

Road calls again for A&M

Rush, Gilbert lead way for No. 21 Tigers

By True Brown
THE BATTALION

After a week to recuperate from a tough two-point loss to Texas Tech University last week, the Texas A&M men's basketball team hits the road tonight for a Big 12 game against No. 21 Missouri.

The stumbling Aggies have lost five straight and have scored more than 65 points in just three of their last 11 games. In that same stretch, A&M has allowed almost 77 points per game.

Eight of the Aggies' last nine games were away from Reed Arena.

"We're very concerned (about the road)," said A&M head coach Melvin Watkins. "When you look around the landscape of college basketball — seeing Kansas get beat at UCLA — it's difficult for any teams to go on the road and get a win."

Now the Aggies are faced with containing the duo of Missouri's Kareem Rush and Clarence Gilbert.

Rush, a forward, is the Big 12's third leading scorer, while Gilbert, a guard, contributes more than 16 points per game to give the Tigers one of the toughest one-two punches in the league.

"You've got to know where they are at all times," Watkins said. "Our challenge will be to make sure we cloak them and not give them any easy looks. The negative part to that is that they have shown the ability to hit tough shots, especially in their building."

While the Aggies struggled through a long road stretch, Missouri saw its ranking go from No. 2 down to No. 21 after a string of three losses in late December.

Iowa and Illinois, both top 20 teams, and DuPaul claimed wins over the Tigers.

Missouri coach Quin Snyder has earned a 50-30 record as the Tigers' third-year head coach but has not finished a season higher than sixth in conference play, prompting some rumblings around Columbia.

"The expectations that were placed on this team were high (at the beginning of the season)," Snyder said. "Those expectations are gone now, but what we are doing here requires patience. We're ranked in the top 20, and people are walking around like someone got shot. It's just going to get harder, because our conference is so unbelievably good."

Last Wednesday, Watkins' team showed signs of life it had not shown in a long time during A&M's 72-70 loss against the Bobby Knight-led Red Raiders. The Aggies held



GUY ROGERS • THE BATTALION

Texas A&M center Andy Slocum suffered a broken hand during last Wednesday's game and will not play against Missouri.

the lead nine times during the contest.

A&M committed only 10 turnovers and was helped by 36 points off the bench.

Watkins said Wednesday's good play has carried over into practice.

"A good indication (of A&M's improved play) is that we had more assists than turnovers, and that is something we haven't done in a while," Watkins said. "It was nice to see us get back into that frame of mind of sharing the ball and sharing the wealth. For us to have any success, we've got to do that."

Aggies looking for another top-10 win

By Kevin Espenlaub
THE BATTALION

The Texas A&M women's basketball team will attempt to knock off its second consecutive top-10 opponent Wednesday when it squares off with the No. 9 Kansas State Wildcats at 7 p.m. at Reed Arena.

The Aggies (10-5, 2-1) last played Saturday when they defeated the then-ranked No. 5 Iowa State Cyclones by the score of 88-71 behind the hot shooting of senior guard LaToya Rose, who drained a school record-tying eight 3-pointers on her way to a career-high 28 points.

Junior forward Kim Moore added 15 points and sophomore guard Toccara Williams nearly reached a quadruple-double with her 12 points, 12 assists, 8 rebounds and 8 steals against the Cyclones.

Rose and her teammates will need another solid performance to knock off the Wildcats (16-1, 4-0) who are currently on a 13-game winning streak and will travel into College Station tied for the Big 12 lead.

"There's no rest for us," said A&M women's head basketball coach Peggie Gillom following Saturday's game. "We have to think about Kansas State. In this league, there is not much time until your next game."

The Wildcats made the top 25 poll for the first time in nearly 18 years last week after upset victories

over Iowa State and Baylor.

Kansas State continued their streak this season with an 85-71 victory over visiting Nebraska on Saturday in front of a sellout crowd of 13,466 in Bramlage Coliseum. The record setting crowd saw the team's leading scorer, freshman Laurie Koehn, hit six three-pointers on her way to a game-high 26 points that included a perfect 6-of-6 from the free-throw line. On Monday, Koehn was rewarded by being named the Big 12's Rookie of the Week.

"We're gonna be seeing some of the same looks we saw against Iowa State when we play Kansas State," Gillom said. "We're gonna be seeing the 2-3 zone defense again. LaToya shot it to bring them outside against Iowa State and then we got it down inside and had a lot of people scoring. We're going to have to do a lot of the same things against K-State."

Kansas State has already surpassed their total number of wins from last season when they finished with a 12-16 overall record and were 2-14 in conference games.

The Wildcats will be the second of seven-straight ranked opponents the Aggies will face in the coming weeks. A win over Kansas State would be the first time the Aggie women's team has accomplished back-to-back conference wins since they joined the Big 12 in the 1996-1997 season.

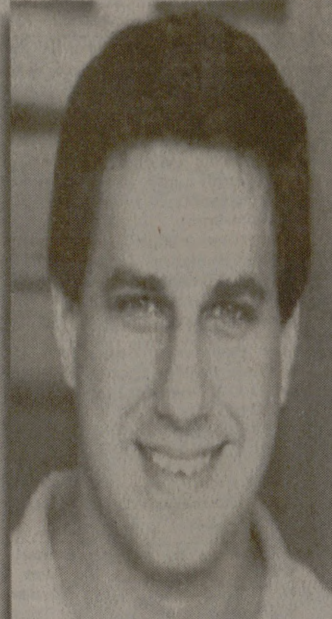
SPORTS IN BRIEF

Mavericks win, 116-107

ATLANTA (AP) — Dirk Nowitzki scored 40 points and the Dallas Mavericks tied a franchise record with 18 3-pointers in a 116-107 victory over the Atlanta Hawks on Tuesday night.

Nowitzki eclipsed his regular-season high of 38 points, though he fell short of a 42-point effort in a playoff game at San Antonio last season. Nowitzki was 6-of-15 from 3-point range.

Steve Nash added 29 points, making five 3s, and Tim Hardaway scored 18.

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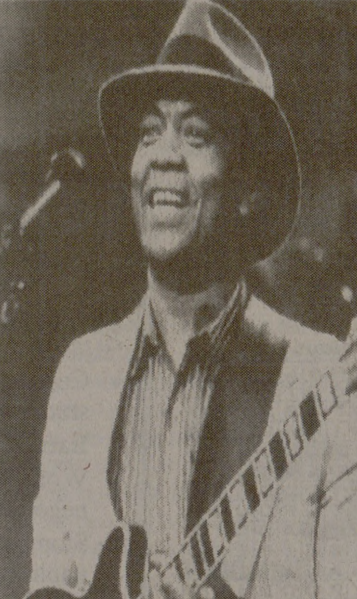
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