

Texas A&M

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Satisfying dividends

Aggie golfer Briggs' efforts result in improvement, success

by Frank L. Christlieb
Sports Editor

About two months before the end of the 1982 college golf season, junior Danny Briggs found himself in a dilemma.

Even though he'd spent the fall and spring seasons working to improve it, Briggs' golf game just hadn't reached the standards he hoped would result from his extra effort.

But then Briggs turned to Texas A&M golf coach Bob Ellis, in his seventh year with the Aggies, to attempt to discover an explanation for his ailing stroke.

"I told Coach Ellis, 'This is the hardest I've ever worked, and nothing's happening.'" Briggs said Monday in a telephone interview from Longview, where he's competing in a pro-am tournament at the Oak Forest Country Club. "He told me to be patient, so I did and it worked."

It worked. Yes, it worked well enough to catapult the 5-10, 165-pound Briggs and the Aggies to a Southwest Conference championship and a fourth-place finish in the NCAA national tournament in Pinehurst, N.C., May 26-29.

And Briggs, nicknamed by friends and teammates as Mr. PR for his golf-induced public relations skills, said he takes pride in personal and team accomplishments.

"I'm really proud for all the guys on the team for what we did this season, and for myself, too," he said. "I felt Texas A&M was well represented."

"I also feel it's a great beginning for (athletic director and head football coach) Jackie Sherrill, and I'm happy to see that. And of course, I'm happy for Coach Ellis — he's done a great job for us."

All in all, Briggs said, his determination and effort during the 1981-82 season paid satisfying dividends. As for the team, which didn't win a single tournament until copping the SWC trophy in April, Briggs said there's a simple explanation for the sudden final surge.

"When you're playing in a tournament, you usually have five members on each team, but you only count the top four scores," he said. "But in nearly every tournament, we had two guys play well and then two or three that didn't play well. We just couldn't get everyone playing well in the same tournament."

"We had three guys that were averaging 72 a round, and our fourth man was averaging 73. We should have won some tournaments with three guys averaging 72."

But pre-conference mediocrity didn't faze Briggs or his teammates at all, he said.

"We were all very confident," he said, "even after not winning any tournaments. We knew that it all had to come together sometime. We went into the conference tournament mentally prepared and ready. It was really the power of positive thinking. "People didn't expect us to do well at nationals, but we knew we'd have a chance to do real well."

At the NCAA competition, the Aggies rebounded from eighth place after shooting a 290 the first day to second place after two rounds, finding themselves at the heels of the Houston Cougars. After having defeated the Cougars for the SWC crown, Briggs said, the Aggies believed that a two-shot deficit could be overcome with ease.

It was Briggs' low of 65 in that second round that brought Texas A&M within two strokes of UH. With that performance, duplicated by the Cougars' Billy Ray Brown the following day,

Briggs tied previous NCAA low rounds shot by PGA touring pros Tom Kite, Ben Crenshaw, Curtis Strange and Hale Irwin.

Even after having endured assorted rain delays totaling about two hours during that second round, Briggs said he didn't have much trouble getting excited about tying the record.

"It's hard to describe the feeling I had after shooting that 65," he said. "After playing 7½ hours out there, I was pretty tired. I didn't even know I'd tied a record until I went in there soaking wet and a girl asked me if I knew that I'd tied a record."

"I seem to get a lot of confidence and I concentrate a lot more when it's raining. I must have gotten called off the course about three times during the round."

Although the Aggies didn't hold onto second place, falling to fourth, Briggs said the team may have learned a lesson from

the 1981 NCAA tournament at Stanford. That year, when the Aggies finished 10th in the country, they let second place slip away after the second round of the tourney.

"We felt surprised, as if maybe we weren't supposed to be there," Briggs said. "But this year, when we were in second place, we knew that we had a chance to win it. We didn't win it, but we were excited about finishing fourth. When you think about finishing fourth among all the schools in the nation, that's a big accomplishment."

"It was a good feeling, and we really felt we could have won it. But golf is an individual sport, and it's also a day-by-day game. You can have it one day and then lose it the next day."

Texas A&M shot 282-291-298 during the final three rounds to finish fourth, 20 shots behind the Cougars, 10 behind

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Aggie all-America golfer Danny Briggs led his team first place in the Southwest Conference and fourth place in the NCAA tournament May 26-29 in North Carolina. Briggs, who has completed his third year eligibility, says he will probably compete for the Aggies during the 1982-83 season rather than opt for shot at the Professional Golfers' Association tour.

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