

Outtakes

By Mike Burrichter



Tennis worth watching

Now that basketball season is reaching its waning stages, what is an Aggie to do in his quest for solace on a Saturday afternoon? Baseball season is still a month away from getting into full swing, as is track. One sport on campus that seems ready to burst out of its cult following and into the limelight is tennis.

Tennis has never really been that big at Texas A&M, perhaps because it just isn't the macho sport Aggies like to watch. But for a laid-back Saturday afternoon, there's nothing better for me than to sit in the sun at the Omar Smith Tennis Complex, catching some rays and watching some of the nation's better tennis players do their stuff.

Some of the best in the country? Come now, you've got to be kidding.

Nope. The Southwest Conference has been the toughest in the land for the past two or three years now. Indicating where most of the nation's tennis talent lies, preseason polls this year duplicated last season's predictions in picking six SWC teams to rank among the country's 20 best. A&M's men's team has been ranked 20th, and with a 5-0 start thus far, I doubt they've dropped any notches.

But the tennis team, despite its No. 18 ranking at the end of last season, is largely unnoticed at Texas A&M. Last Saturday, in a victory over a tough Southwest Louisiana team, the stands were approximately a third full. Still, that is an improvement. Senior Murray Blackshear, who played on the team three years ago, remembers.

"Nobody came to our matches," he said. "We played them on the old courts, or at a country club here in town. And the yearbook forgot to put us in!"

With the arrival of David Kent three years ago, the Texas A&M tennis program started an upheaval. The complex, one of the nicest facilities in the conference, if not the nation, opened up just after he got here.

Kent is the first full-time coach in A&M tennis history. He is easily the most charismatic coach on campus, a delight to interview. A cherubic little fellow, he's easily spotted around the courts wearing tennis togs and a snap-brim cap.

He's got a little Ilie Nastase in him too; whenever a conflict arises on the courts, he's always the first guy out there, and manages to get the last word in many times. One of the players told me Kent boxed in college and I've since watched him with keen interest everytime he gets into a heated conversation with the opposition.

The top three men's seeds are seniors Reid Freeman and Trey Schutz and sophomore Brian Joelson.

After a horrendous fall his freshman year, Kent may have wanted to ship Joelson back. However, in keeping with Kent's all in the family atmosphere, the former Oregon state champ began dating Maylyn Hooton of the women's team and he settled down and began playing some serious tennis. He hasn't lost much since.

Freeman has been near the number one seed slot all four years he's been on the team. Tall, dark and skinny, he's generally considered the team's nice guy. He is a very consistent player at the baseline.

Schutz shot into the limelight a couple of seasons ago when his serve became one of the league's most deadly weapons. He's probably more fun to watch when he loses, for when he's down, he loses everything; the match, his cool and very often, his racket. But when his serve is working and he's confident, he's the most awesome force on the team.

The four and five slots are held by Max King and Tom Judson. King, a senior from Dallas, is one of Kent's favorites. He's been on the team for four years now, and he made a curious change at the beginning of the season: he stopped wearing his Aggie cap, which had become his trademark. Maybe he's trying to show off his new disco hair style.

Judson walked on a year ago, had a sensational season, and as a sophomore, he now has a scholarship. A real eye-opener for Kent, Judson was passed up by everyone, but when he became an integral part of the team last season, the coach says he'll keep on the lookout for walk-ons in the future.

The sixth slot on the men's singles ladder, is being contested for by the team's two biggest flakes, sophomore Ron Kowal and freshman Leonard Smith.

Kowal is the team's crazy man. He hails from Illinois, which automatically makes him a little different, but for novice tennis fans, he may be the most fun to watch. A tall, curly blond haired kid, Kowal, like Schutz, has a terrible temper. He yells, cusses in foreign languages, stomps all over the court and wins a lot.

Smith is from Austin. Enough said, right? One of the first times I met Leo, he pulled out a sheet of lyrics he had written for a punk rock band. The team had to force him not to dye his hair purple once last semester.

This year, the Ags play most of their tough matches, SMU, Texas, Arkansas, Wichita State and Arizona, at home. With a little more fan support, they could win some of the close matches they've lost in the past. They're just looking for some respect.

Ag tennis team plays 1:30 match

By RICK STOLLE

Battalion Staff
The nationally ranked and undefeated Texas A&M University men's tennis team is scheduled to have two tough matches this week.

Today, the Ags play the University of Washington in a dual match at the Omar Smith Tennis Center at 1:30 p.m. and on Thursday, the Ags must travel to San Antonio to take on ninth-ranked Trinity University.

Washington is from one of the toughest conferences in the nation. The league has the four top-ranked teams in the nation and six overall in the top 20.

"It will be a good match," said Aggie coach David Kent. "But we can't afford to look past Washington towards Trinity."

He said Washington has a good, solid team that could win if the Ags overlook them.

"If we play well, though," Kent said, "the match will be an excellent tune-up for the Trinity match."

Texas A&M and Trinity have developed a rivalry since beginning dual match competition a number of years ago.

"They have a great deal of depth, are very strong and on paper, they are better than us," he said.

He said the Ags are excited about the match and are looking forward to going to San Antonio to play Trinity.

ward to going to San Antonio to play Trinity.

"The pressure will be on them to win," said Kent. "We're just going to try to go in there relaxed and play the best we can."

Kent said the Ags can use any and all the help they can get.

"If anybody is from San Antonio, call your folks, relatives, friends or anybody who will yell for us and, if they want to watch some great tennis, tell them about the match," he said.

Maybe, he said, with a little support and help, the Ags will be able to pull an upset and defeat Trinity for the first time.

The line-up for both matches will consist of Brian Joelson, Max King, Reid Freeman, Trey Schutz, Tom Judson and Leonard Smith in singles, and Joelson-Freeman; Ron Kowal-Judson and Schutz-Smith in doubles.

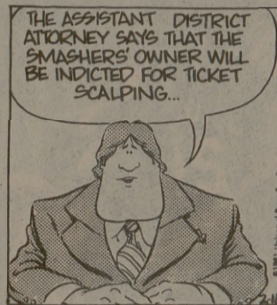
The Ags have a string of 27 straight doubles victories in dual matches going. The string began with the last five matches of the fall and has continued to the present.

"I hope we can keep the string alive after this week," said Kent. "We are an excellent doubles team but need a little work on our singles."

The Ags are 5-0 for the season and were ranked number 20 nationally in one of the various preseason polls.

TANK McNAMARA

by Jeff Millar & Bill Hinds



State rugby tourney will be here

The Texas State Collegiate Rugby Tournament will be held at Texas A&M University Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on the intramural fields.

Texas A&M will have two teams in the thick of the competition. The Ags will be sending their first and second teams into the fray to defend their state championship.

There will also be two teams from Stephen F. Austin University, a team from Southern Methodist University and another from Rice University.

The teams will be competing in a dual-bracket, round-robin tournament for the state championship and the right to advance to the National Regionals Tournament.

From there, it is on to the Nationals.

Texas A&M also has four cup matches left on its schedule. The Ags have three Texas Rugby Union members left and a match against the Notre Dame University rugby team on March 16 in Houston.

The Ags are 9-8 for the season and 1-3 in cup play.

Banquet tickets available

The Aggie football awards banquet is scheduled for 6:30 p.m. Saturday in the east wing of Duncan Dining Hall on campus.

Special awards will go to Johnny Hector who was ABC-TV's pick as top Aggie player in the SMU televised game and to freshman linebacker Jerry Bullitt as freshman defensive player of the year in the

SWC. The banquet's highlight will be the presentation of the Aggie heart award.

Tickets for the public, priced at \$12 each, must be purchased by today at the football office on the ninth floor of Rudder Tower or at the Athletic Business office in G. Rollie White Coliseum.

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!! RETREAT !!

The Association of Baptist Students invites you to their spring retreat at Paron, Ark. The dates are Feb. 27, 28, & Mar. 1. The guest speaker will be Dr. Joe Pendleton, pastor of First Baptist Church of Magnolia, Ark. The theme for this retreat will be "Fruit of the Spirit." Registration fee is \$20. Deadline for registration is Feb. 19. Transportation will be provided.

For information call 693-1529.

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