

Basketball dominates in Reed Arena opener

Women win by 30 over Arkansas-Pine Bluff

BY BRIAN RUFF
The Battalion

The Texas A&M women's basketball team opened its home season at Reed Arena Tuesday night with a 76-46 win over Arkansas-Pine Bluff (0-3). The Aggies (4-1) are coming off an impressive finish in the Lady Tiger Tournament in Memphis this weekend.

The Aggies opened the game strong in the first half, going on a 12-4 run and opening an 18-point lead midway through the first half. A&M was led in the first frame by forward Jaynetta Saunders, who took all tournament team honors last weekend in Memphis, averaging 19 points per game.

Saunders and the rest of the Aggies looked to be well in control of the defensive side of the court, scoring 16 points off 22 turnovers by the Golden Lionettes in the first 20 minutes of play.

Lynn Classen, Saunders and Brandy Jones each had three steals, giving the Aggies fast break chances throughout the half. With less than a minute left in the first half, Jones showed the team's extraordinary hustle and created yet another scoring chance for the Aggies. After a steal, Jones moved the ball down the court, got her own rebound, saved the ball from going out of bounds, and then sunk a three-pointer from the corner of the court. At the end of the first, the Aggies looked to be well in control with a 40-22 lead.

In the second half, the Aggies did not let up on the Arkansas-Pine Bluff squad, and extended their lead over the Lionettes, not allowing Pine Bluff to score until three minutes had gone by in the half.

Forward Meg Banahan led the Aggies in the half with eight points and six rebounds. With nine minutes left in the game, the Aggies took their biggest lead when guard Chereny Woodard, one of five true freshmen on the squad, sunk a free throw to give the Aggies a 32-point margin over the Lionettes.

In the second half, when the Aggies were controlling the Lionettes, the bench got some well-needed playing time and came through with 25 points, including 15 points by the five true freshmen on the team. The Aggies continued to score easily against the Pine Bluff team, and the Lionettes did not get closer than the team's 20-point halftime deficit.

Despite the 30-point victory, the Aggies shot only 43 percent from the free-throw line, less than the team's average for the first three games of the year.



PATRIC SCHNEIDER/THE BATTALION

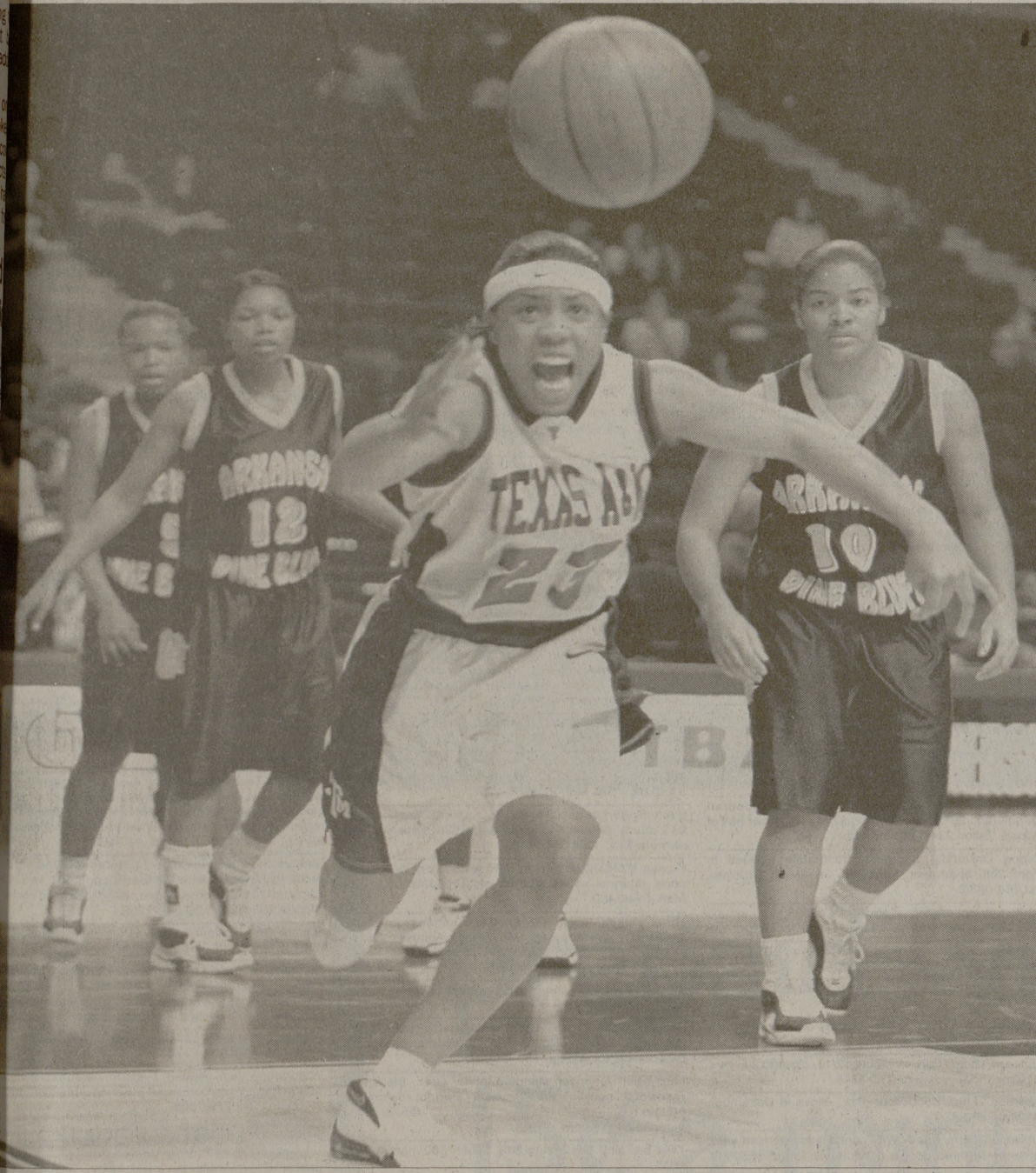
Toccara Williams had a trio of steals in the Aggies' 76-46 win against Arkansas-Pine Bluff. The win improves A&M's record to 4-1 this season.

All but one of the Aggies on the squad had less than 10 minutes of playing time in the game. "You've got to have games like this," said coach Peggie Gillom. "It is really good for the freshman. They get a lot of experience, a lot more than the games they are on the bench and we are really glad they are getting to play."

The team created a Reed Arena record 34 turnovers in the game.

"As long as we do what they (the coaches) tell us to do, then we knew we would get our steals," Saunders said.

The Aggies will take on Texas-San Antonio at Reed Arena on Friday.



PATRIC SCHNEIDER/THE BATTALION

Brandy Jones hustles after a ball headed out of bounds, while four Arkansas-Pine Bluff players stand and watch. The Aggies dominated the Golden Lionettes, winning by 30 in their first match in Reed Arena this season.

A&M men conclude three game homestand Aggies have chance to reclaim .500 record against Morris Brown

BY JASON LINCOLN

The Battalion

Morris Brown bears a striking resemblance to the Birmingham-Southern team that beat A&M, 74-54, Sunday night.

Both are first year Division I programs coming out of the SIAC. The difference is Morris Brown already has its first two Division I wins, while Birmingham-Southern did not get a win until playing the Aggies.

But Morris Brown offers A&M the perfect opportunity to rebound after a performance that nearly brought A&M coach Melvin Watkins to a boil.

A&M shot less than 30 percent in what Watkins would later admit was a performance just like A&M's practices.

The Aggie coaching staff has intensified the practice environment since then. A&M's injury woes are no longer an excuse.

Wednesday will be A&M's first chance to prove the new attitude on the court.

"It's a must-effort performance," Watkins said.

"Otherwise, we haven't accomplished anything. It should be a different basketball team on the floor come Wednesday night than we saw in our last outing."

The Aggies have one player who is taking over much of the scoring duties this season — Carlton Brown.

Brown leads the team with an average of 14 points per game this season, and his 5.3 rebounds are second on the squad.

Sunday, he was the only starter to score in double figures.

One of two seniors on a squad with just three upperclassmen, Brown should, without question, be a leader.

"Carlton is quiet and kind of an introverted person," Watkins said. "We need Carlton to be a little bit more vocal and bring that type of thing to the team."

"We're a team without a soul right now. It's tough. And every good team that I have been associated with has always had that core player to be

the guy. We just don't have that right now. Carlton and Aaron Jack are the captains. We need it from our seniors."

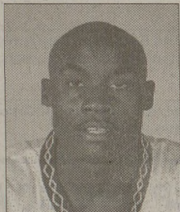
Jack has recently returned to the court following a concussion that sidelined him for nearly a month.

With so much of the team's performance coming from underclassmen, the Aggies are still searching for leadership.

Another on-court performer has been missing for most of the season. Sophomore forward Tomas Ress has been sidelined after developing a staph-infection after an appendectomy earlier this fall. Ress lost close to 30 pounds while spending close to two weeks in the hospital. Afterwards he was put on intravenous antibiotics for another three. But doctors have cleared him to return to the court this week.

Wednesday, Watkins' will be looking for change, just as much as he wants a win.

"What I hope will happen is that we will look back on this and say it was a turning point in this season. It wouldn't be a crisis, but something that we surely got a lot out of and we don't always want to lose in order to learn things."



BROWN



GODY WAGES/THE BATTALION

Jamaal Gilchrist played just one half in the Aggies loss to Birmingham-Southern while the back-up point guard Andy Leatherman took over.

Panel addresses 'winning first, learning second' attitude in college

WASHINGTON (AP) — Joseph Whitt, a former Auburn wide receiver, says he practiced football four hours a day during college and never had a meaningful conversation with anyone about his studies.

In too many powerhouse programs, coaches and players told a panel Tuesday, the academic goal is not to earn a degree but to stay eligible to play.

"They tell you to go to class, to concentrate on studies," said Whitt, a communications and business major who is heading for a coaching career instead of the NFL when he graduates next summer. "When it comes down to it, it's just about eligibility."

Whitt said he had teammates who never took a test in high school, but were sure their athletic skills would get them into college and carry them into the pros: "We owe them more than just four years of football and basketball."

He told a panel of college officials: "If you are going to get these kids to further your career, you should help them along with their careers."

The 28-member Knight Commission met for a third time this year, focusing on the millions of dollars sports earn for colleges and the toll that takes on student learning and university reputations.

The commission, created by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation to find ways to combat problems facing college athletic programs, including cutthroat recruiting, gambling and questionable courses, began in 1990. In 1996, the NCAA adopted a package of reforms it had recommended.

The panel reconvened in the summer after the NCAA, college sports regulators, found they were unable to reform errant schools.

University presidents, though given more power to set the rules, were hindered by trustees and fans

in carrying them out even as they were starting to balk at the tarnish

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to their academic reputations.

Figures released last week show that only 48 percent of college football players are graduating, the lowest rate in 15 years. Rates for other

sports stayed the same or increased slightly.

"We're hearing about Mickey Mouse courses and majoring in eligibility," said panelist Creed Black, former president of the Knight Foundation.

College players said Tuesday they needed tutors, counselors and freedom from oppressive practice schedules to make the grade. Otherwise, they said, they are left without the security of a meaningful degree.

"It's not good enough for athletes to just to be on the court, you have to produce," said Cathy Joens, a top-scoring sophomore on the George Washington women's basketball team.

A premed major who balances physics, biology and American literature with three-hour practice sessions and weekly travel, Joens said she is missing classes and getting lecture notes "second or third hand from a friend down the hall."

"It takes away from the learning process," she said.

Their mentors blamed the situation on market forces that drive out athletic officials and coaches who may produce graduates but not winning seasons.

"We're teachers first," said Gene Keady, who credits strong university backing for his long basketball coaching career at Purdue. "If student athletes are not at college to get their education first, they are there for the wrong reasons."

With the promise of commercial contracts and early departures for pro teams, the pressure on college athletes is only going to increase, said Peg Bradley-Doppes, athletic director of North Carolina-Wilmington.

Re-examining the problem now is "like a needed timeout," she said. "Let's take a drink of water, take a deep breath and come out swinging again."

Panel members, many of them

college presidents, also lamented the public pressure to win and produce future athletic stars.

"We shouldn't be in the business of being a farm team for the NFL," said Iowa president Mary Sue Coleman, who asked Whitt, one of several witnesses, whether he ever sat down with someone at Auburn to chart his academic career.

"Have you ever had a conversation about your hopes and dreams, about what you want in life?" she asked.

"No," he told her. Knight Foundation president Hodding Carter III said the group would meet early next year before issuing a final report.

No one is sure yet what the panel will recommend.

"At this point we still have a clearer understanding of the problems than we do of the solutions," said Stanley Ikenberry, a commission member and president of the American Council on Education.