

Tuesday, February 15, 2000

Violence in sports sends mixed signals



MELISSA JOHNSTON

Brent Holmes was in the wrong place at the wrong time, but he never would have guessed it.

He was right where he was supposed to be, on a basketball court, playing guard for East Central High in a game against South San Antonio. He was doing quite well, as a matter of fact, having scored 19 points in the first two quarters, and he must have been looking forward to continuing that streak, until opposing center Tony Limon's elbow met up with his nose.

Here's the betting Limon had no idea that elbow would get him five years in prison.

Aggression, to a certain extent, is an essential characteristic of all sports. No one can really deny the extra boost that an aggressive drive can give to a player. What should be contested, however, is the mixed message players are receiving about this aggression. On one hand, they are taught to play rough, to get the ball and, most of all, to win.

Fouls are a consistent and expected part of the game in basketball, hockey, football, soccer and many other sports where contact and adrenaline get caught up in the mix. On the other hand, players rarely know when their actions may cross the line — and often do not even know where the line is.

During this game in San Antonio last January, as the ball moved down court away from the two players, Limon took the opportunity to smash his elbow into Holmes' face. Holmes received a trip to the emergency room, having suffered a concussion and a compound fracture of the nose. What he did not receive was a foul, as the officials did not even see the actu-

al event take place. Play continued as normal on the court — Limon included. Limon soon fouled out, and East Central went on to win the game.

No protest about the elbowing was raised at all until someone noticed the scuffle on a home video and released it to a San Antonio news program.

The public raised a furor after seeing Limon's flying elbow on tape, and he was appropriately suspended from the team for the remainder of the season. Holmes' parents, however, used the video to file a criminal complaint against Limon.

Last Tuesday, that complaint turned into a five-year prison sentence — and Limon's attorney calls it overkill.

Though prison might seem a disproportionate response, Limon's history lends itself to strong disciplinary action. This incident was his third violent action on the court in three weeks. He had also been arrested for attempted burglary in December, and two months after this elbowing, he appeared for sentencing on that conviction and received four years of probation. That probation is somewhat void now, as he is headed to state prison due to his assault on Holmes. Judging by his past, Limon would have probably gotten himself into much bigger trouble if he had not broken Hughes' nose.

The truth is that the elbowing was unnecessary, if not because of its intent, simply because Limon was nowhere near the ball. It probably would have been unnecessary if he had been somewhere near the ball. In fact, it would have been unnecessary if he had been in possession of the ball. It should have been a flagrant foul.

If Limon had pulled this stunt on the street, he would have been arrested for assault on the spot. He was not on the street, though, he was on the

See VIOLENCE on Page 10.

Baseball heads to Southwest Texas

BY DOUG SHILLING
The Battalion

Early in the Texas A&M baseball team's season, the problem has not been what it has done, but instead what it has not done.

A&M has had a relatively easy time getting men on base. But when it comes to driving those men in, the Aggies have not been very successful.

The Aggies hope to turn that around as they travel to San Marcos to take on the Southwest Texas University Bobcats at 3 p.m.

A&M baseball coach Mark Johnson said pitching and defense have been carrying the Aggies in the early going.

"I'm not disappointed with our pitching and defense," Johnson said. "Those are the main staples of baseball and when you have those, you have a chance."

"I'm not saying we're worldbeaters in those areas, but they've given us a chance to win just about every ballgame. It's our hitting right now. The anxiety is still there. No one has a hot bat going. We're striking out way too much. The other teams are giving us opportunities to have big innings."

A&M had another up and down series this past weekend, losing two of three games to the University of Texas-Pan American.

The Aggies took the first game on Friday 6-2, behind two home runs from sophomore leftfielder Carlos Sepulveda. On Saturday however, the Aggie bats fell silent once again as Pan Am swept the doubleheader from A&M, 3-1 and 5-3.

For the series A&M left 32 men on base and struck out 18 times.

It was reflective of the Aggies' season, as A&M batters have left 75 men on base through seven games and have struck out 52 times in 220 at-bats, an average of once in every four at-bats.

Johnson said even though the Aggies have struggled on offense, he believes the team will be able to turn things around.

"The hitting has to come," Johnson said. "The saving grace is that we have the talent to hit, but we're not there yet,



GUY ROGERS/THE BATTALION

A&M freshman **Ryan Warpinski** will take the hill for the Aggies as they take on Southwest Texas University at 3 p.m. in San Marcos.

so everyone is pressing. Everyone wants to do well because they know that's the issue.

"It's a typical thing that happens in baseball; you're not hitting so everyone tries harder. And then when they try harder, it multiplies the problem. I do have confidence that we're going to hit better than we are right now."

A&M senior second baseman Sean Heaney said a number of factors have contributed into the Aggies' lack of offense.

"It seems like when we hit a ball hard, it's right at someone," Heaney said. "We also haven't been putting the ball in play and we've struck out too much. You put all those things together and you're not going to be very productive offensively."

Freshman Ryan Warpinski (0-1) is set to take the hill for the Aggies against the Bobcats, who are 4-5 on the season after being swept by the University of Houston Cougars over the weekend.

Heaney said he hopes the Aggies get a good start to help alleviate some of the Aggies' woes.

"If we come out tomorrow and start hitting the ball, maybe get 3 or 4 back to back hits," Heaney said, "everyone hopefully will loosen up and get on a roll."

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