

# New coach offers experience

By RICK STOLLE

Battalion Staff

Jan Cannon is a part-time coach with full-time experience.

She has 31 years experience in organized tennis and is the new coach of the women's tennis team at Texas A&M University. She has begun programs for other schools, added to existing programs at some and has coached a Davis Cup finalist.

Cannon began her coaching career at Edinburg with six new courts. Fresh from Texas Tech she did not know what to expect, she said. "At Tech, we had to begin the women's program on a shoe-string," she said. "There were no funds for the program and the first year we recruited intramural players for the team."

She said the team played with its own personal gear without much help from the university. The new courts were hard to get at Edinburg but a nice way to start a team. She didn't know, she said, that it would be the beginning of many uphill fights.

She moved on to Abilene High School two years later and her teams won the district championship three of the five years she was there. At

Monterrey High School in Lubbock, she coached nine district championship teams and one player who reached the Davis Cup finals when he later attended college.

Bobby Joyner was a three-sport reject when he tried out for the tennis team at Monterrey High, Cannon said. He was a tall, gangly youngster who had been cut from football, basketball and baseball.

"When we got him he could hardly walk without tripping over his own feet," she said. "But he had the most fantastic hand-eye coordination I have ever seen."

She said he worked harder than anybody on the team and gradually improved. After a year, all the teams that had cut him wanted him back. Joyner went on to play tennis at Trinity University and made it to the finals of the Davis Cup in doubles with Chuck McKinley.

After 14 years at Monterrey, Cannon moved on to Amarillo, where she remained for 10 years, Bryan and ultimately, Texas A&M.

One of the reasons she came to A&M was because of tennis coach David Kent.

"We have known each other since he (Kent) was in high school," she said. They have always coached in the same areas and have kept in touch, she said. Cannon attended many of the camps in West Texas and even played in some of the tournaments Kent organized.

He has a tremendous reputation in West Texas and deserves it for the work he has done out there. "We have a good rapport and work together very easily," she said.

Coaches have to work together, she added, if a program is to succeed. "He will come over to help my girls and I can go over to help the guys if needed," she said.

She said she had been at too many schools where the two tennis teams had been as far apart as possible. It did not produce good results, she said, and sometimes went as far as antagonism toward the other program.

She said one of the things that makes coaching fun for her is watching her "kids" grow. "It is a good feeling to watch them go on," she said. "Like with Bobby (Joyner), you can never tell just how far they will go."

A coach is like a second parent, she said. They have to help the younger adjust. "Amy Closs is from Oregon and had not been very far from her home, so coming to A&M is a big adjustment for her."

It is a big adjustment on a good athlete to begin competition at the college level, she said. Many of her freshmen have never played lower than the top spot on their home teams. Sonja Hutcherson never lost a set in University Interscholastic League (UIL) competition.

"I have told the girls they will have to work hard and that the competition is different here than they are used to," she said. They cannot get discouraged, she stressed, because they will have to get used to the situation they are in.

That is one of the reasons all the freshmen will be going to the Galveston Adult Open Tournament Saturday, she said, for the experience. "It will be a lack of experience that will hurt us early in the season," she said "not a lack of effort."

The girls are very coachable, she said. That makes it very easy to prepare for the competition.

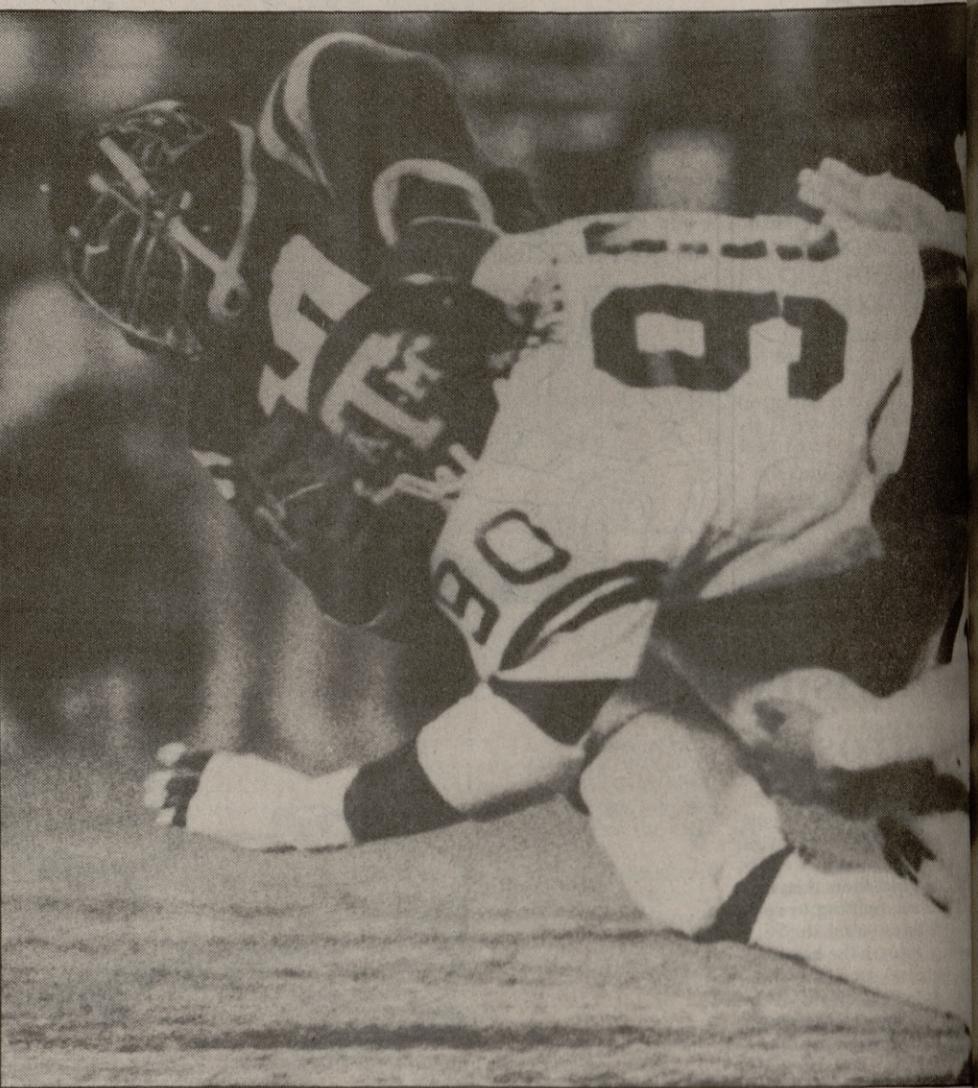
She added that all the girls want to play and need to learn.

"It will be done my way though. I do have a little more experience than they," she said, "and any mistakes will be mine as well."

She said she is trying to add to the schedule to try to make it even tougher. "I believe, and always have, that quality competition produces quality teams."

She said she will make sure that when Southwest Conference competition begins, the Texas A&M women's tennis team can swing a racket with anybody. "Above all," she said, "I want it to be fun for everybody on the team."

The team will leave Friday and begin competition Saturday at the Galveston Open. The team will consist of freshmen Amy Closs, Laura Hanna, Sonja Hutcherson and Mary Hise. They will be led by sophomore Liliana Fernandez and junior Ferol Hinkle. Top contenders University of Houston and Rice will be at the competition. "It will give the freshmen a lot of good experience," Cannon said, "and right now that's most important."



Texas A&M defensive lineman Mack Moore (90) stops an Ole Miss Rebel runner behind the line of scrimmage during the Aggies 23-20 win

last Saturday night. The 19th-ranked Aggies travel to Athens, Ga., Saturday to take on the 15th-ranked Georgia Bulldogs.

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