

SPORTS

THE BATTALION

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Aggies hosting UTSA with streak on the line

By Michael Crow
THE BATTALION

A red-hot and well-rested Texas A&M men's basketball team will return to the court on Sunday at Reed Arena to host the University of Texas-San Antonio Roadrunners (UTSA). The Aggies (5-1) have been on a four-game tear since losing a close game to Miami on Nov. 26. The streak includes wins over Louisiana State, Tennessee, and most recently, Prairie View A&M in double overtime.

While the A&M men have continued adding to their win total, freshman guard Antoine Wright has continued to play like a seasoned veteran. Wright averaged just under 19 points and 10 rebounds in the Aggies' three victories last week on his way to becoming the Phillips 66 Big 12 Rookie of the Week for the second consecutive week. Wright poured in 21 points and nabbed 12 rebounds against Prairie View in A&M's most recent contest.

"I knew he could score, but his rebounding has been a plus for us, so we hope he can continue to do that,"

said A&M head coach Melvin Watkins. The Aggies' significantly improved defense has provided some peace of mind for Watkins. Since allowing 65 second-half points in a forgettable preseason game versus the EA Sports All-Stars, the Aggies have finally started to show signs of life on both ends of the court.

"We've made defense a top priority," Watkins said. "We've put a lot of emphasis on (defense) because we know that's an area where, to be a good team, you've got to play well."

On Sunday, A&M has an opportunity to further the team's defensive confidence, as UTSA head coach Kevin Carter and his team (2-3) will continue adjusting to a new offensive scheme. Carter made the changes just two days prior to his team's 81-67 victory over St. Mary's University a week and a half ago.

"We installed a new offense ... so we are still a little shaky with what we are doing, but I thought we did a good job of controlling the second half (against St. Mary's)," Carter said.

While the Roadrunners lack the early season record A&M boasts,

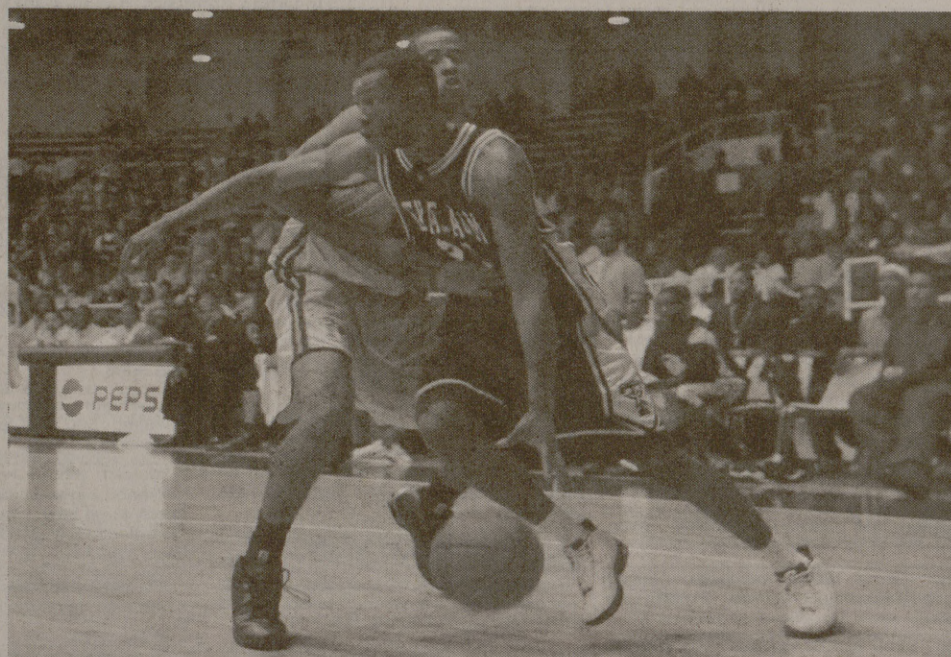
UTSA has its share of threatening players. Junior forward Leroy Hurd dropped 21 points on St. Mary's and has posted double-digit outings in all five of his team's games thus far. Of late, senior forward Ike Akotaobi has been the Roadrunners' hottest hand, throwing down 24 points in a loss to Marquette University and matching Hurd's 21 points in UTSA's last game.

Committed to avoiding a collapse following the Aggies' scorching start, Watkins does not want his team to become complacent.

"Can we win some close games? Can we compete with Big 12-caliber teams? I think we've answered some of those questions," Watkins said. "Now the question has to be: Can we get better? Can we take it another step? Hopefully, the answer is yes."

The A&M men will enter Sunday's game off an eight-day hiatus, during which players prepared for final exams. Tip-off is scheduled for 2 p.m.

A&M's new head football coach Dennis Franchione will be speaking to fans at halftime.



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A&M freshman forward Antoine Wright drives past his Prairie View defender last Saturday. Wright was named Big 12 Rookie of the Week for the second consecutive time earlier this week.

New coaches named

By Dallas Shipp
THE BATTALION

Texas A&M Head Football Coach Dennis Franchione announced Les Koenning, Jr. as the new offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach on Thursday.

Koenning is one of eight assistant coaches making the move from Alabama to A&M with Franchione. The Crimson Tide offense was ranked No. 1 in the Southeastern Conference last season.

"I'm pleased (Koenning) will join our staff as offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach," Franchione said. "He's done an

excellent job of coordinating (Alabama's) offense the past two years."

This will be Koenning's second stop in College Station. Koenning worked with wide receivers at A&M from 1995-96 before working on Jimmy Johnson's staff with the Miami Dolphins as an offensive assistant in 1997.

Koenning moved back to the college game in 1998 as offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach at Duke University.

Koenning served in the same capacity at Houston before joining

See **Coaches** on page 4B

Aggies ready to take on Mavericks

By Gary Livingston
THE BATTALION

The Texas A&M women's basketball team will try to extend its five-game winning streak when it hosts the University of Texas-Arlington (UTA) Mavericks on Saturday at Reed Arena at 2 p.m.

The Aggies (5-1) are coming off an impressive 85-68 win over Wright State (1-5) in which senior forward Kim Moore had a double-double with a season-high 20 points and 12 rebounds. Junior center Lynn Classen also scored a career and season-high 20 points.

"This was a big road win for us," said A&M head coach Peggie Gillom. "We started slow, but picked it up on defense.

We started to beat them inside and I thought that was the key to the game."

In the game, the Aggies scored 56 of their 85 points in the paint and outrebounded Wright State, 46-31.

"We just kept pounding at them," Gillom said. "Lynn (Classen) really wanted this game. She is quickly becoming a leader for us. She is just getting better with each game."

The Aggies will now set their sights on Saturday's match up with UTA (2-3).

Last season, the Mavericks went 14-15 overall and 12-8 in the Southland conference.

The Mavericks have all five starters returning from last year's squad including center Sheena Johnson, who averaged 10

points and 11 rebounds per game, and forward Rola Ogunoye, who averaged 13 points and six rebounds.

The two teams have not faced off since 1988, but the Aggies hold a 6-1 all-time advantage over the Mavericks and have won six straight games against UTA.

During the Aggies' five-game winning streak, they have won by an average of 23 points a game and captured the Whataburger Women's Basketball Classic.

Junior guard Toccara Williams, who leads the nation in steals and is averaging 6.6 assists and 5 steals per game, has been posting another solid year for A&M. She is the Big 12 Conference's active steal leader with 244 and is only 64 shy of breaking A&M's all-time record held by Lisa Branch.

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