

## Ho leads Aggie women into NCAA finals

By Troy Miller  
THE BATTALION

The No. 24 Texas A&M women's swimming and diving team will wrap up its season this week at the NCAA Championships at the Lee and Joe Jamail Texas Swimming Center in Austin, Texas.

Three A&M swimmers will compete along with three Aggie divers. The Aggies have a shot at having their best finish since 1995 when they placed 18th in the nation.

"Our goal before the year began was to be top 20," said head coach Steve Bultman. "With three swimmers and three divers, that possibility exists."

All-American senior Clara Ho will compete in her fourth NCAA Championships; she will swim both the 100- and 200-yard butterfly. Ho is looking to turn some heads in the 200-yard butterfly. She currently ranks No. 11 in the nation with a time of 1:59.17.

"1:58 would be very satisfying," Ho said.

The NCAA Championships marks the last meet of a glorious four-year career for Ho. She holds school records in both the 100- and 200-yard butterfly and is part of all four A&M relay records.

"It's been a really good four years," Ho said. "I've had a lot

of fun and it's sad to see it come to a close."

"I'll be sad to see her go," Bultman said. "I'm excited to see her race and I think she is ready to go out with a bang."

This meet foreshadows the future of Aggie swimming. The torch is being passed from Ho to freshmen Courtney Patterson and Christina Thompson who will also represent A&M in Austin.

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A&M swimming head coach

Patterson has held a piece of at least four Aggie records in her first year on the team.

In the 100-yard backstroke, Patterson holds the school record time of 55.20, which ranks No. 18 nationally. She will also swim the 200-yard backstroke, in which she ranks No. 22 nationally, and the 200-yard individual medley.

Thompson topped Patterson's school record during the 200-yard backstroke during the Big 12 Championships. Her time of 1:58.21 is the 20th best time in the nation. She will also race in the 100-yard backstroke as well as the 400-yard individual medley.

"It will be a good learning experience for [the freshmen]," Bultman said.

Senior Meghan Zack leads the Aggie divers as they look to have a strong showing this week in Austin.

Zack is fresh off of a second place finish to University of Houston sophomore Yulia Pakhalina, the defending NCAA champion in both the 1-meter and 3-meter competitions, at the Zone D Championships in Fayetteville, Ark.

Zack took home three Big 12 Championship rings last month in the 1-meter, 3-meter and platform events.

"Meghan has a chance to score some serious points," Bultman said.

Sophomore Katie Williams, the 2001 Big 12 platform champion, will also compete for the Aggies. Williams captured the third qualifying spot at the Zone D Championships on the strength of her first place finish on the platforms.

Junior Callie Petroff was able to gain the sixth and final qualifying spot in Arkansas after placing second to Williams in the platform competition.



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A&M senior Clara Ho heads up the six Aggies going to Austin to compete in the NCAA Championships.

Ho will be in her fourth NCAA Championship meet and will swim the 100- and 200-yard butterfly.

Zack, Williams and Petroff can expect stiff competition from Pakhalina and Texas divers Nicole Pohorenc and

Ally Hartzell. The NCAA Championships begin Wednesday and run through Saturday at the Lee and

Joe Jamail Texas Swimming Center in Austin. Preliminaries begin at 11 a.m. and finals begin at 7 p.m.

## A&M football begins spring with a few changes

### SPORTS IN BRIEF

#### No. 17 Aggies to host Bearkats

After dropping four of five games last week, the No. 17 Texas A&M baseball team will host the Sam Houston State Bearkats at Olsen Field at 7 p.m.

The Aggies (17-9, 5-4 in Big 12) suffered a sweep at the hands of Nebraska last weekend in Lincoln.

Sam Houston (10-12, 1-2 in Southland) lost two of three to the University of Texas - Arlington over the weekend.

Sophomore right-hander Brian Finch is the expected starter for A&M. Finch owns a 2-0 record and is averaging one strikeout for each inning pitched.

Earlier this season, the Aggies defeated Sam Houston, 18-5, in Huntsville. A&M has won 68 of the 104 games played between the two teams.

#### A&M claims 2nd in Invitational

The Texas A&M equestrian team tied Fresno State for second place in the combined English and western invitational season.

The Aggies won the English show in Las Cruces, N.M., Saturday but struggled Sunday and was shut out in the western competition Sunday. West Texas A&M captured the western crown Sunday, edging out Oklahoma State's "Black" team, 23-20.

The Aggies next action will be at the Zone 7 Championships on April 14.

#### Panthers trade Bure to Rangers

(AP) NEW YORK — The New York Rangers acquired forward Pavel Bure in a trade with the Florida Panthers on Monday night.

New York also acquired a second round pick and sent defenseman Igor Ulanov and Filip Novak to Florida along with three draft picks. "He's a constant threat," said Rangers general manager Glen Sather of Bure. "He's someone who can score any time he gets the puck on his stick. He's an artist. He's a superstar."



Doug Fuentes

The Texas A&M football team began spring practice on Monday with a two-hour session in shirts, shorts and helmets.

It was the first time the Aggies have been on the field since their 28-9 victory over TCU in the Galleryfurniture.com Bowl in Houston.

Linebacker Jared Morris and Jonte Buhl did not participate in practice on Monday and are not expected to practice this spring.

Both are nursing knee injuries with Morris' coming in the Texas game and Buhl's coming in the bowl game. Punter Cody Scates missed practice because of a late class.

#### Trading Places

The Aggies began spring practice with a couple of old faces in new places.

Keith Joseph, who played running back last season, will work out at fullback this spring and Dwain Goynes, who played wide receiver last season, will see time at tailback.

Joseph's move gives the Aggies more depth at fullback as Joe Weber and Stacy Jones are the only other fullbacks on the roster.

With the Aggies' depth at wide receiver, Goynes' move helps them use his speed.

"We're trying to get the best use out of our players to give us the most combinations for the fall," said A&M head coach R.C. Slocum. "That way we can

be 3-4 deep at tailback and 3-4 deep at fullback."

#### The Numbers Game

With the departure of seniors, some current players have switched their numbers.

Wide receiver Jamaar Taylor, who wore number 82 last season, is now wearing the number two of departed linebacker Christian Rodriguez.

Safety Terrance Kiel has switched from number 48 to the number eight, which was worn by Vance Smith last season.

Freshman offensive lineman Brandon Flanagan, who enrolled in the spring, has taken over the number 77 from departed center Seth McKinney.

Flanagan has another distinction — his size 20 shoes are the largest that Senior Associate Athletic Director of Facilities Billy Pickard has ever issued.

Pickard, who was a student trainer under coach Paul "Bear" Bryant in 1956,

became head trainer in 1965. In 1972, he accepted the title of equipment manager in addition to trainer.

#### Excellence in Execution

The Aggies have added a new wrinkle to their practices this season. During the last session of practice, the offense works on their play running and conditioning. "We're really working on execution," Slocum said. "We're working on plays and it has to be perfect. We were trying to get three perfect ones."

The offense lines up at the 10-yard line to run a play. The players must sprint through the play and execute it perfectly, or coaches start it over.

Prior to the drill, the four groups — quarterbacks, running backs, receivers and offensive linemen — go through four stations of agility drills to tire them out.

Slocum said the reason for the agility drills before the final exercise is to help the offense simulate conditions in the fourth quarter when the team is likely to be tired.

## Big 12 basketball success no surprise in NCAA's

With 32 teams remaining in the men's and women's NCAA tournaments, the nation's top teams are being whittled down to a select few. The contenders are separated from the pretenders, and as usual, there have been some surprises along the way.

Something that has not been a surprise is the Big 12 Conference's success in the postseason.

The Big 12 has proven to be one of the strongest conferences in the nation, and one needs to look no further than the tournament brackets to see that.

On the men's side, six teams from the league were invited to the tournament and four of them have advanced to the Sweet 16: Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas and Missouri. The two teams that did not make it, Texas Tech and Oklahoma State, suffered first-round defeats.

The only other conferences to send six teams to the big dance were the Big East and the PAC-10, but only two Big East teams and three PAC-10 teams are still alive.

The ACC, a conference whose name is often batted around as the nation's toughest basketball conference, has been mostly top-heavy. Of the four ACC schools in the tourney, the two that are still playing are both No. 1 seeds: Duke and Maryland. The other two schools, North Carolina State and Wake Forest, suffered second-round defeats.

While the ACC, Big East and PAC-10 are solid conferences, the Big 12 is a leg up on all three so far in the tournament. Kansas, the Midwest's No. 1 seed, and OU, the East's No. 2 seed,

have advanced with relative ease. UT and Missouri are the Big 12's two surprise teams, but even they are hardly surprises.

Texas and Missouri finished 3-4 in the Big 12's regular season race and are a testament to the league's depth, as they posted upsets en route to the Sweet 16. Texas knocked off No. 3-seeded Mississippi State, and Missouri rolled two top-five seeds on its way to the third round.

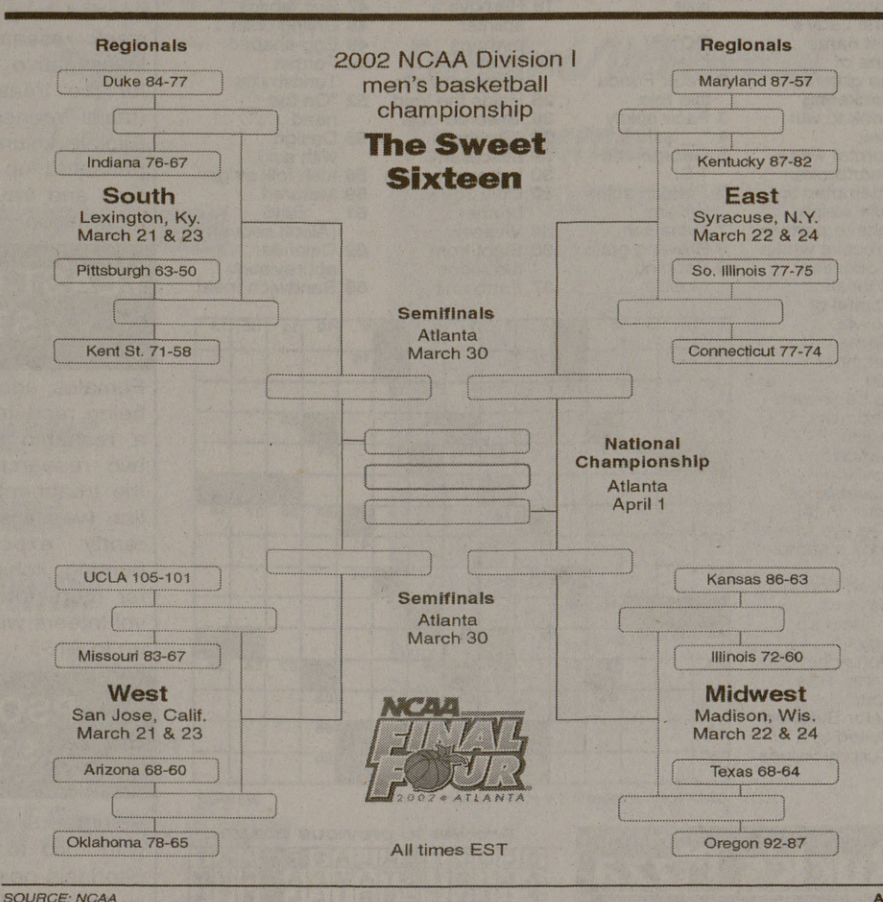
The case for the Big 12's hardcourt dominance is strengthened on the women's half of the bracket. The Big 12 sent seven teams to the tournament, second-most in the nation. Only the SEC had more, sending eight teams.

But the league leads the nation's conferences with all seven teams getting top-four seeds and getting to host first and second-round games. Six of the seven teams are still alive, and four have already clinched spots in the Sweet 16.

The way the women's teams are winning is equally impressive.

With their 77-55 win over Mississippi State, the Texas Tech Lady Raiders made their fourth-straight appearance in the regionals. Not to be left out, UT advanced after ending UC-Santa Barbara's 22-game winning streak. Big 12 women have outscored their opponents 937-724 in the tournament.

Although it would be a long shot, it is possible Oklahoma and Kansas could end up advancing to the Final Four in the men's bracket. The Sooners are the highest-seeded team



SOURCE: NCAA

AP

in the west, and Kansas owns the No. 1 seed in the Midwest. A strong run by those teams could culminate in a national championship game between two Big 12 schools, a game that would be a rematch of the Big 12 Tournament's championship game. But regardless of whether or not that

happens, the college basketball world is seeing what everyone in the Big 12 has been watching all season: an elite conference with elite teams.

True Brown is a sophomore agricultural journalism major.