

Aggies fall to Sooners, 77-59

BY JASON LINCOLN
The Battalion

The 21st-ranked University of Oklahoma made no effort to hide its desire for the fourth seed in the Big 12 Tournament as it delivered a 77-59 trouncing to the Texas A&M men's basketball team.

Oklahoma (23-5, 11-4 Big 12) takes a one-game lead over the University of Kansas in Big 12 standings, leaving one of the top four seed first-round byes in the conference tourney only one game away. The Aggies (7-19, 3-12 Big 12) still hold on to hope for the ninth seed in Kansas City, needing only to win their final match against the University of Nebraska on Saturday.

A&M men's basketball coach Melvin Watkins knew his Aggies were in trouble when, late in the first half, Oklahoma forward Eduardo Najera had 17 points, the same amount as his entire team.

"I usually play better in the second half," Najera said. "Tonight I knew if Texas A&M had a chance to win it was going to be in the first half, so I was just ready to play. I was just trying to lead the team, get a big lead and then relax in the second half and have fun."

Najera's streak began with A&M leading 13-

11, by the time the Aggies had scored again, the Sooners had amassed a 13 point advantage.

"That's when Eduardo did some things," A&M senior forward Aaron Jack said. "He hit what seemed like 4 or 5 shots in a row. He kind of took it over there in the first half. He's a good player and that's what good players are supposed to do."

From there A&M would never close within single digits, trailing as much as 22 during the contest.

"It was too much Oklahoma," Watkins said. "We came out and played pretty good at first but with this group it's hard for us to maintain."

After the 17 point first half, Najera would only score three in the second, while the OU perimeter lit it up led by freshman guard Hollis Price who had 15 points.

The outside scoring came as the Aggies looked to counter Najera inside, alternating traps and zones and throwing a variety of players in his way. That only made it easier for the three-point shooting OU guards.

The Sooner guards would amass nine three-pointers and account for 43 points.

"If your going to zone us, that's what your going to give us," OU coach Kelvin Sampson said. "If you try and take Eduardo away inside, we're pretty good outside."

The Aggies were nevertheless persistent, coming back in the second half to close the lead to 10 and outscore the Sooners 38-37. During the period A&M would cut the lead to as little as 10 before OU stretched it back out, sealing the game.

"Defensive intensity," A&M freshman guard Bernard King said about closing the gap. "We picked it up a whole lot - started to break and run. That's when we started coming back."

Jack and King kept A&M playing at top speed despite the deficit.

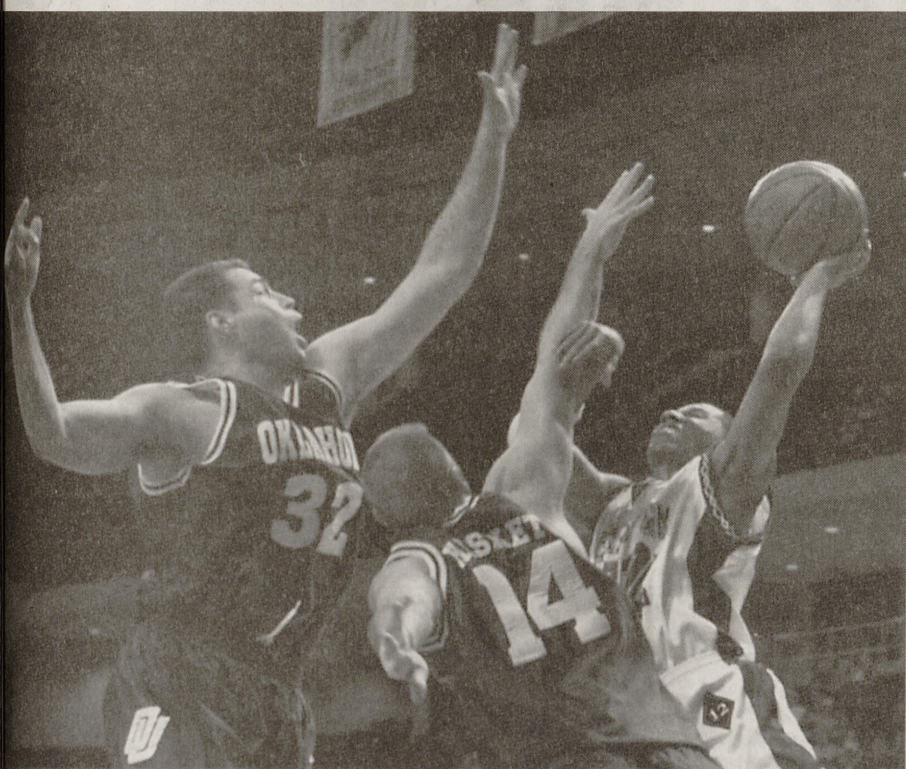
In his first game back from dehydration, Jack had 14 points shooting a perfect 5-5 from the floor and sinking all four free-throw attempts. 10 of his points came in the second.

"I got a little more tired than usual," Jack said. "I'm still not 100-percent but I feel alright."

Big 12 Freshman of the Year candidate, King, had 15 points with a trio of three's to lead A&M.

King now has 75 treys on the season, setting an A&M record and narrowing in on the Big 12 freshman record of 79 set by University of Kansas guard Jeff Boschee last season.

He is also only nine points shy of the Big 12 freshman scoring record of 447 set by Iowa State's Marcus Fizer in 1997-1998, already averaging two points about Fizer's per-game pace with 16.8 points-per-game.



GUY ROGERS/THE BATTALION

A&M freshman guard **Bernard King** strains to get a shot off against University of Oklahoma center **Victor Avila** (32) and guard **Tim Heskett** in the Aggies 77-59 loss to the Sooners.

A&M softball team hammers UTA

BY AMANDA LAWRENCE
The Battalion

A&M junior pitcher Amy Vining surrendered only three hits in six innings Wednesday as the Texas A&M softball team downed the University of Texas-Arlington Lady Mavericks, 9-0, at the Aggie Softball Complex.



VINING

The game was scoreless through 5 1/2 innings as defense was the name of the game. "Our hitters had to make an adjustment to be able to get a hit. She [UTA pitcher Cassie Brand] pitched inside and I told the girls they needed to step off the plate, and they did," A&M softball coach Jo Evans said.

A&M senior left fielder Hollee Hayden

cracked open the game and hammered a single with two outs. Hayden then stole second.

It was promptly followed by a single from senior first baseman Angie Long with an UTA error to put Long on second.

A&M sophomore second baseman Lisa Klam stepped up to bat and sent a line drive to center field. While the ball was being bobbled by the center fielder, Hayden and Long scored. Klam was thrown out on her way to second to end the play.

"Lisa [Klam] really stepped up at the plate; she had two strikes on her and she stepped up in the clutch," Evans said.

Next, the catching and pitching duo of Selena Collins and Vining eliminated any kind of Lady Maverick offensive attack by retiring the side in order.

"Selena called a really good game, and I'm so proud of our defense; they really stepped it up," Vining said.

The Aggies, eager to continue what they had started in the bottom of the fifth, stepped up and turned up the heat on UTA in the sixth. The inning started off with a solo home run by Collins, her second of the season.

"I just saw the pitch and went for it," Collins said of her home run.

Then the Aggies started scoring runs like it was going out of style. The Aggies went on their biggest streak of the night as junior right fielder Tiffany Esters, senior shortstop Jamie Smith, pinch runner Cheryl Fowler, senior center fielder Angie Shetler, and Hayden consecutively crossed the rubber bringing the tally to 8-0 and ending the game after six innings.

Next, the Aggies (11-6) will host the GTE Aggie Invitational II; their first match up will be 4:30 p.m. Friday against University of New Mexico.

Vining (8-3) hurled an entire game to capture the win, while UTA's Cassie Brand (5-7) took the loss.



STUART VILLANUEVA/THE BATTALION

A&M senior center fielder **Angie Shetler** hits the ball against the University of Texas-Arlington Wednesday night at the Aggie Softball Complex.

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