

SPORTS

THE BATTALION

Page 7 • Tuesday, November 12, 2002

Aggies open with exhibition win over Ukraine

Men's basketball team rolls to 86-73 victory at Reed

By True Brown
THE BATTALION

Antoine Wright made sure his first game in an Aggie uniform was a memorable one.

The freshman from San Bernardino, Calif., scored a team-high 24 points and added eight rebounds as the Texas A&M basketball team notched an 86-73 win over MBC Nicolaev in the Aggies' exhibition opener.

"It felt good," Wright said. "I was just trying to stay from getting too excited. It was my first college game, so I was talking to (senior guard) Bernard (King) before the game and telling them to keep me down and not let me get too high. I was relaxed, and I was ready to play."

Wright was even subject to some good-natured hazing after the game by King, who made the newcomer turn his jersey around so his name would be in front before he came into the media room for post-game interviews.

King added 16 points and Kevin Turner, a junior transfer, added 15 to help the Aggies, who never trailed in the contest.

Because of a sizable early lead, head coach Melvin Watkins was able to get every player in uniform on the floor. A&M's bench scored 22 points, led by an eight-point effort by junior Jesse King.

"We were trying to get a look at everyone,"

Watkins said. "That will change some as we get into the season. Tonight we wanted to get all these guys into the game. The rotations were not probably what they will be, but we use exhibitions to continue to evaluate our players."

A&M jumped to an early 20-6 lead five minutes into the first half after Wright's fourth field goal of the game. Wright scored 11 points in the first 5:19 of the game and was 6-of-9 from the floor in the first half.

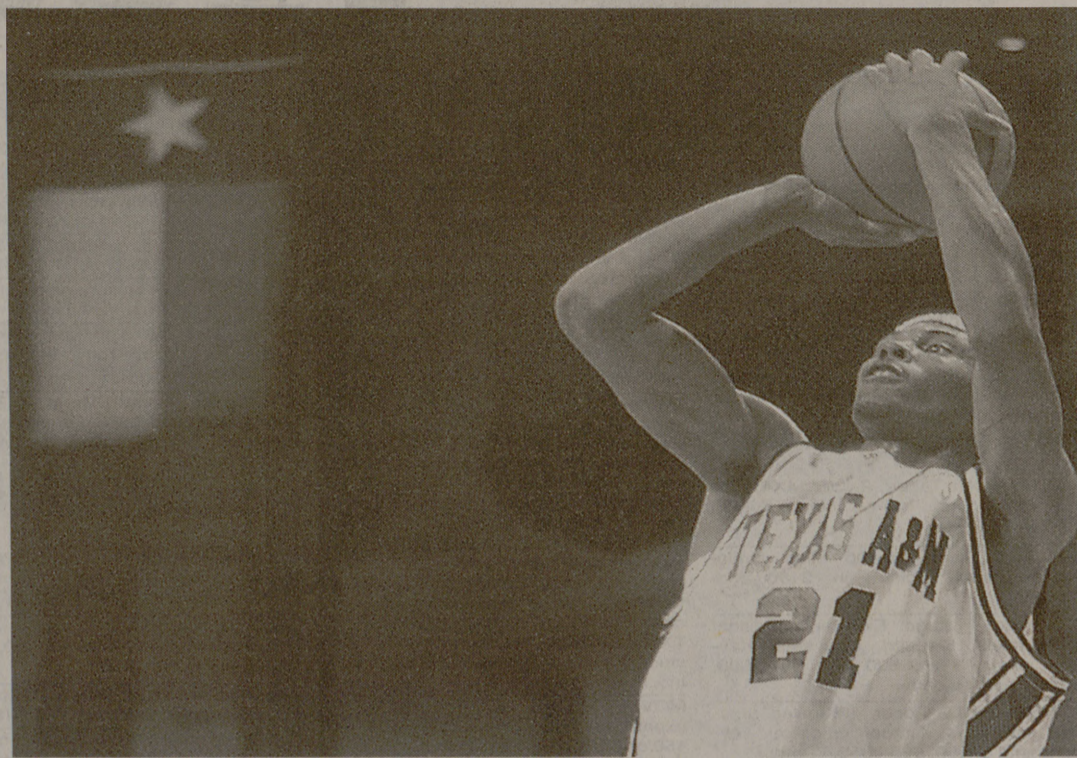
"He came out very aggressive," said King, who has carried the majority of A&M's scoring load during his first three seasons. "He's a good scorer and took a lot of pressure off me. It's going to be tough to stop us both."

Nicolaev climbed back into the game late in the first half after a three-pointer by Oleksandr Rayevskyy cut A&M's lead to three points, but Wright built A&M's lead back to five after a pair of free throws.

Nicolaev never got closer than four again as the Aggies quickly built their lead to 15 by halftime.

"We looked at the scoreboard a couple times and got a little casual," Watkins said. "I broke out of rhythm a few times with my subbing. There are some things we need to be more conscious of and get better at as we get closer to the season."

The Aggies will wrap up their two-game exhibition schedule next Tuesday against the EA Sports All-Stars.



JOHN C. LIVAS • THE BATTALION

Texas A&M freshman forward Antoine Wright attempts a three-pointer in Monday's game at Reed Arena.

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Aggie soccer team hosts first and second round NCAA action this week

The No. 4 Texas A&M women's soccer team will host first and second round action for the NCAA Championship Tournament beginning on Friday at the Aggie Soccer Complex.

The Aggies (17-4-1) will meet Northwestern State (12-5-5) Friday at 7:30 p.m. in the first round.

A&M was the Big 12 Regular Season Champion and an at-large qualifier for the tournament.

Northwestern is the representative of the Southland Conference after winning the conference tournament.

The Aggies will be one of 16 different schools hosting the first two rounds of the tournament.

The No. 8 University of Texas Longhorns (15-4-1) will also be playing in College Station against the Western Athletic Conference (WAC) Champion Southern Methodist University (12-5-4) at 5 p.m. Friday in the first round.

The winners from the two matches will play in the second round matchup on Sunday at 1:30 p.m. at the Soccer Complex.

Missouri attempting to get over hump

COLUMBIA, Mo. (AP) — So close, and yet so far.

Missouri's second-year coach, Gary Pinkel, appears to be on the verge of turning the program around. Week in and week out, the Tigers are competitive.

They've put scares into No. 1 Oklahoma, No. 21 Iowa State and No. 18 Colorado, losing by a touchdown each time. They led in the second half against Iowa State last week and Colorado on Saturday.

But, the bottom line isn't pretty. Missouri's record, 4-6 overall and 1-5 in the Big 12, makes the program appear as if it's still on the skids.

That's how tough it is to climb the ladder in one of the nation's top conferences.

Pinkel, a success on the mid-major level at Toledo, is convinced he'll get the job done at Missouri where the school is closing in on its 17th losing season in 19 years and has lost 17 in a row to ranked opponents. Right now, that's small consolation.

"We're close, but it's all about

"We're close, but it's all about winning. There's not a magical answer for it except just keep working and persevering and getting through it."

— Gary Pinkel
Missouri head football coach

winning." Pinkel said after Saturday's 42-35 overtime loss to Colorado. "There's not a magical answer for it except just keep working and persevering and getting through it."

As heartbreaking as the recent losses have been, and Saturday's was the worst of the lot, Pinkel will take them over the alternative of losing big. He had enough of that last year as players seemed to struggle

embracing the new program, getting outscored 79-10 the final two games at Kansas State and Michigan State.

"Are we going to become a much better team next year and the next year, I don't think there's any question about that," Pinkel said. "I feel awesome about our program. But that doesn't help this."

Moral victories, he's having none of. Missouri rallied from a 27-7 deficit to take a 28-27 lead at one point, but created its own misfortune with a poor first half.

"We're competing, but when around here do you pass an award out because you compete?" Pinkel said. "For some reason people think we tried hard in the second half. Why wouldn't we."

"If you've got any heart or any character, if you're a competitor, you should fight."

Players are doing a good job of keeping their chins up. Wide receiver Darius Outlaw got a sympathetic reception after fumbling away the Tigers' overtime possession to end

the game, which left a Faurot Field crowd in stunned silence. And players on offense insist they're not getting tired of carrying the load for a porous defense that surrendered 575 yards on Saturday.

"The game of football is a team game," wide receiver Justin Gage said. "You can't point fingers at the defense or anything like that."

Some day soon, players believe, this team will get over the hump.

"It's getting smaller and you can see it as we progress every week," Outlaw said. "The last five weeks have been tough on us, these last-minute losses."

"We've just got to play hard from the first minute to the fourth quarter and then everything else should fall into place."

Missouri will attempt to get over its hump when it visits College Station on Saturday to take on the Texas A&M Aggies, who upset then No. 1-ranked University of Oklahoma last week at Kyle Field, knocking the Sooners out of the BCS hunt.

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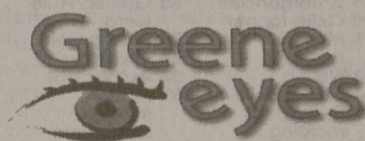
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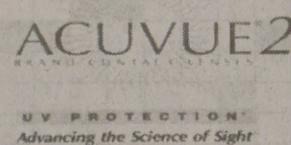
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