

2001 TEXAS A&M BASKETBALL

By DOUG FUENTES
THE BATTALION

Young Aggie squad hopes to surprise

The 2001-2002 Texas A&M men's basketball team begins its two-game exhibition season against Australia's Team ezzy-bonds at 7 p.m. at Reed Arena.

The Aggies are anxious to return to the court and improve on last season's 10-20 record that included a 3-13 record in Big 12 play. "I think we're excited about starting off again," said A&M men's basketball coach Melvin Watkins. "Any time you come off of a losing season, if you have the right type of players, they want to get out here and prove that they are winners. So, I hope this group is no different than that."

This season's team will be relatively young but not short on experience.

A&M returns four starters and nine lettermen from last season. Despite this, the Aggies are among the youngest teams in the Big 12 with only one senior on the roster.

Of the 15 players on the roster, nine either are freshmen or sophomores.

Still, 12 team members have at least one year of Division I college basketball experience.

The Aggies will again rely on the play of junior shooting guard Bernard King. King, who has been a fixture in the starting lineup since his freshman season, ranked third in the Big 12 with an 18.0 scoring average and was listed among the league's top 10 in assists (4.8), steals (1.5) and three-point field goals (2.1).

"He was kind of thrust into that [leadership] roll probably a little unfairly," Watkins said. "But we had no choice, and I think he's done a pretty good job."



JUNIOR
BERNARD KING

PHOTO • THE BATTALION

See YOUNG on page 3B.

By BRIAN RUFF
THE BATTALION

Ags look to improve on Big 12 record

At 2-14, the Texas A&M women's basketball team did not have the kind of conference season most would hope for. This season, the Aggies will try to improve on their 2-14 conference record, but they will have to do it with a young team that is now without one of the most decorated players in A&M women's basketball.

Jaynetta Saunders, who is the first Aggie on a Women's Professional Basketball Association roster, is only the second Aggie to score 1,000 points in her career. Saunders accomplished the feat in just two years with the Aggies. She set the career record for average points, with an 18.6 points per game average during her two years at A&M.

"She was just instant offense," said A&M women's basketball coach Peggie Gillom. "[This season], we have more than one person who can score."

Gillom is in her fourth year at the helm of the Aggie squad. Gillom was an assistant with the Houston Comets before coming to A&M.

Senior guard LaToya Rose and sophomore guard Toccara Williams will team up in 2001-2002 to replace the offense that was lost with Saunders' graduation.

Rose averaged 9.6 points per game for the Aggies, and was named to the All-tournament team at last year's Aggie Invitational.

Williams was a standout freshman for the Aggies during the 2000-2001 season. Williams started every game last season and set the school freshman record for assists.



SOPHOMORE
TOCCARA WILLIAMS

See IMPROVE on page 3B.

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