

Ags stay on road to face Big 12 co-leader Tigers

BY JASON LINCOLN
The Battalion

The Texas A&M men's basketball team is not the only program in the Big 12 to make big changes in the 1999-2000 season. The Aggies will travel to Columbia, Mo., Saturday to take on the up-and-coming University of Missouri Tigers, one of the Big 12's hottest young teams.

The Tigers (11-6, 4-1 Big 12) have been one of the biggest surprises in conference action, most recently defeating the No. 8 University of Kansas Jayhawks by 22 points.

Yet, the Aggies have pulled their own upset of a ranked conference powerhouse in recent days, upsetting No. 12 Oklahoma State University last Saturday.

Missouri will pose a challenge to A&M's defense. The Tigers are currently the highest scoring team in the conference, averaging nearly 82 points-per-game. Missouri also shot better than 50 percent against the Jayhawks in their most recent win.

"They seem to have adjusted very well," A&M men's basketball coach Melvin Watkins said about the changes Snyder has brought to MU. "And there again, that's going to be a tough place to go play, just ask Kansas."

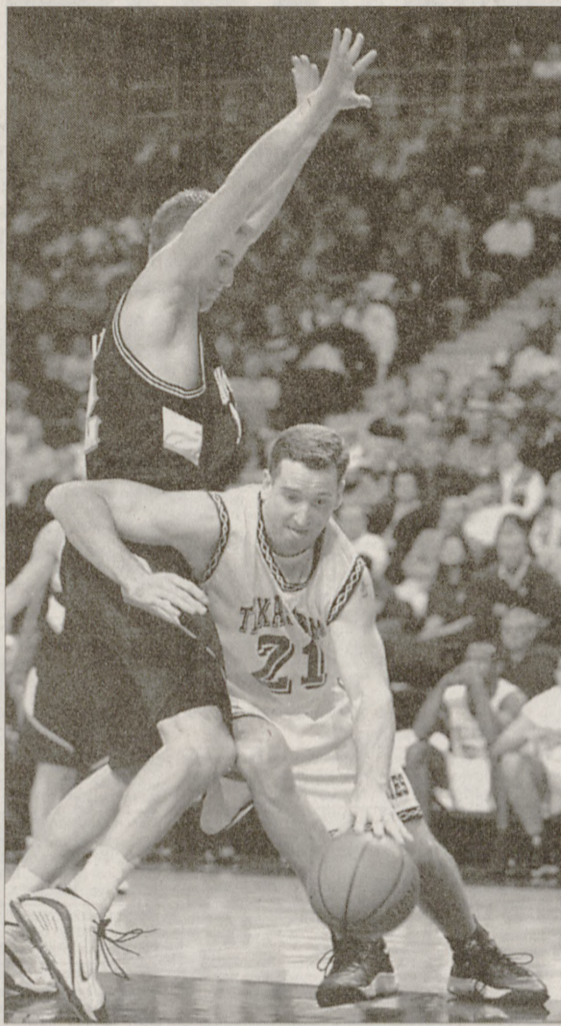
That home court advantage is a huge factor for the Tigers who are averaging over 10,000 per contest in the Hearnes Center.

For A&M to be able to play with the Tigers in the hostile Missouri environment, the Aggies must be mentally sound going into the game. With the win over OSU and a narrow loss to Iowa State University in Ames, A&M has some expanded confidence in their performance ability.

"Our mechanics are still not what they need to be and we are still making some mental mistakes," Watkins said. "We have to eliminate some of those mental mistakes, and part of that is because we are still a very young team."

The Aggies will stay with four true freshmen in their lineup as Watkins looks to build the experience of the school's future banner players. The lineup includes Andy Slocum at center, Tomas Riss at forward, with Bernard King and Jamaal Gilchrist at the guard slots.

The Aggie freshmen are on their way to playing consistent Big 12 basketball, but the final game in the two-game road



SALLIE TURNER/THE BATTALION

A&M senior forward **Aaron Jack** dribbles around an Oklahoma State University defender.

stretch will make it difficult for A&M to get some positive reinforcement before returning to College Station.

Missouri is not taking the Aggies for granted, despite their inconsistency and record.

"They've been playing well," Snyder said about A&M. "They beat Oklahoma State who is one of the top teams in the league and one of the top in the country."

"Coach Watkins is a great coach. He'll have his guys ready to go. I think his guys are finding themselves right now."

Aggies host Red Raiders

BY REECE FLOOD
The Battalion

The Big 12 Conference portion of the Texas A&M women's basketball schedule has been filled with challenges and close calls so far this season as the Aggies have gone 1-6 against conference opponents, 9-8 overall.

Things will not get any easier for the Aggies when the 10th-ranked University of Texas Tech comes to Reed Arena for a 2 p.m. showdown on Saturday in which the Aggies are hoping to end a few streaks.

The Red Raiders (15-2, 4-2) are coming to College Station riding a four game winning streak, while the Aggies have lost their last six.

Another streak the Aggies would like to break is the winning streak Texas Tech has over the Aggies. A&M has not beat Texas Tech since the final round of the 1996 Southwest Conference Classic. The Red Raiders have earned the last six victories in the series against the Aggies.

Leading the way for the Red Raiders is freshman forward/center Penette Pierson, averaging 13.9 points-per-game, followed closely by senior forward Aleah Johnson with 13.2 points per game.

A&M Coach Peggy Gillom thinks her team is up to the task of defending these Red Raider stars.

"I think we can guard them," Gillom said. "One thing about [Pierson], she has confidence. She doesn't play like a freshman. This should pose a thing of pride for our seniors, not to let a freshman come in and win."

Another challenge facing the Aggies is Texas Tech senior forward Keitha Dickerson, who is leading the Big 12 with 10 rebounds per game. Gillom said they can't expect to prevent Dickerson from rebounding, but they will try to limit



SALLIE TURNER/THE BATTALION

A&M sophomore guard **LaToya Rose** attempts to dribble past a University of Oklahoma defender.

either get the rebounds or get the Red Raiders in foul trouble.

"She's going to get a rebound," Gillom said. "Probably the only person we've got [to challenge] is someone coming off the bench or maybe Jaynetta [Saunders]."

The Aggies have struggled on the boards this year, but Gillom thinks if the Aggies can block out properly they will

Men's and women's swim teams prepare for LSU

BY BREE HOLZ
The Battalion

As the Texas A&M men's and women's swim teams prepare to host the Louisiana State University Tigers, each is faced with the challenge of competing successfully without All-Americans Alfred Mansour and Tracy Evans, who are out due to injuries.

Today's meet is scheduled to begin at 1 p.m. at the Student Rec Center Natatorium.

Despite the absence of Mansour and Evans, both teams' coaches believe their swimmers are ready to rise to the occasion.

"Our guys have done a great job of responding," men's assistant coach Jay

Holmes said. "They know what it's going to take to win." Junior David Morrow said the team has been working diligently to fill Mansour's void.

"The team is ready to step it up," Morrow said. "We don't have the extra cushion of Alfred so we can't allow ourselves to have a bad day."

The men's team is ranked 15th in the nation, according to the College Swimming Coaches Association of America poll.

They are 5-1 on the season in dual meets and recently defeated Big 12 Conference foe University of Kansas, 165-123. LSU is ranked 19th, according to the poll.

Morrow said he expects LSU to enter the meet very motivated.

"We beat them last year at their place so I have a feeling they're going to come here looking for a little revenge," he said. "They're coming here to win."

Holmes said because the teams match up so well, the meet will somewhat depend on a high level of strategy.

"We're trying to figure out which events they're going to put their best swimmers in, and vice versa," he said. "But we know that in the end it will all be decided in the water."

The women's squad will also have its hands full against LSU. The Aggies are currently ranked 22nd, while LSU is ranked 24th. They hold a 6-1 record in

dual competition and also posted a victory over Kansas last weekend, 163-132. This will be the last dual meet of the season for the women's team.

Coach Steve Bultman said his approach to the meet is not quite as complicated.

"We're just going to put our best people out there and let them race," he said.

Bultman said Evans' absence has not yet been a factor as far as wins and losses and has somewhat boosted the other swimmers.

"[Evans'] injury has been a setback, but it's also made our team better," he said. "The other girls have had to step it up, and they've done a nice job of accepting that role."



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After a win against the University of Kansas last weekend, the Texas A&M men's and women's swim team face LSU on Saturday.

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