

SPORTS

THE BATTALION

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Basketball teams push forward after losses

Men go to Iowa State in search of first win

By Troy Miller
THE BATTALION

Looking at the Big 12 conference standings, it's easy to see Texas A&M on the bottom and believe the Aggies are destined for another disappointing season.

But what is not seen just by looking at the standings is that A&M (7-8, 0-4 Big 12) is playing some of the best basketball in the league.

In their four losses in conference play, the Aggies have been in the position to win all of them. Three of those games came against three of the better teams in the nation, No. 12 Kansas, No. 13 Texas Tech and Missouri.

In past years, the Aggies would still be winless after that slate, but they would never have been close.

"It could be something as simple as one ball bouncing our way, or one rebound bouncing our way," said A&M coach Melvin Watkins. "We sit here and look at our tapes, and with a play here or there we could be 4-0. That's how close it's been for us. They're going to get a win in conference, they're working too hard for it."

The Aggies' schedule doesn't get any easier as they travel to Ames, Iowa, to face Iowa State (11-4, 2-2) Wednesday at 6:30 p.m.

The Cyclones are coming off a hard 63-59 loss in Waco to Baylor University, but Iowa State's Hilton Coliseum is one of the toughest places to play in the country.

"I think we have tremendous fans," said Iowa State coach Wayne Morgan. "Our fans create an atmosphere where it is difficult for other teams to play. I think we have a great home-court advantage."

Iowa State boasts two prominent players in senior forward Jackson Vroman and junior center Jared Homan. Vroman is averaging 13.6 points and 9.9 rebounds per game while Homan is averaging 12.1 points and 6.7 rebounds.

A&M senior center Andy Slocum will be charged with defending the low post again, something he has done successfully thus far.

"Andy Slocum is having his best year of his career," Watkins said. "Other coaches are saying he's a handful to try to handle."

The 7-foot tall Slocum has had to handle big posts before this season. In the Aggies' 65-59 loss to Kansas, Slocum held the Jayhawk's Wayne Simien and Jeff Graves well below their averages. Graves didn't get a single rebound against Slocum.

But holding big men down and winning small moral victories against prominent teams are not what this Aggie ball club is after. A&M is after wins.

"The last four games have been real close," Slocum said. "I think we're going to turn it around with a winning streak soon."

The last time A&M met Iowa State was in the first round of last season's Big 12 Tournament in Dallas. Iowa State blew out the



JOHN C. LIVAS • THE BATTALION

Aggie center Andy Slocum attempts to shoot under Texas Tech Red Raiders Gevonne Giles (left 21) and Mikey Marshall (rear) during last Saturday's game at Reed Arena. Slocum added 11 points to the Aggies 78 during their defeat 78-80

Aggies in an upset 97-70 win to propel them into the National Invitation Tournament.

This year the Aggies are hoping that a win over Iowa State can propel them into the win column and get over the hump.

"You start to see where teams

are going to find their niche (niche)," Watkins said. "Our kids feel like we're going to make a run for this thing. We're going to be in the middle of it. The fact that we got off to a slow start doesn't mean we're going to finish up that way."

Women Aggies travel to No. 7 Texas Tech

By Brad Bennett
THE BATTALION

The statistics are against the Aggie women's basketball team when it travels to Lubbock to play No. 7 Texas Tech tonight.

The unranked Aggies have yet to win a Big 12 game, while Tech is 3-2.

The Aggies shot a meager 31.5 percent last game against University of Texas, while Tech averages 45 percent for the season. Worst of all, the Aggies have not won a game against Tech in their last 14 tries.

Fortunately for the Aggies, the game won't be decided by conjecture but by 40 minutes of basketball.

After Sunday's loss to No. 5 Texas, Aggie guard Toccarra Williams said she was ready for Tech.

"We can't let this get us down," Williams said. "They lost a key player (top scorer Jia Perkins), and we hope to take advantage of that."

Perkins was injured earlier in the season and will not play on tonight.

Aggie Head Coach Gary Blair said Perkins' injury hurts Tech, but believes the Red Raiders are still a team capable of winning the national championship.

"Texas Tech has tremendous depth, where they can lose their best player and it affects them but it doesn't affect them that much," Blair said.

Tech has dropped five spots in The Associated Press poll from number two to seven since Perkins' injury.

Blair said Tech freshman Alicia Robertson has taken up the slack for the Raiders in the last two games since Perkins went down.

Robertson averages 19.7 points per game for the season with 27 in the overtime loss versus Oklahoma State last weekend.

In Aggieland last weekend, Williams had a career high, 24 points and nine steals. With 405 steals to her credit, she is now No. 13 all time, in

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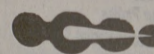
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