



Cody Franklin — THE BATTALION

Senior Jeremy Efferding celebrates after the Aggies clinched the SEC Tournament over Georgia.

The time is now

Men's tennis team in prime position as NCAA's loom

By Alex Scott

The Aggies have never won a men's tennis national championship. But their time might be coming.

Ranked No. 3 in the nation — the highest ranking in program history — and with A&M head coach Steve Denton at the helm, the team could be poised to make its first appearance in the round of four or a championship in program history.

The Aggies will enter the NCAA tournament as the No. 6 overall seed and will host the first two rounds in College Station. With just under two weeks to prepare for their 22nd straight tournament appearance, the players have the time to ready themselves.

The NCAA tournament is as big as it gets in college tennis, and many teams allow themselves to work it up to the point that it becomes more of a distraction than a challenge. Back-to-back SEC Coach of the Year Denton said the key to advancing will be to take care of each step in stride, as the team did when it failed to go to the national indoors earlier in the year.

"We're the highest ranked team in the country that didn't play the national indoors by far," Denton said. "As a result of that early setback the guys just kind of put their heads down and just kind of grinded it out. That's what we've got to do as we get in a NCAA tourna-

ment is have that same mindset, just grinding these matches out one match at a time."

Senior Jeremy Efferding — who will represent A&M in the NCAA singles field — has been in this position before, entering the tournament as a top-eight seed at home with hopes of attaining the program's first championship. Now, he has a new way of thinking as he prepares for the NCAA's.

"Take it one match at a time, one point at a time and I think a trap that a lot of people get into and one that I personally have fallen into in the past is treating it differently — putting more emphasis on it, maybe falling to nerves a little bit more," Efferding said. "One thing that I have been stressing with Arthur and AJ and Jordi and some of the younger guys is just to play like any regular match, you know, go out there, compete your butt off and represent A&M well. And I think that's what they're doing and I think that's what really helped us win that SEC title."

Although the Aggies have been present in the tournament for over two decades, they have never advanced to the championship match. The mental side of the tournament will play a big role if they are to change that, Efferding said.

"[Denton] always has told us, 'Eyes on the prize and your mind tells you lies,' and so the more we focus on the national title, I mean, we have to get there first. We still have to win six or seven matches," Efferding said. "Last year we were thinking national title and we lost

in the second round hosting to Cal and that was really an eye-opener and a learning experience and that's something we can't do this year."

Playing at outdoor venues during the tournament introduces another challenge for the Aggies — the heat. Due to the conditions the players will face, Denton said the team will use practice time to prepare for the Texas heat.

"We're going to play in the heat of the day, in the afternoon and we're going to pep up our fitness over these next two weeks since we don't have matches," Denton said. "They've got to get acclimated to being out in this heat and playing a little bit longer and training a little harder and doing some stuff on their own as well."

As they prepare to enter tournament play, Denton said depth is one of the team's biggest assets.

"We don't really have holes in our lineup, we're capable of winning at every position," Denton said. "As I stated earlier in the year, I was a little uncertain about where our doubles play would be and it's certainly been a strength of our team. So I'd say depth and our doubles has really been a key component, and these guys have a great fighting spirit. When you play really big teams you can't be intimidated by them, you can't be afraid, you've got to go out and compete and play hard and our guys have done a good job of that this season."

Play begins at 2 p.m. May 8 against Eastern Kentucky.

SOFTBALL

Fox goes for complete game in bounce-back A&M home win

By Milkyas Gashaw

► The Aggies returned to the friendly confines of the Aggie Softball Complex and earned something that had become scarce in the last two weeks, a victory.

The Texas A&M softball team earned a much-needed victory by a score of 2-1 against the Texas State Bobcats Wednesday at the Aggie Softball Complex.

Rachel Fox pitched a complete game in the win. "Rachel did a great job," Evans said. "The only thing I wasn't happy about was the four straight balls to lead off the fourth inning that they scored the run off of. I thought she went out and did a nice job and was confident out there."

Cali Lanphear sent a Randi Rupp offering just over the right field wall to give the Aggies the early 1-0 lead in the bottom half of the first. Ashley Walters continued the home run party with another solo home run in the third.

The Bobcats (29-20, 11-6 Sun Belt) cut the lead down to one with an RBI single from Kimberlin Naivar, but A&M held on.

The Aggies continue their homestand with the final SEC series of the season against the Ole Miss Rebels on Friday. First pitch is scheduled for 6:30 p.m.



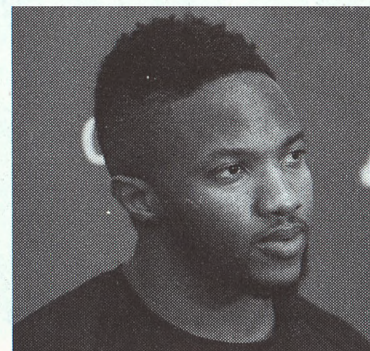
Tim Lai — THE BATTALION

Senior Rachel Fox threw a complete game in the 2-1 Wednesday win against Texas State.

Familiar faces to watch for as the NFL Draft begins

The 2015 NFL Draft will commence at 7 p.m. Thursday and will conclude Saturday. A number of Aggies hope to hear their name called and their shot at the pros confirmed. Here's a selection to keep an eye on.

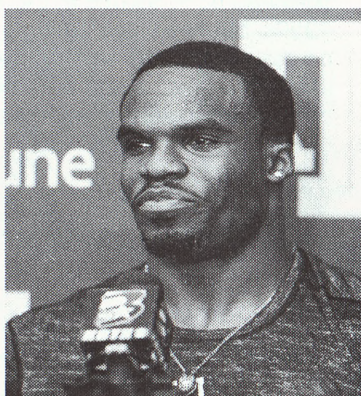
OT Cedric Ogbuehi



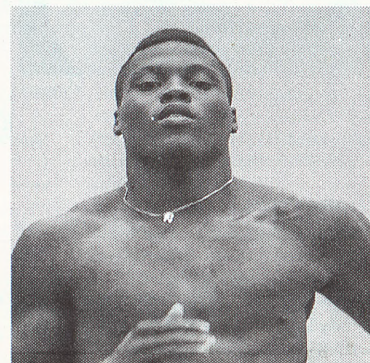
Although he was almost a lock as a first-round pick last year, Ogbuehi decided to return to A&M for his senior year. An ACL injury in the Liberty Bowl caused Ogbuehi to miss time and damaged his draft stock. However, Ogbuehi will be in attendance at the NFL Draft headquarters in Chicago, as he hopes to be A&M's fifth straight first rounder, which hasn't happened in school history. Ogbuehi stands at 6 feet 5, 305 pounds.

RB Trey Williams

Williams left A&M after his junior season to enter the draft. The versatile running back finished his career at A&M with a 6.8 yards-per-carry average and 1,343 yards with 18 rushing touchdowns. As a junior, Williams was second on the team in all purpose yards. Williams was used in a rotation at running back, never as the featured back. Williams is 5 feet 7, 195 pounds and ran the 40 in 4.49 seconds. Williams ran for 15 or more yards on 13.6 percent of his carries during the last two seasons.



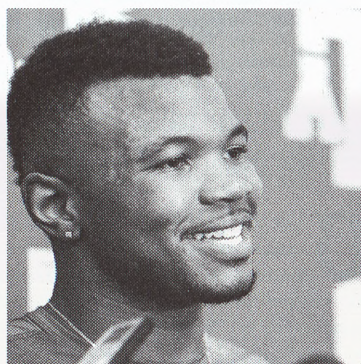
DB Deshazor Everett



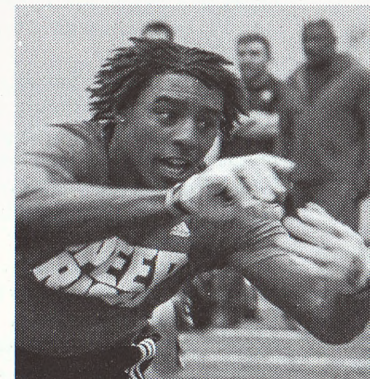
Everett finished his career as an Aggie with 123 solo tackles and five interceptions. The one interception for which he will always be known came against Alabama in 2012 to secure A&M's upset victory. The 6-foot, 193-pound Everett played cornerback and safety during his A&M career. At Pro Day, he ran the 40 in 4.49 seconds and impressed scouts with his 10-foot, 10-inch broad jump and 38-inch vertical. Everett is projected to be drafted around the seventh round.

TE Cameron Clear

Clear did not receive much playing time in his two-year career at Texas A&M. Clear caught nine balls for 76 yards and had one touchdown. Still, the 6-foot-6, 277-pound tight end has the body and tools to become an NFL player. Clear ran the 40 in 4.98 seconds at the combine and was given a rating of 4.8 by the scouts. Several NFL teams even view Clear as a potential offensive tackle. He is projected to go in the seventh round or as a free agent.



WR Malcome Kennedy



Kennedy became a household name at the receiver position during his last two seasons at A&M. He had 60 receptions for 658 yards and seven touchdowns as a junior, and despite missing games and playing injured he had 53 receptions for 611 yards and six touchdowns his senior year. Kennedy, who is 6 feet and 205 pounds, played mainly in the slot but could also play wide during his time with A&M. Kennedy is projected to be signed as an undrafted free agent.

K Josh Lambo

Josh Lambo only missed four field goals during his time at A&M, finishing 21 of 25 and 111 of 112 on PATs. The former FC Dallas goalkeeper holds a share of the record for most PATs in a game and is seen by scouts as a potential kicker in the NFL with his leg strength and ability to make field goals beyond 40 yards. His career long as an Aggie was 50 yards.



OL Jarvis Harrison



Jarvis Harrison is an offensive lineman full of experience who started 38 games at A&M. Harrison started every game blocking for Johnny Manziel during the 2012 and 2013 seasons, and as a redshirt freshman in the 2011 season he saw action in 11 games. The 6-foot-4 offensive guard ran the 40-yard dash in 5.19 seconds at the combine and received a grade of 5.73 from the scouts.