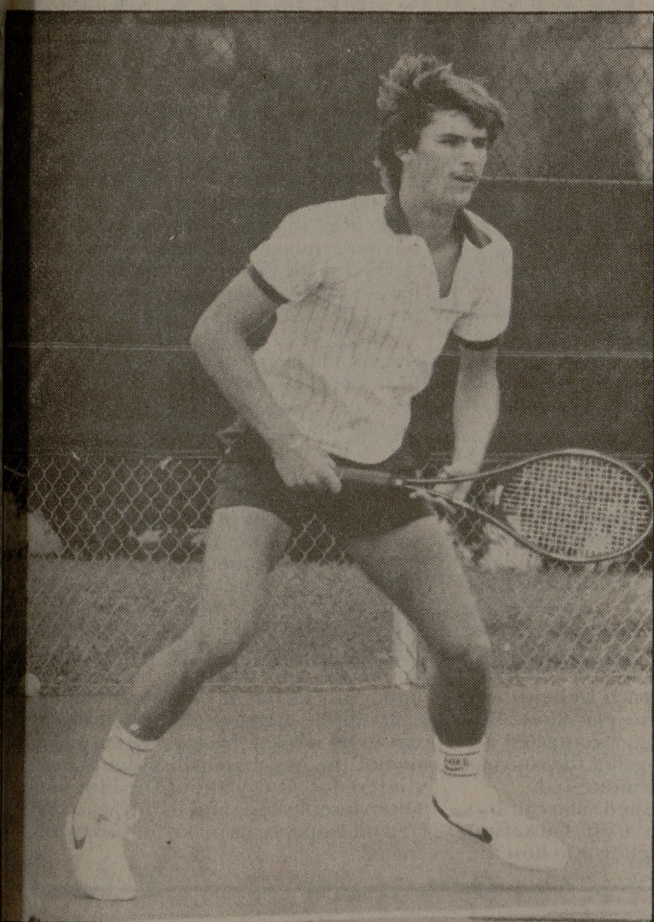


The Battalion Sports

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Hard work pays off

Joelson's persistence, determination key to tennis success



staff photo by John Ryan

Brian Joelson readies himself for a return against Mike Livshitz of the University of Houston. Joelson, as he has in most of his matches this season, beat Livshitz 7-6, 7-6 in the Aggies' team 8-1 victory over the Cougars.

by Denise S. Sechelski
Battalion Staff
Perspiration, not inspiration. That's Coach David Kent's key to success in tennis and he says Brian Joelson, the Aggies' No. 1 tennis player, has proven that the formula works wonders. "The reason Brian's such a great athlete is because he works extra hard," Kent said. "He's really our best player day in and day out. He had a slow start this year, but right now he can play and beat the best players in the country."

And Joelson has been doing just that. The 20-year-old junior has won eight of his last 12 matches and has a season record of 16-10.

Joelson said a couple of matches stand out as personal high points, but his recent victory against Arkansas is one of the best memories of the season.

"I've had some good matches," he said, "but beating (Pat Serret) from Arkansas was a good win. He'd just beaten David Pate who is the No. 2 college singles player in the country."

However, Joelson's success in the latter part of the season doesn't reflect his record in the early matches. He lost four of his first eight matches and says the

poor start was not what he expected.

"I have problems in the cold weather," Joelson said, "and for a while at the beginning, the weather was really cold. I couldn't get a good match in or even a good practice in. That really bothered me."

"But then the weather got warmer, and I was able to start playing a little better. I also changed from a wood to a graphite racket, and that may have helped some, too."

Kent says Joelson puts in extra time on the court, and the dedication pays off when he wins.

"He's been working really hard," Kent said. "It says a lot that he didn't get discouraged at the beginning of the year. He just came out and worked harder."

"In years past, he didn't do that extra work and he didn't do that well in his matches. But now he's one of the best I've seen and he's winning the matches he plays."

Joelson, a native of Portland, Ore., began playing tennis when he was nine years old, but said he didn't dream of being a successful tennis player.

"I was always interested in other sports," he said. "When I got into the 16-year-old age bracket I started to play seriously. Before then I'd rather have been playing basketball or baseball."

But Joelson chose tennis. His mother acted as manager and got him to play tournaments for the experience he needed. It was a tournament in Dallas that put Joelson in the sight of Kent and Texas A&M.

He was recruited and began playing for the Aggies as a freshman three years ago.

Joelson used to be a baseline player, staying back in the court and hitting long rallies. But college changed that.

"I'm a little more aggressive now," he said. "When I first started playing for A&M, I was in about the No. 5 position and

could win from the baseline. But then I started getting beat all the time, so I started coming to the net a little more. I had to do something."

And he's done something, off the tennis courts as well as on. Joelson, a parks and recreation major, received recognition last semester for having the best grades among members of the tennis team.

"He's done well in his studies," Kent said. "We play a lot of matches, but we're not running a tennis factory here. We want our athletes to do well in the classroom."

The Aggies have not had a break in play since the spring season started, playing an average of two schools a week since Jan. 30. However, Joelson said

the full schedule of matches and practice every day doesn't curb his desire to play.

"The motivation is definitely there," he said. "The NCAA tournament is at the end of the year, and you have to win matches now to be able to play in that. I also want to turn pro after college, so that keeps me going, too."

Kent said he's confident that Joelson's success will continue, but added that he'll hate to lose him after he graduates.

"I'm glad he has another year left to play here," Kent said. "He's a super person as well as a great tennis player. He has that little ingredient it takes to win. The ones that have it win, and the ones that don't get beat by the ones that do."

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QUALITY FIRST

High school recruits Bock, Clifford sign to play with Aggies

The Texas A&M basketball coaching staff signed two players to national letters of intent Wednesday. Head Coach Shelby Metcalf was in California to collect the signature of Roger Bock, a 6-10 center from Oxnard, Calif.

High School, averaged 17 points and 10.4 rebounds a game this season. He had five blocked shots a game and shot 61 percent from the field.

The 232-pounder was All-California Interscholastic Federation, MVP of the Frontier League, and All-Ventura

County. He led his team to two CIF championships in three years.

Texas A&M also signed Mike Clifford, a 6-6 forward from Round Rock High School. Clifford averaged 20 points and 11 rebounds for the Dragons this season.



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