

# Women's athletics alive and growing

By MARK PATTERSON  
Battalion Staff

Unknown to some people at this University, women's sports are alive and growing at Texas A&M. What started a few years ago as a small athletic operation has bloomed into a major sporting operation which fields teams in eight sports.

The women's program, which operates under a budget of \$420,000 a year (up from \$300,000 last year), will field teams in six sports this fall. Due to their increase in the budget more women athletes are being offered scholarships and being brought into the Texas A&M program. Thirty-one new scholarships were granted to girls enrolling this fall.

With the increase in talent has come increases in team success. All six fall teams advanced into post-season competition at the state level last year. In addition all six advanced into regional competition with three teams competing at national tournaments.

Because of last year's performance, coupled with the players returning to this year's teams, optimism abounds within the women's program. And they let their records speak for themselves.

Here's a breakdown of the fall sports and a team-by-team outlook for 1978:

## Volleyball

It's only appropriate to begin a look at the women's teams with the most successful team from last year. The women's volleyball team finished third in the region last year and was granted an at-large bid to the national tournament.

At the national level the women won three of five matches and finished a respectable ninth in the nation. And the prospects for this season look even brighter.

Head coach Dave Schakel, entering his second season as head coach, has four of six starters returning from last year's team that finished with a 46-20 record. Schakel also had a fine year recruiting, landing five freshman to aid his quest this season.

And his squad will carry the flavor of Arlington with it as three of the newcomers are off of last year's Arlington High School state volleyball championship team; Kristen Bloom, Nancy Dunn and Pam Miller. Also joining the team will be Crystal

Cobb from East Bernard and Krista Sodich from Caldwell.

Bloom was highly recruited player last year. After choosing to attend Texas A&M she, along with soon-to-be teammate Wendy Wilson, also from Arlington, participated on the South Junior Olympic team at the National Sports Festival in Colorado Springs earlier this month. At the festival Bloom was named best setter and Wilson gained MVP honors for the event.

"With our new players coming in we can run a different kind of offense than the one we ran last season," said Coach Schakel. "We're going to run a more sophisticated offense and isolate our hitters against one block or no blocks. It involves more risks but it also gives us greater opportunities. And we can take those risks with this good of a team."

The team will get to see just how good they are when they travel west on a two-state tour in which they'll face the best teams in the nation.

"On our trip to Utah and California our girls will get a chance to see the teams we'll be facing in nationals this year," said Schakel. "But realistically, I'm not expecting to do that well on the trip. We'll just be in our second week of workouts and our freshman won't be totally adjusted to our style. But it will be a week that will make us grow."

"Our goal this year is to finish in the top five nationally. And to play well in front of our fans. For the first time we'll have home matches this season and we're hoping that some of the students will come out and see us play."

The women open the 1977-78 season Sept. 14 in a tri-match at the University of Texas at Arlington. The first home match is scheduled for Oct. 9 against Texas Lutheran College.

## Softball

New women's softball coach Bill Galloway has but one objective in mind for the Texas A&M women's softball team: to become the national power in the sport.

Galloway came to Texas A&M from Indiana University, the hotbed for women's softball, where he was the assistant coach for the team that finished second in the state.

Taking over his first head coaching job Galloway inherits a team that finished seventh in the state

and sixth in the region last year, compiling a 21-10 season record. Four players were lost from last year's team, including two starters and a pitcher, Kim Bellamy, who compiled a 13-4 record last season.

"One of our needs this year is to reestablish our pitching," said Galloway. "I believe in going with a set rotation and sticking with the rotation no matter who you're facing."

"We only have one pitcher (Sami Evans 8-6 last season) returning from last year's team. But we're working on recruiting a girl from New York who is of national caliber. Plus we have two walk-ons coming out this fall."

In order for Galloway to fulfill his dream of developing a national power he feels the team must develop in two areas.

"First you obviously have to have the best athletes available," said Galloway. "You have to have strong pitching and power hitting to compete at the national level."

"Second you need to develop a winning team from within. Every girl must be motivated to play and play at her best. Then she must demand the same from her teammates."

"In order to get the best athletes you have to offer more than your competition when you're recruiting. It's hard for us to do that because of our field, so we make up for it with our attractive schedule. We've scheduled some of the top teams in the nation and that allows our girls to see just how good they really are."

"Our weather here is also quite a bonus for us. Because we can play a split season (fall and spring), the northern girls like to come south and play."

With the weather and schedule ahead the women's softball team is looking for great results this season. But just how great?

"Realistically, I'm shooting to win state this year," said Galloway. "Anything beyond that would be an extra plus. But next year we'll aim even higher."

"But I have a saying that I follow. 'Never talk of next year, talk of the year that's here'"

And he's already started doing his talking.

## Gymnastics

Gymnastics involves inches and execution and the Texas A&M women's gymnastic team found out just

how close you really have to be for success.

After finishing first in the state the team finished second in the region behind LSU and missed qualifying for national competition by a slim four points. But 60 percent of the team is returning with visions of a stronger showing this year.

The team lost two girls from last year's five-member team but the two will be replaced by Tracy Shearin from San Antonio, Sharon Freydenfeldt from Austin and Jill Mossbarger from Houston.

"All three girls are private gymnastic club members," said fourth-year coach Jan Fambro. "Tracy is the best gymnast we've ever signed at Texas A&M. Tracy and Sharon have a great deal of experience while Jill has unlimited potential."

"We have six team members and all can compete in a meet, with the top four counting for our team score in each event. But even with these new girls it doesn't look like we'll beat LSU again this year. Our team depth is our greatest problem. But we'll probably still win Class I State and finish second to LSU. They're just so strong."

"But we may have a participant at nationals this year. Tracy has the possibility of being invited in the all-around category. All we can hope is for the best."

The team has a split schedule with fall competition beginning Oct. 26 against Southwest Texas State in C. Rollie White Coliseum.

## Cross-country

Cross-country is a sport that requires great discipline, practice and control for achieving success. Coach David Williams, entering his fourth season as women's track and cross country-coach at Texas A&M, has molded a team into one of national power and recognition.

"Our number one runner was sick with mono and wasn't able to run at nationals," said Williams. "We had the potential to challenge the top 10 last year. But that was last year."

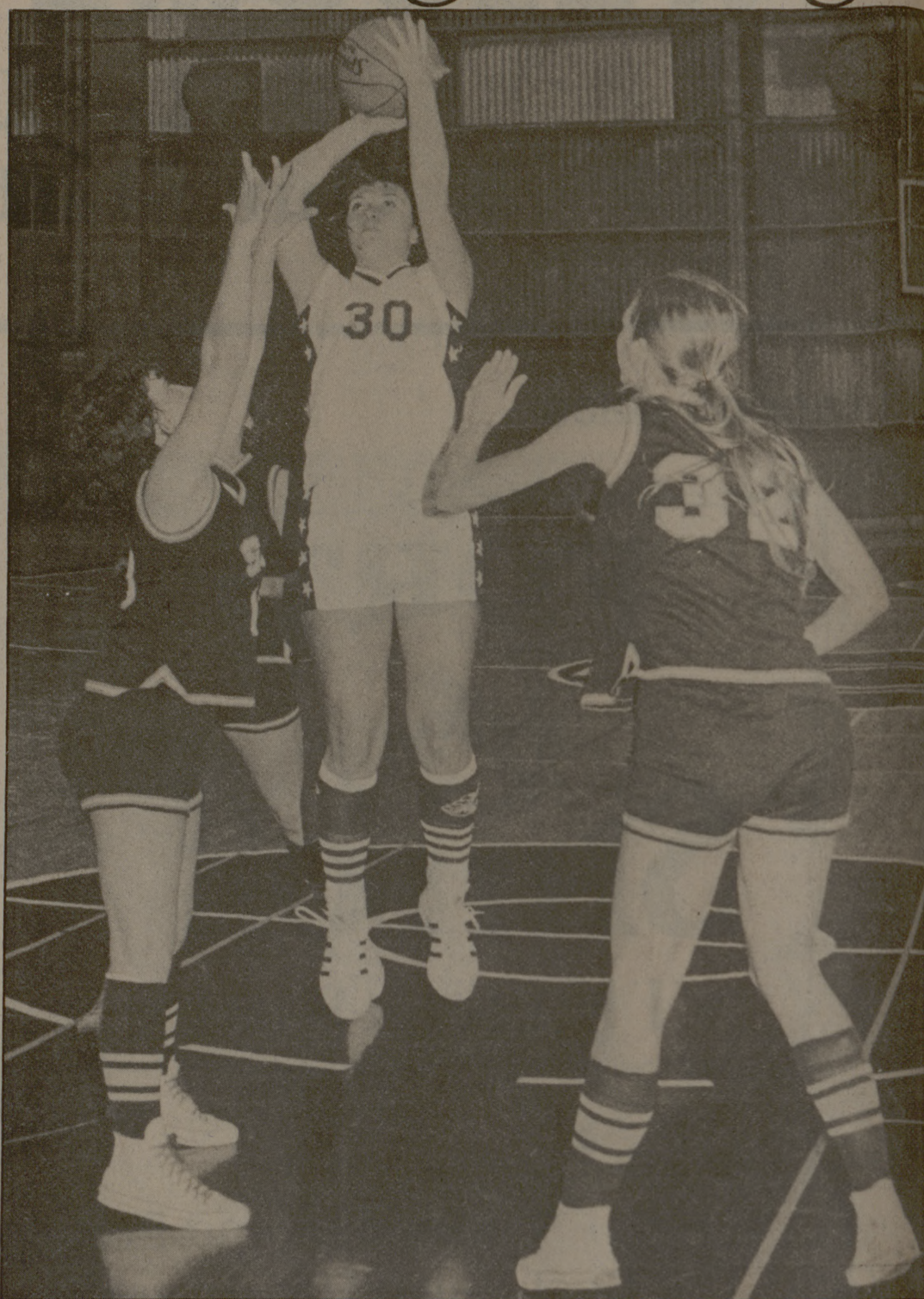
This year's team could be even stronger than last year's squad. The team lost but one runner from last year's team and Williams recruited three freshmen to bolster his squad. Sandra Brown, Debbie Cocks and Lorie Scott will be looked on to supply depth to the team.

"The new girls will supply us with immediate help, but only after they get used to running 5,000 meters (about three miles). These girls will be some of our top runners and could easily become our No. 2 or 3 runners."

## Golf

Head coach Kitty Holly and the 1977-78 Texas A&M women's golf team has some room for improvement. But if last year was any indication of what's to come, there's little room for advancement.

The team finished fourth in the state behind SMU, the University of Texas and Lamar and was granted an at-large bid to the national tournament. Proving that their talent was better than their season finish the women finished 19th in the na-



Texas A&M's Sheree Christian shoots a jump shot senior, and the rest of the Aggie Ladies basketball team begin their 1978-79 season on Nov. 17.

tion out of a field of 26 teams.

And only one player was lost from last year's squad while two girls were signed as scholarship players. Shirley Furlong will bring her golfing talents to Texas A&M after finishing third in the class 4A state tournament last year. Joining Furlong will be Monica Welsh from Austin.

The women's golf schedule is split between the fall and spring semesters. The women will participate in four tournaments this fall with their first competition coming Sept. 11-16 at the Oklahoma Golf Championship tournament.

## Basketball

The most publicized of the women's sports begins its season Nov.

17 as the Texas A&M women's basketball team begins another year of play.

The Ladies are coming off a year in which they finished 19-18 under first-year coach Wanda Bender. The team advanced to the state tournament and finished in a tie for seventh with North Texas State University.

In hopes of getting immediate help for the team that lost four players from last year's squad, Bender dipped into Junior College National Basketball Champion Panola Junior College's roster and signed four of the starting five members of the team.

Coming to Texas A&M from Panola this fall are Karen Gen from Vidor, Lisa Hughes from Athens, Lola Baker from Kountze and Junior College All-American Peggy Pope from Carthage. Also joining the Panola group will be freshman Kelley Sullivan, a state volleyball, softball and basketball player from Houston.

Post-season play is designed preferentially this season for berths in state tournament. The zone tournaments have been eliminated and only the top 16 teams with the overall season records will be invited to participate. With the Texas A&M women's team possessing, it ought to be one of the 16.

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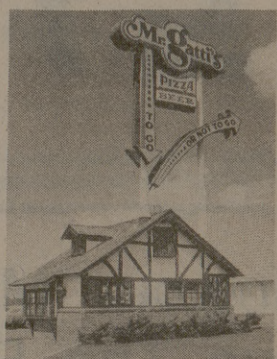
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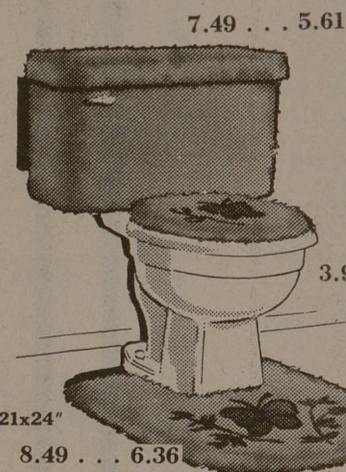
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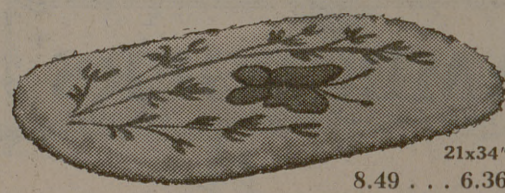
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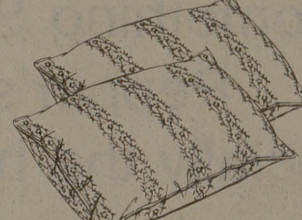
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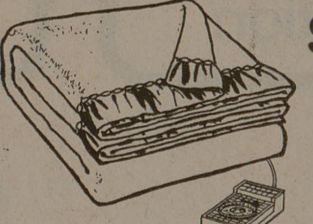
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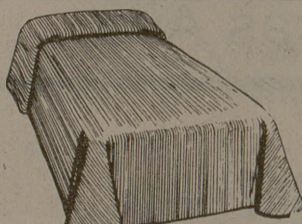
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