

Tuesday, January 23, 2001

Aaron Jack ends career

Health forces early retirement

By JASON LINCOLN
The Battalion

Texas A&M senior forward Aaron Jack announced the end of his college basketball career Monday after suffering his fifth concussion on Jan. 13 against Colorado.

"I feel like I'm divorcing 15 years of my life," Jack said. "It's been a tough thing to deal with. Obviously, I'll miss the competition, the games, battling with the other guys, chattering at the refs, all the little stuff. But I have to focus on my health and make sure I'm okay."

"Aaron is a tremendous young man, and it's unfortunate that his long career had to end in this manner."

- Melvin Watkins
A&M coach

The blow that ended his career was incidental contact during the Colorado game, as he connected with Stephane Polle's shoulder while attempting a rebound.

The All-Big 12 forward transferred to A&M after suffering a pair of concussions in the first four games at Penn State in 1995. After a third concussion on the first day of fall practice in 1996 and the Nittany Lions decided to release Jack, Jack was not prepared to stop playing basketball and transferred to A&M at mid-term after meeting with doctors.

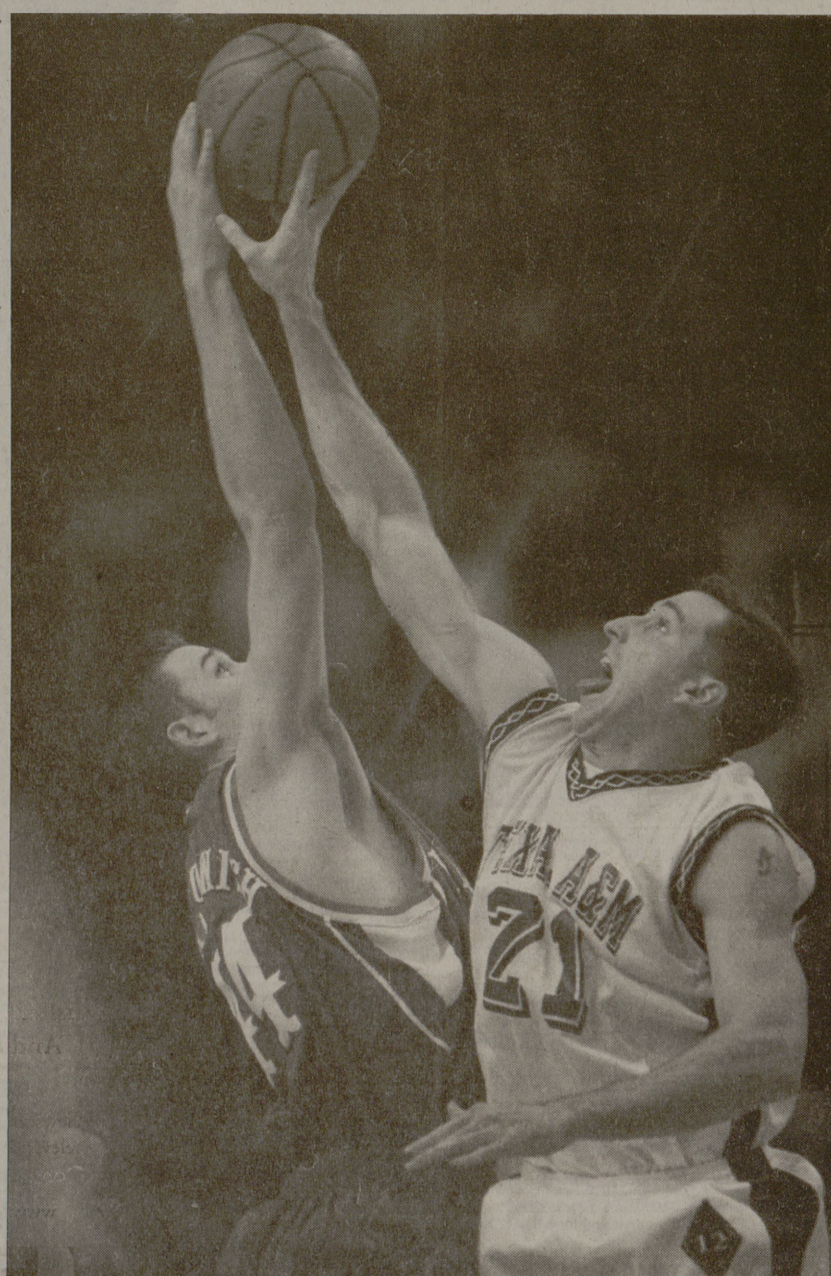
In his three seasons at A&M, Jack developed a reputation not only for his scoring or his rebounding, but for his give-all attitude and on-the-floor leadership with Aggie basketball.

"Aaron is a tremendous young man, and it's unfortunate that his long career had to end in this manner, but his health is the top priority," said A&M coach Melvin Watkins. "Aaron is the epitome of what a student athlete should be. To our young kids, he's been as much of a teacher and coach as he's been a teammate. We certainly wish him the best of luck, and we know he has an outstanding future."

During the off-season, Jack celebrated when the NCAA granted him a medical redshirt for the 1995 season, allowing him one more year of basketball. But Jack's senior season never got off to a start, after he suffered his fourth concussion during fall practice.

Jack returned to the injury-plagued Aggie lineup in early December, and playing in 14 games scoring 68 points, grabbing 68 rebounds and averaging 22 minutes per game. In those games, Jack sprained his ankle against North Carolina while posting a game high nine rebounds and then suffered a hyperextended knee in the first round of the Rainbow Classic in Hawaii. Jack did not return to full strength before the Jan. 13 concussion.

"I've been disappointed with the year I've had. It seems like I've been banged up the whole year, starting in



FILE PHOTO/THE BATTALION

A&M Senior forward Aaron Jack announced his retirement Tuesday.

October," Jack said. "I haven't been able to give my full effort to the team or the guys. But on the other hand, I got 14 extra games that I didn't think I would have. I just have to take a step back and look at it in that way."

At age 24, Jack was the oldest

player in the Big 12 conference and was just one of two seniors on the Aggie squad. With Jack's departure, former walk-on Andy Leatherman, a junior point guard, is the only

See JACK on Page 9.

Aggies face Big 12 foes in losing streak

The Texas A&M men's basketball team starts another rough week of Big 12 play on the heels of a five-game losing streak.

The Aggies (6-11, 0-5 in Big 12) finished last week 0-2, with losses to No. 20 Texas, 76-58, and No. 4 Kansas, 100-70.

This week, A&M hits the road to take on Oklahoma State on Wednesday at 7 p.m. and then returns home to face 17th-ranked Iowa State on Super Bowl Sunday at 3 p.m.

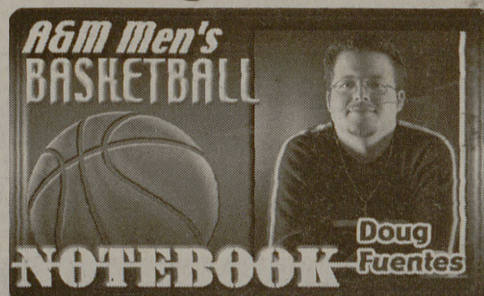
First-Half Warriors

There was a silver lining in the losses to the Jayhawks and Longhorns. The Aggies showed flashes of the team they hope to become and played two of their best halves of this season.

Against Texas, A&M actually led by six points, 34-28, at halftime. The Aggies held the Longhorns without a field goal for the last 11:54 of the first half.

Against Kansas, the Aggies bounced back after falling behind 11-2 in the early moments. A&M cut the lead to 26-24, but Kansas ended the first half with a 24-5 run.

"If you look back at the tape of the Kansas game," said A&M men's basketball coach Melvin Watkins, "the first few possessions we executed, and we were excited about that. Hopefully, what we can learn from that, is that if we do execute, whether it's Kansas or anyone A&M plays Oklahoma State and Iowa else, we have a chance to be a State on the road this weekend. decent team. Now we just



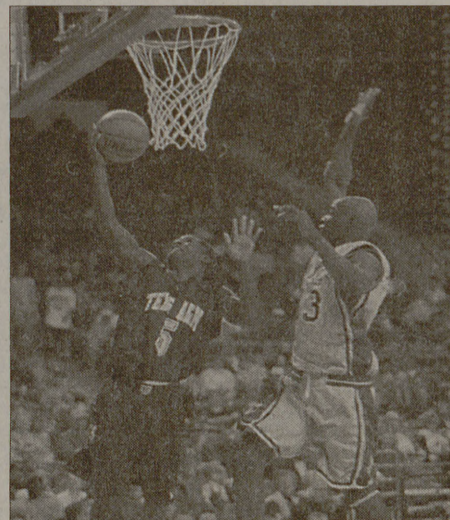
have to find a way to do it more than 10 to 12 minutes at a time."

Unfriendly Confines

Going into the Oklahoma State game, the Aggies move from one hostile environment to another.

Against Kansas at Allen Fieldhouse, A&M played before 16,300 fans, the largest crowd it has faced all season.

See AGGIE MEN on Page 9.



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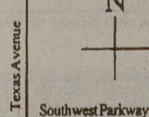
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