

SWC title match Saturday

# Spikers lose to Coogs

by Frank L. Christlieb  
Sports Editor  
It's been a long haul for the Aggie women's volleyball team. While in the midst of its highest-ever series of tournaments, Texas A&M has managed to creep up to No. 13 in the NCAA rankings and to the top of the Southwest Conference standings during the past two months.

After traveling to California and Tennessee during the first two weeks of November, Coach Terry Condon's players are tired.

But they can't afford to let up now, because Wednesday night's loss to the Houston Cougars tightens things up even more in the heated league race between Texas A&M and Texas.

The Aggie Ladies, who entered the match with an 8-0 SWC record and a 32-10 overall record, lost to Houston 9-15, 15-11, 11-15, 15-1, 10-15 in G. Rolie White Coliseum. The Lady Longhorns, who are 8-1 in the SWC after a victory over Baylor, are even with Texas A&M in the race for the league crown and a berth in the NCAA tournament.

And now it's all come down to one match. Texas A&M meets UT in the final match of the regular season Saturday at 2 p.m. in Austin, with the title and post-season play on the line. To make the setting even more interesting, consider that Texas' only loss of the conference season came at the hands of the Aggie Ladies on Oct. 13.

The situation is simple: if the

Aggie Ladies win Saturday, they'll win the SWC championship and gain the national tournament; if UT wins, it'll gain an automatic berth in the NCAA tournament by virtue of its league title.

If the Aggie Ladies had defeated the Cougars and lost to the Lady Longhorns, Texas A&M and UT would have held a one-match playoff in Austin Tuesday at 7:30 p.m., with the winner earning the crown.

Condon, in her third year at Texas A&M, said her players showed a little wear and tear in Wednesday night's match.

"Houston played real well and we didn't play real well at all," she said. "I don't know exactly what it was. I think we're a little tired from the last two weeks. We were tired tonight

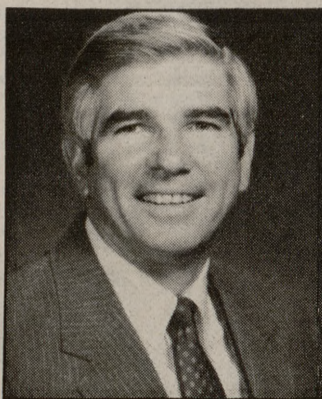
mentally ... and we didn't play well.

"Houston's a real scrappy team. They play real good defense and get a lot of balls back. We just weren't ready — we might have been looking too far ahead.

"I guess you live and learn — the hard way," Condon said.

But the Aggie Ladies received good news late Wednesday afternoon. Joey Vrazel, the team's junior all-America setter-hitter, was given the OK to play after having sustained a bad knee sprain over the weekend in the Tennessee Invitational. Earlier in the week, it was believed that Vrazel would miss the remainder of the season, but doctors say she can play if her knee is well-taped and she wears a knee brace.

# Mustangs' Collins says Hog defense might be problem



SMU coach Bobby Collins says Hogs' defense strong

"Fortunately in their career, they haven't been shut down that often," he said. "But we've won ball games throwing the football. Lance (McIlhenny) and the receivers have been able to make the big plays when necessary and I think that has been important."

Holtz said the Razorbacks realized the importance of Saturday's game and his staff had not had to dwell on that too much during practices this week.

"I don't think there is any doubt our team will be ready to play," he said. "This is the type of game you really don't have to say too much about."

For the Razorbacks, a victory Saturday would keep alive their hopes for a berth in the Cotton Bowl in Dallas Jan. 1. For the Mustangs, a win would give them an undefeated regular-season record, the outright Southwest Conference championship and the trip to the Cotton Bowl.

Arkansas must get past both SMU Saturday and Texas Dec. 4 to get to the Cotton Bowl.

Collins attributed SMU's spotless record and ability to make the game-winning play to his team's talent and its dedication to work hard.

"We believe and it's been part of our philosophy that when you

work hard, good things happen," he said. "They've prepared themselves for situations that have come up in ball games and they've accomplished things that maybe some teams would not. But I think it's because of hard work and a talented football team."

Holtz attributed SMU's winning ways to positive thinking.

"Finding a way to win is just basically a group of players that don't believe they can lose no matter what happens," he said. "They just believe they can find a way to win somewhere along the line. It's mental as much as anything."

Asked about the close games SMU had played this season, Holtz responded: "The whole criteria is how many games they have lost."

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