30 at G. Rollie White Coliseum.

"Making the tournament was our top goal," head coach Laurie Corbelli said. "It is what we worked for all year."

It was a wait and see process for the Lady Aggies, who were not ranked in the South region despite playing one of the region's toughest schedules. Corbelli said it was tougher schedule that gave the team an advantage in the end. "We played more ranked teams than anyone in the South region," Corbelli said. "It scared us that they didn't rank us in the regions top 15. I felt we were not getting credit for wins and strength schedule."

"I think the national committee had a broader focus and took more into consideration. We thought a criteria was to schedule tough so that your strength can be gauged."

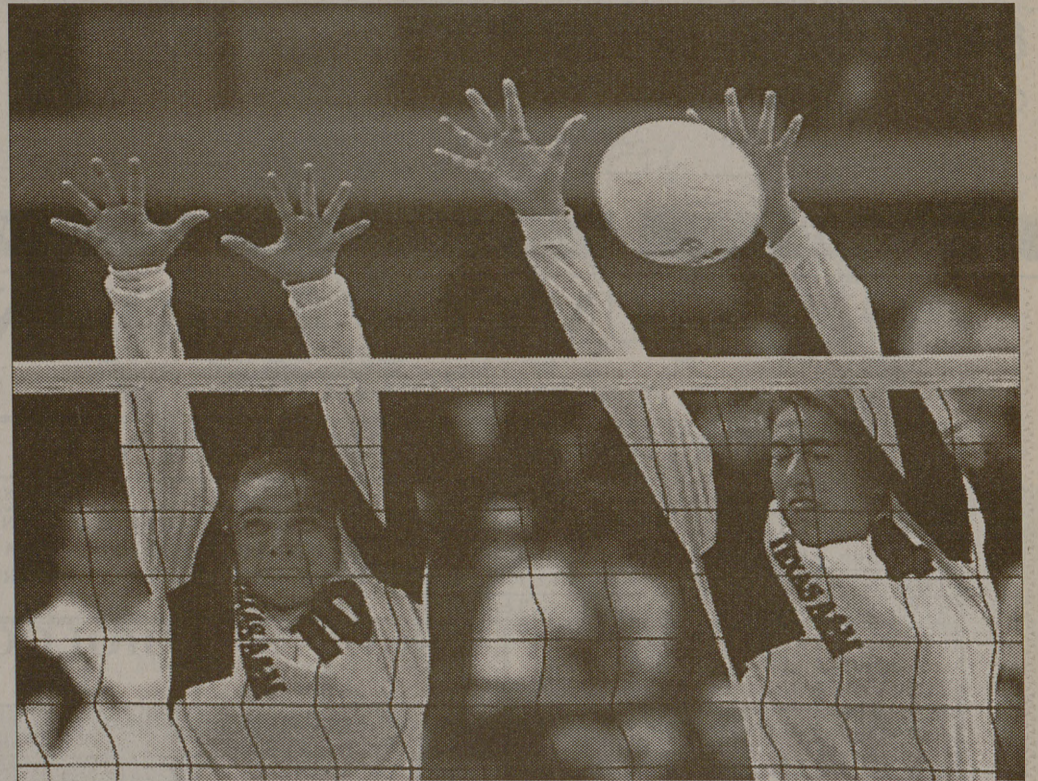
Corbelli also feels the schedule has improved the team's performance throughout the year.

"It (the schedule) has helped our team so much," Corbelli said. "We've given so much, learned so much and become stronger from our schedule. It has forced us to."

Hosting Michigan State, a team that defeated the Lady Aggies in five games at the University of Colorado Coors Tournament, is an even greater surprise to Corbelli. The Lady Aggies lost to the Spartans, a team making its first ever NCAA tournament appearance, in five games at the University of Colorado Coors Tournament. Corbelli hopes staying at home will bring many advantages including playing in front of the G. Rollie White crowds.

"We have played great at G. Rollie White," Corbelli said. "They (the players) feel the push the crowd gives them. I've seen the players do things on the G. Rollie floor that I've never seen them do in other matches. It adds a great dimension to our game."

The winner of Wednesday's match will travel to Columbus, Ohio, to take on the Big Ten Champion Ohio State Buckeyes. The Buckeyes, 28-2, received an automatic bid to the tournament and a first round bye.



Blake Griggs/THE BATTALION

Junior setter Suzy Wente, (#10) and sophomore middle blocker Page White (#4) block a spike during the game against the University of Houston.

## Lady Aggies' defense stops Arizona State

### Branch breaks game wide open with ten straight points in fourth quarter

By Stewart Doreen THE BATTALION

Sophomore guard Lana Tucker stepped up for a career high 20 points to complement Lisa Branch's 23 in Sunday's 82-69 victory over Arizona State University at G. Rollie White Coliseum.

"A good promo for them would be 'fire and ice,'" head coach Candi Harvey said. "Lana is as cool as a cucumber and keeps us calm. Lisa (Branch) is fiery and plays the game with great emotion."

The Aggies, 2-0, came out early and played tough defense to get out to an early 20-12 lead.

"In the first eight minutes of the first half, we had the defense where I want it to be," Harvey said. "The offense was feeding off the defense. That's the style of play that I wanted to play."

Tucker, whose previous high was 15 (versus Oklahoma State last January), hit three straight three-pointers to put the Lady Aggies up 29-14 with nine minutes left in the first half.

"I think sooner or later somebody is going to have to respect Lana's shot," Branch said. "If not, she'll make them pay for it."

Tucker, who led the Aggies with twelve first half points, said the experience of her freshman year has im-

proved her game.

"I feel a lot more confident this year," Tucker said. "She (coach Harvey) is challenging all the two-guards to step up."

Arizona State, 1-1, spent the rest of the half knocking points off an A&M lead that climbed as high as 16 before settling in at six with the 40-34 halftime score.

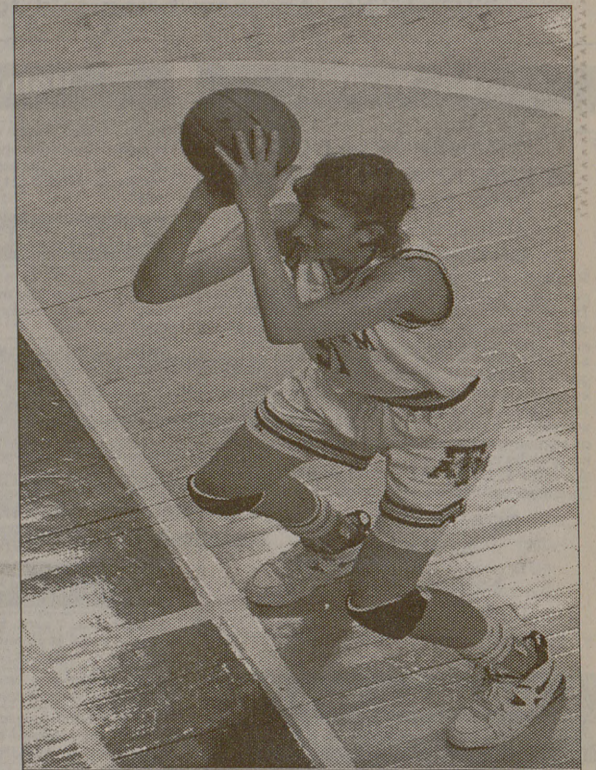
The second half opened up with an 11-2 run by the Sun Devils. Arizona State freshmen guard Stephanie Freeman, the Sun Devil's leading scorer with 17 points, scored ASU's first five points in a run that held the Lady Aggies without a field goal for the first six minutes of the half.

"We're going to have bad streaks, but they don't have to last for seven minutes," Harvey said.

The drought ended with additional pressure on the defensive end that translated into points on the offensive end. The Lady Aggies built a 56-49 lead capitalizing on turnovers and missed shots by the Sun Devils.

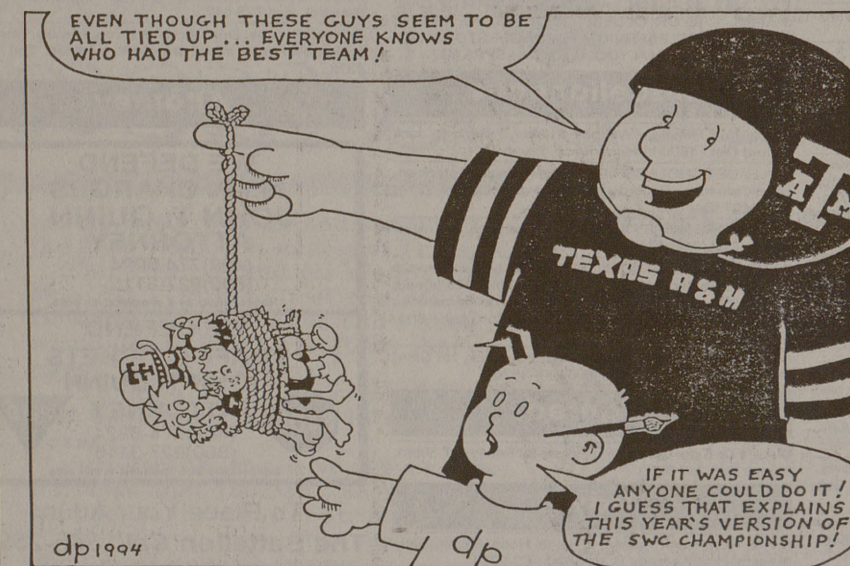
"The intensity on defense was the key, and the team fed off that," Branch said.

Branch, who had been held in check for most of the game, busted the game wide open firing home ten straight A&M points to increase the lead to 14 with 6:45 left in the game. It was a lead that would not fall under 10 points the rest of the way out.



Stew Milne/THE BATTALION

Sophomore forward Marianne Miller shoots a free throw in the victory over Arizona State.



EVEN THOUGH THESE GUYS SEEM TO BE ALL TIED UP... EVERYONE KNOWS WHO HAD THE BEST TEAM!

IF IT WAS EASY ANYONE COULD DO IT! I GUESS THAT EXPLAINS THIS YEAR'S VERSION OF THE SWC CHAMPIONSHIP!

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## Oilers continue their losing streak

CLEVELAND (AP) — Playing his first full game in six weeks, Vinny Testaverde looked like his old self Sunday, and that was both good news and bad news for the Cleveland Browns.

Testaverde committed two turnovers deep in Houston territory but also threw two touchdown passes as the Browns beat the still-reeling Oilers 34-10.

Leroy Hoard ran for 103 yards and two touchdowns for Cleveland (9-3), which handed the Oilers (1-11) their eighth straight loss — two of them since Jeff Fisher was promoted from defensive coordinator to replace the fired Jack Pardee as head coach.

Houston had won its previous four games at Cleveland Stadium.

Testaverde, whose playing time had been

limited since he sustained concussions in consecutive games against Cincinnati and Denver last month, was alternately awful and brilliant.

He was intercepted by Darryll Lewis in the end zone in the first quarter, was nearly intercepted at least two other times, and fumbled the ball away when he was sacked by Lamar Lathon in the third quarter.

But Testaverde was on target when he had to be, throwing a 1-yard touchdown pass to Frank Hartley, the first of Hartley's career, early in the second quarter, and an 11-yarder to Brian Kinchen later in the period, helping Cleveland build a 17-10 halftime lead. The Browns' defense, which has given up the fewest points in the NFL, took it from

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