

A league of their own Former A&M cagers blazed trail to NBA

BY MATT WEBER
The Battalion

As the National Basketball Association wrapped up its preseason schedule Monday, more than 360 players were preparing for the lockout-shortened 1998-99 season.

More than 360 players, but not a single Aggie. In fact, in the 52-year history of the NBA, just 23 A&M players have been drafted, and of those 23, only two played for any extended period of time. By comparison, schools such as the University of North Carolina, the University of Kentucky and UCLA can boast of dozens of alumni with NBA experience.

Big 12 foe University of Kansas had two players drafted in the first rounds of both the 1997 (Scot Pollard and Jacque Vaughn) and 1998 (Raef LaFrentz and Paul Pierce) drafts. Fellow conference members University of Colorado and Texas Tech University also have produced NBA lottery selections in the last two years.

The first Aggie to see major minutes in the NBA was center Walter Davis, who was selected by the Philadelphia (now Golden State) Warriors in the 1952 draft. Parker helped lead the Aggies to the Southwest Conference co-championship in 1950-51 as a junior, averaging a league-leading 12.2 points.

As a senior, Davis raised his numbers, leading the Aggies in scoring (15.1), rebounding (10.6), shooting percentage (.453) and free-throw percentage (.634). As a member of the Warriors, Parker averaged 4.8 points over five seasons and was one of the squad's top rebounders, averaging 6.4 boards per game in 1953-54, third-best on the team.

Almost a quarter-century later, forward Sonny Parker, who played for A&M from 1974-76, joined the NBA's ranks. In his two years with A&M, Parker dominated the Aggie record books. In his senior season, Parker scored 561 points for a team-high 20.8 points-per-game average, the seventh-best single-season



COURTESY OF A&M SPORTS INFORMATION

Former A&M forward **Sonny Parker** played six seasons with the Golden State Warriors of the NBA. Parker, one of two Aggies to play five or more years in the NBA, averaged 9.9 points during his NBA career.

mark in Aggie history. More than just a scorer, he also led the Aggies in virtually every other statistical category, setting team highs in field goal percentage (.507), free throw percentage (.767), assists (97), blocked shots (20) and steals (66).

Parker became the only A&M player to be taken in the first round of the NBA draft when the Golden State Warriors made him the No. 17 pick in 1976. Parker had his best season in 1978-79, placing second on the Warriors in steals with 144 while scoring a career-best 15.2 points per game on 50-percent shooting.

The next year, he led Golden State in steals with 173 for an average of 2.11 per game, good for eighth in the league. In his six seasons in the NBA, all with Golden State, Parker averaged 9.9 points, including three seasons over 11 points per game.

The most recent A&M connection to the NBA was shooting guard Brooks Thompson, who played two

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Aggie seniors recognized

Campbell, Nguyen lauded for efforts during college careers

STAFF AND WIRE REPORTS

Dan Campbell, a senior tight end from Glen Rose, Texas, was named the Aggie Heart Award winner Saturday, the highest honor for a Texas A&M senior football player. The award, presented to a senior who has completed his eligibility and the criteria includes intangibles such as effort, desire, determination, competitiveness, leadership and courage, was presented to Campbell by A&M Football coach R.C. Slocum at the Annual Texas A&M football banquet. All of the banquet's awards are voted on by the A&M football players.

"Dan Campbell is very deserving of the Aggie Heart Award," Slocum said. "He was an outstanding leader on our team and played with great determination. Dan worked hard to become a good football player."

"In the off-season, he was always one of our hardest workers, and during the season he gave great effort in practice and in the games. I can see why his teammates selected him for this prestigious award."

Campbell, who started the final 14 games of his career, also was named the offensive team captain. For his on-field leadership, both vocal and by example.

Senior linebacker Dat Nguyen, who won the Rotary Lombardi Award and the Chuck Bednarik Award as the nation's top defensive player, was named "Wrecking Crew" Most Valuable Player for the second consecutive year. Nguyen leaves Texas A&M as the all-time leading tackler in school history with 517.

Nguyen led the team with 147 tackles this season, marking his fourth straight year to lead the Aggie defensive unit. In addition to the defensive MVP honors, Nguyen



MIKE FUENTES/THE BATTALION

Senior tight end **Dan Campbell** was awarded the 1998-99 Aggie Heart Award Saturday by his teammates. Campbell, who started the final 14 games of his career, also was named the offensive team captain.

also was voted the defensive team captain. Nguyen started every game in his Aggie career. In those 51 games, the Aggies compiled a 35-16 record.

The offensive MVP for 1998 was junior running back Dante Hall, who led the team in rushing with 1,024 yards and scored eight touchdowns. He also caught six passes for 92 yards, returned eight kickoffs for an average of 21.5 yard and returned seven punts.

The special teams MVP and special teams captain was senior Toya Jones. Jones, usually the first man down on the coverage teams, recorded 18 tackles this season. He recovered a fumbled punt in the Aggies' game against Missouri

which set up the game-winning field goal.

The 12th Man MVP award was given to junior Chad Frantzen from Diana, Texas. Frantzen, the 12th Man MVP last year as well, is a walk-on who excels on kickoff coverage and also has worked his way up to second-team inside linebacker. He compiled 28 tackles during the 1998 season, including one quarterback sack.

The 12th Man captain was junior Drew Bridges from Odessa Permian High School. Bridges made three tackles on kickoff coverage this year.

Defensive safety Rich Coady, a

SEE AWARDS ON PAGE 11.

FREE BBQ

February 2 @ 7pm @ The Brazos Center

Capitalizing on Engineering Opportunities Career Fair

February 3

February 4

- 9am-4pm Exhibition
MSC, 2nd Floor
- 7pm Student Recruiter Social

- 9am-3:30pm Exhibition
MSC, 2nd Floor

Hosted by: the Student Engineers' Council

For More Info, Contact Danny or Sara @ 847-8567