

Tennis teams rated 20th in nation

By RICK STOLLE

Battalion Staff
While the Texas A&M University tennis teams rested over the Christmas break, the tennis ranking committee of College and Junior Tennis Magazine was busy.

The publication rated the Ags No. 20 nationally as the spring season begins.

"We are obviously pleased with our ranking," said head A&M coach David Kent, "but we realize we have a lot of hard work ahead of us."

And most of that work will be in our own conference.

What Kent was referring to was the five other Southwest Conference teams that are ranked ahead of the Ags in the Top 20.

Arkansas was rated fifth, Houston 11, SMU 14, TCU 15 and Texas 17. Trinity University, in San Antonio, was rated ninth nationally.

The SWC and the Texas area is the strongest tennis area in the nation, said Kent. The only other area that can compare is California with the top four tennis schools in the nation centered in that state as well as the number seven and 19 ranked.

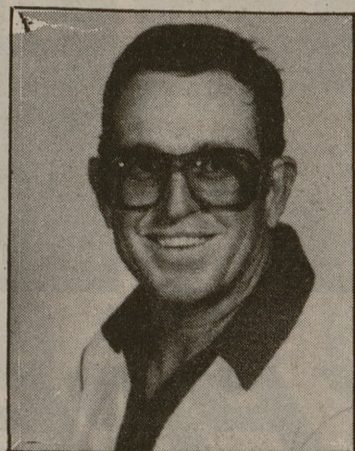
"Rice should be up there with us, too," said Kent. "The Owls are as good as we are and should have been ranked so actually there are seven teams in the SWC that can compete with anybody."

Kent also said he was pleased with the A&M schedule this year. The Ags have 19 home matches this spring including Arkansas, Texas, SMU and Arizona. Arizona was picked as one of the teams in the nation that could very well break into the Top 20 by the poll.

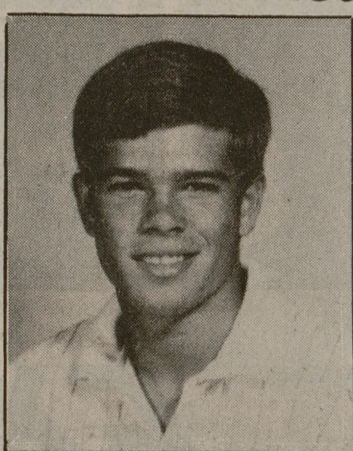
"The good thing about being picked high," said Kent, "is that good teams are now willing to come to us to play here. I hope having all these good home matches will help us get



Sonja Hutcherson



David Kent



Leonard Smith

good crowds out to see some fine tennis."

Not only were the rankings going out to the teams, but to players as well. The Ags had four players ranked nationally in the Top 101 18-year-olds.

Sonja Hutcherson, from Memphis, Texas, was ranked 71. She also won the Panhandle Sports Hall of Fame Tennis Player of the Year for the third straight year.

"That is an incredible achievement for a little ol' country gal from a town with a population of about 2,000," said Kent.

Amy Closs, from Oregon, was ranked 79 and Laura Hanna was 99. Leonard Smith, the only member of the men's team to be picked, was ranked 101.

Kent said Smith has had wins over higher ranked players, however. He defeated Miguel Nido of Puerto Rico who was ranked 42, Doug Snyder of Austin, ranked 78 and Greg Hill of Kentucky who was ranked 83.

"Leonard has really come on strong for us since fall and we are looking forward to him helping us in

the future," said Kent.

Kent said the future looks bright for A&M tennis with the addition of Van Barry and some hoped-for recruits.

"The recruiting war is in full swing now," he said, "with everybody trying to get the best players they can. We are looking at players who will help us. It's an investment in the future."

Barry is a quality player said Kent and will sit out a year to gain eligibility. Barry transferred from Southwest Louisiana.

"Their loss is our gain," said Kent. "Anytime you can get somebody that has beaten you before, it's a great help to the team."

Kent said he is looking forward to the season because it promises to be a good, exciting one.

Rockets scorch the Suns

United Press International
HOUSTON — Moses Malone and Allan Leavell led the Houston Rockets to a 106-100 victory over Truck Robinson and the Phoenix Suns Wednesday night.

Malone had 25 points and 15 rebounds while Leavell had 18 points and nine assists and six crucial points in the final two minutes of play. Robinson scored 27 for the losers.

Houston pulled away to a 14-point lead midway in the second period and maintained it entering the second half.

Calvin Murphy came off the bench to ignite the Rocket offense with five jumpshots in that stanza. The Rockets forced the Suns into seven turnovers while they committed only one in the second period. Phoenix made a game of it in the second half.

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"This is one of our strongest teams ever," he said. "With a lot of hard work, we can improve our standing in conference and nationally as well."

The season will begin Jan. 31 for the men's team against Hardin-Simmons University in a home match at the Omar Smith Tennis Center on the campus of Texas A&M.

The women's season begins a week later on Feb. 7 when they take on Southwest Texas University in a home match.

Home matches are scheduled to begin at 1:30 p.m. Tournaments are slated to begin at 9 a.m. and last throughout the day. The tennis center is between the police station and Kyle Field.

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