

Ags seek role as spoilers

By MIKE BURRICHTER
Battalion Staff

Only one day away from the state championship, the Texas A&M women's volleyball team, having recently completed its two worst weeks of the season, is eager, yet apprehensive about the tournament at G. Rollie White this weekend.

With only two victories in their last 13 games, the young team, which is made up entirely of underclassmen, enters the tournament after a tough week in California.

The Aggies played in the UCLA Invitational last week in Los Angeles. First year head coach Terry Condon, who played for the Bruins during her college tenure, had hoped the California week would provide the team with good experience against top ranked teams. In four games, the Aggies experienced different ways to lose games. But none of the Texas teams were greeted with a hearty welcome. Indeed, the University of Texas and the University of Houston, both more experienced and ranked higher than A&M in the state, could muster only one victory in eight games between them. UT got swept, and UH, playing in what Condon called an easy pool, managed only one victory. The Aggies may have had the best showing among Texas teams, playing three teams ranked in the top ten, pushing two of those teams to three games.

Condon has said all along that her team simply lacks the experience to win the close ones. Many of her players agree, saying that late game jitters lead to many of their losses.

Anne Yardley, a sophomore from California, said the team didn't play that badly despite their record. "I didn't think we played that bad," she said. "Some matches we played well. They were just more experienced and better and top ranked teams." Yardley, who came to A&M via California along with two other play-

ers, said some of the players had never faced top competition before and it showed.

"The freshmen from Texas have never played against top teams," she said. Four freshmen suit out for the Aggies, along with four juniors and the California trio of sophomores.

Yardley said the team's chances in this weekend's tournament depend on the team's attitude. "We're so up and down, it just depends on how we feel. I really want to do well because I want to go to regionals."

The tournament gets underway Friday morning at G. Rollie White Coliseum. The Aggies were not blessed with a favorable home court draw. They face UT-Arlington, the state's top ranked team, and Texas Tech, another perennial power, having dealt A&M two losses already this season.

Yardley said the team seems to

play best when they are relaxed and having fun.

"No one has been having fun. One time this season it didn't matter whether we won or lost so coach just told us to go out there and have fun," she said. "We went out there and had fun, and ended up beating Lamar."

The Cardinals are ranked about fourth in the state, at least a notch above the Aggies. It was the only victory for the Ags in three outings with Lamar this season. A&M has to be considered an upset special in this weekend's tourney, and many players are ready to prove it.

"We played pretty badly in California," Kristen Bloom, a junior from Arlington said. "But the coach at North Texas State said we're the tournament spoilers and I'm inclined to agree with him."



Soccer sandwich

Photo by Howard Eilers

Texas A&M soccer fullback Mike Denton, after being trapped between two Texas Tech players, escapes with the ball in action last Saturday on the Penberthy Intramural Complex.

The Aggies won the game, 2-1 with a goal on a fast break by Aggie striker Paul Winston in the last few seconds of the game.

Bellard escapes Aggie plague

By KURT ALLEN
Battalion Staff

Oh how the mighty have fallen! That wild last two weeks this has been both politically and in the world of football.

I dare say no one could have predicted so many upsets. While an MU defeat of Texas was conceivable, who could envision Texas A&M being beaten in Kyle Field by Rice? Then, last week, Rice embarrassed Arkansas, Baylor temporarily lost its mind by losing to San Jose State and Texas Tech rose from the ashes to smoke Texas.

The wild chain of upsets was completed Tuesday when President Ronald Reagan swamped President Carter.

While all this is very exciting and wonderful, nothing tops the upset Mississippi State pulled on Alabama on the weekend.

To put it simply, the Bulldogs were magnificent. It was one of the best defensive efforts thrown against Alabama since Bear Bryant became coach, but it was the Crimson Tide's head coach.

Until its Waterloo at Jackson, the Tide had averaged 38 points per game. But MSU showed why Emory Bellard-coached teams are known for their defense by allowing only a field goal.

A glance at the stats shows the Bulldogs held the Tide to a mere 180 yards net offense. Of that total, 116 yards came on the ground with 64 in the air.

Beyond that, the contest considered Stapp's altered the national collegiate rankings. The Tide slumped from first to sixth, while MSU entered the top-20 for the first time at 17th.

The MSU triumph also earned head coach Emory Bellard UPI Na-

tional Coach of the Week honors and saw Bulldog defensive end Billy Jackson named Southeast Defensive Player of the Week. Bellard's reaction was a characteristically modest one.

"Well, that's incredible," said Bellard. "I can't take the credit. But I appreciate it for the players and for the coaching staff."

The game also matched up Wishbone offenses. Many of Bellard's

Analysis

players said he told them that since he created the Wishbone, he knew how to stop it.

"Well," drawled Bellard in reaction, "I have a pretty good understanding of what it (the Wishbone) is supposed to do and that's always an asset."

While Bellard may be low-key now, he certainly couldn't hide his enthusiasm Saturday. In the MSU dressing room he characterized his team's performance as "a flat-out 10, just like (actress) Bo Derek."

The MSU-Bama game was also a matchup between two former Texas Aggie head coaches. Bryant coached Texas A&M from 1954 through 1957 and compiled a 25-14-2 record, including an undefeated 9-0-1 mark in 1956.

Bellard led the Aggies from 1972 until resigning midway through 1978. He compiled a 48-27-0 composite record and took Texas A&M to three bowl games in that time. His defeat of Bryant was the first time the Bear had lost to a current or former Texas A&M coach since Gene Stall-

ings beat Alabama 20-16 in the 1968 Cotton Bowl.

Remarkably, Bellard has turned MSU around in just two seasons. After last year's 3-8 mark, MSU is now 7-2 and headed for a bowl.

Bellard's success once again points up how a coach can build programs when free from administration and alumni interference. It's too bad Tom Wilson doesn't enjoy the same benefits here in Aggieland.

Since succeeding Bellard, Wilson has diligently strived to build a program which wins and is also honorable. Yet, he has been stymied in that effort.

Wilson's job has been complicated by two things. First, he inherited the results of two sub-par recruiting years by Bellard. But before anyone goes around blaming Bellard, it

must be remembered that at that point he was also fighting the same outside interference now plaguing Wilson.

Secondly, Wilson has been victimized by an uncanny combination of injuries which have at different times disabled both the offense and defense. It's certainly easier to win with a healthy squad.

The point is, that no matter who the coach is, no matter where he practices his profession, he must be given a free hand. That's a football lesson some people in positions of power around here have never learned. Ignorance in the wrong hands can often breed disaster. The sad thing is that Texas A&M seems to have more than its fair share of ignorance these days.

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