

SPORTS

THE BATTALION

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Aggies take on No. 20 Texas Men's basketball seeking consecutive conference wins

By Dallas Shipp
THE BATTALION

This time in 2002, the Texas A&M basketball team went down the road to Austin and accomplished something that an Aggie basketball team had not done since the 1984-85 season: it beat the Longhorns on their home court.

This year, the No. 4 'Horns are stronger and faster than last year's squad, but the Aggies still feel they have a chance to win the game.

"It's always tough to go on the road in the Big 12," said A&M head coach Melvin Watkins. "That's our challenge, to go on the road and see how well we can play in the Big 12."

Road wins in the Big 12 don't come easy for anyone, but the Aggies have had an especially difficult time on the road since joining the conference.

Since joining the Big 12 in the 1996-97

season, the Aggies are a combined 6-43 on the road in Big 12 conference play, including their win against Nebraska Wednesday.

The Aggies' performance on the road should be a confidence booster for the Aggies heading into Austin Saturday night.

A&M held off Nebraska with a strong finish in Lincoln. Senior guard Bernard King scored with 1:01 remaining in the game. Neither team scored again in the final minute and the Aggies held on for the 53-52 win.

King's 18-point effort in the win against Nebraska puts him 96 points away from the all-time Big 12 scoring record of 1,779 career points.

Watkins said the key to winning on the road is confidence.

"You better have some good players with lots of confidence," Watkins said. "That surely puts you in position to win on the road. If you don't have that confidence you are in a bad, bad situation."

"Part of being good is having confidence to go out and execute your game plan."

The Longhorns (11-2, 2-0 Big 12) have had that confidence so far this season. The Longhorns' two losses were to Notre Dame in the BB&T Classic in Washington, D.C. and on the road to Arizona.

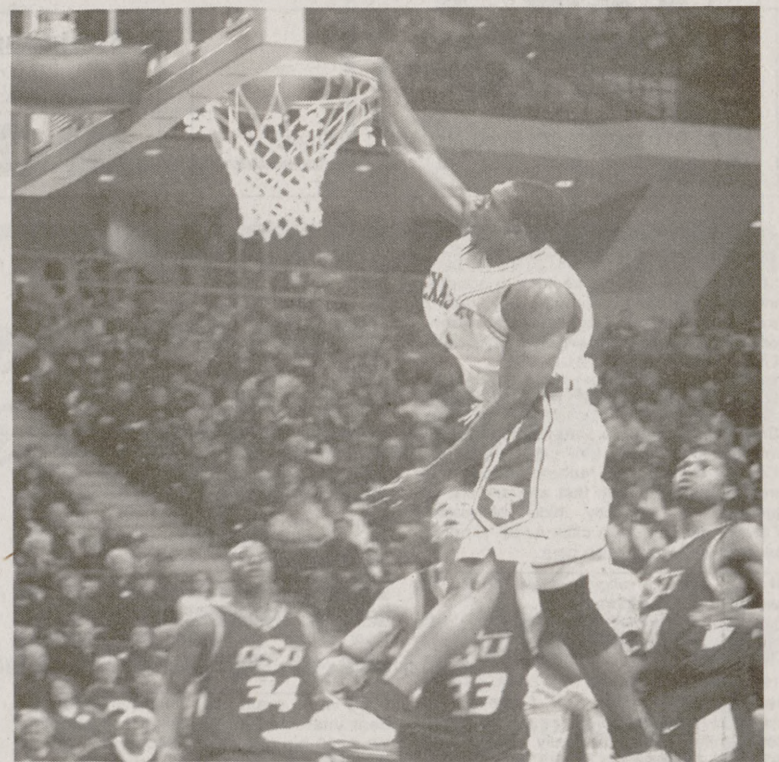
UT struggled early in its last action as it trailed by as many as 11 points in the first half at Baylor University before pulling out an 16-1 scoring run in the second half to gain the lead for good and leave Waco with the 82-71 victory.

The Longhorns are led by sophomore guard T.J. Ford, who has been dominant on offense and defense. Ford enters Saturday night's game with the Aggies averaging 13.0 points per game and leads the team with 30 steals.

Texas has beaten A&M in 22 of their past 25 meetings, dating back to 1986-87.

The Longhorns lead the all-time series with a commanding 121-79 record against the Aggies.

The game will tip-off at 7 p.m. at Frank C. Irwin, Jr. Center.



ALISSA HOLLIMON • THE BATTALION
Aggie guard Bernard King dunks the ball while the Oklahoma State Cowboys look on. A&M will face the Longhorns on Saturday night.

Women's basketball travels to OU following loss to Longhorns

By Michael Crow
THE BATTALION

The Texas A&M women's basketball team will have an opportunity to move forward after being trounced 74-47 by the University of Texas when the Aggies travel to face the Oklahoma Sooners on Saturday.

The overwhelming defeat at the hands of the 20th-ranked Longhorns came on Wednesday night at Reed Arena. Texas' Stacy Stephens scored 18 points, aiding her team in its third straight victory, but the Aggies' most significant problems were associated

with their inability to rebound. A&M was outrebounded 50-26 in the game.

"I thought we had fixed that since the Texas Tech game," said A&M head coach Peggie Gillom. "I thought rebounding was going to be one of the keys of the game."

The Aggies' rebounding struggles were likely to be expected following the retirement of Kim Moore, the team's leading rebounder, announced this past Wednesday. Moore cited personal reasons as the motivation for her departure.

It is doubtful that things will get much easier for Gillom and her team during the trip to Lloyd Noble Center in Norman. No. 23 Oklahoma finished as

the NCAA runner-up just a year ago. Still, the Sooners returned only one starter from last year's squad and are fresh off of an 80-71 loss to No. 7 Texas Tech on Wednesday. Junior guard Maria Villarreal contributed 20 points for Oklahoma, which surrendered its first conference loss at home in more than a year.

"We had a few slips, and every time we did, they made us pay," said Sooners' head coach Sherri Coale. "They're not ranked No. 7 in the country for nothing."

Oklahoma had trouble shooting versus the Red Raiders, despite putting up 71 points. One of the Sooners' top

offensive threats, sophomore guard Dionnah Jackson, shot just two of 16.

"We have come to depend on her for about 15 points, and she just struggled and took some ill-advised shots," Coale said. "I thought we executed better, but we still have a long way to go."

With A&M and Oklahoma coming off upsetting defeats, Saturday's game becomes much more important for each team. The Aggies could pick up consecutive Big 12 road wins for the first time, while the Sooners will be working to maintain a national ranking in the top 25.

Junior A&M point guard Toccarra Williams will certainly be a player to watch, having averaged 13.3 points, 6.5

assists and 5.2 steals per game. Williams ranks first nationally in steals and is 15th in the country in assists. One of Williams' goals entering the season was a top-six finish in conference, an accomplishment being sought by many teams in the conference.

"When you're in the top six, you're going to be recognized as one of the best teams in the nation," Williams said. "The Big 12 is the hardest conference, so being in the top six says a lot."

Oklahoma will depend on improvement from Jackson, along with continued output from older players such as Villarreal.

Tip-off will be at 7 p.m.

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Aggie Nights

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