

SPORTS

THE BATTALION

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Aggies travel to face No. 7 Kansas Jayhawks

KU boasts one of nation's best home-court records

By Dallas Shipp
THE BATTALION

The Texas A&M men's basketball team will face one of its toughest challenges tonight when it meets the No. 7 Kansas Jayhawks at Allen Fieldhouse in Lawrence, Kan.

The Jayhawks are 13-3 this year at home with two of their three losses coming against Arizona, which was ranked No. 1 in the nation at the time, and Florida, which was ranked No. 7. The Aggies (13-10, 5-7 Big 12) are 2-6 on the road this year, including a heart-breaking 70-69 loss to Texas Tech in Lubbock on Saturday.

Senior guard Bernard King led the Aggies with 23 points in the losing effort.

A&M Head Coach Melvin Watkins said he knows tonight's game against Kansas will be just as tough as any other Big 12 game on the road.

"(Kansas) is one of the best teams in the country, so we know we'll have to play our best basketball," Watkins said. "They have an excellent inside game, and they are equally good on the perimeter."

The Jayhawks are coming off of a tough 77-70 loss to No. 5 Oklahoma on Sunday. With the loss, Kansas is now tied with Oklahoma for the lead in the Big 12 with a 10-2 conference record.

Kansas has four players averaging more than 15 points per game including senior forward Nick Collison, who leads the Jayhawks with 18.7 points per game and 9.1 rebounds per game. Collison trails A&M's King by just 44 points for the all-time Big 12 scoring leader.

The Jayhawks are third in the nation in averaging 84.2 points per game, more than 10 points higher than the Aggies' average of 74.1.

"Kansas likes to score a lot of points and they do it with their

transition game," Watkins said. "Our challenge is to try to slow them down in transition."

The Aggies will have to keep their number of turnovers down against the Jayhawks to reduce the amount of transition points by Kansas. A&M enters tonight's contest averaging 14.8 turnovers per game, the worst in the Big 12. But in their last six games the Aggies have lowered that number to 12.8.

"We have to be able to handle their pressure and limit our turnovers, which has been a problem for us at times this season," Watkins said.

Rebounding will be another key to the match up tonight. Kansas has out-rebounded its opponents this year by an average of 7.7 boards per game, fifth in the nation. The Aggies have been outrebounded by their opponents by 2.5 boards per game, also the worst in the Big 12.

On the positive side for the

Aggies, King has scored in double digits in his last 18 straight games and is averaging 18 points per game this season.

Kansas Head Coach Roy Williams said King is a strong leader on the court for the Aggies and Kansas is not looking past this game.

"Bernard (King) has played the way he's played for years (and is) doing a great job for them," Williams said. "I think they're much more of a team this year and their record shows it; they're much improved."

The Aggies will need a strong offensive performance to stand a chance against the highly-touted Jayhawks. A&M is 12-2 when shooting at least 43.2 percent from the field.

"We need to finish the season as strong as we can to get some momentum going for the conference tournament," Watkins said.

Tip-off is set for 6:37 p.m. and the game will be televised on local cable.



JOHN C. LIVAS • THE BATTALION

A&M guard Bernard King brings the ball up the court. King is the Big 12 Conference's career scoring leader, leading KU's Nick Collison by 44 points

A&M returns home following consecutive losses

By Blake Kimzey
THE BATTALION

The Texas A&M women's basketball team will return home this week where the weather is a bit nicer, at least inside of Reed Arena. After back-to-back losses against Iowa State and Kansas State on the road, the Aggies' home record of 8-5 looks inviting.

The Aggies will face Oklahoma State University tonight, after a dismal shooting performance over

the weekend helped No. 5 KSU usher in an easy 88-49 victory against A&M in Manhattan, Kan. The Aggies shot just 32 percent from the floor against the top team in the Big 12.

"Once again we got into a game where we couldn't score," said A&M Head Coach Peggie Gillom.

However, going into the match against OSU (6-18, 2-11 Big 12), Gillom said there is still hope that the Aggies (10-14, 3-10 Big 12) can enter the final stretch of the 2003 season with an added sense

of urgency. With three games remaining in the season before the Big 12 tournament tips off, the Aggies see their remaining contests against OSU, Baylor and Missouri as potential victories.

"The story to this season is not written yet," said A&M Assistant Coach Steve Curtis. "We have two more games at home, and one on the road which are all winnable."

Only OSU and Nebraska are below the Aggies in the Big 12 standings, and facing OSU could prove fruitful and give A&M an

added boost of confidence with a win. As regular season play winds down, Curtis said the Aggies are looking to improve their seeding for the end of season Big 12 tournament by staying focused and finding ways to win their remaining games.

"We told them yesterday in practice that we're playing for our seed in the Big 12 tournament at this point," Curtis said. "When our

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ALISSA HOLLIMON • THE BATTALION

Toccara Williams attempts a shot under the basket.

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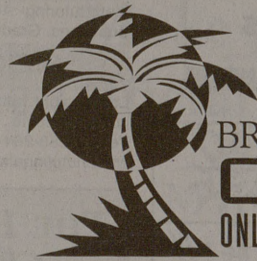
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