The Battalion Sports

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Sticks and ice

Texas A&M hockey team overcomes unusual problems to survive season

by John Wagner

Sports Editor

Tom Dobrez throws his head back and laughs. stories? He has a few. In an unmistakably thern accent — he's from a town close to Chi-- Dobrez offers up a netful of anecdotes would make your head spin. Or your ice melt,

Obrez is the only senior member on Texas M's ice hockey team — a team that wound up maugural season in March against the Austin ols. It wasn't easy, but the Aggies managed ay eight games — and win five of them — in a n beset with difficulties from the very begin-

Anyone who is determined enough to play key at a school like Texas A&M is bound to esome kind of anecdote — some type of war to tell. A&M is a university that loves its pall. The students wear shorts in February. ters come and go, with no sign whatsoever of white stuff. To Aggies, icing is something you is not the kind of place you start a hockey

at somebody did. And, as Dobrez and the r members of the team will tell you, things ed out just fine.

at somebody was Steve Mathiason, the s first president. After several members of Texas A&M lacrosse team sat down to discuss good old days" up North, the idea of an hiason's plan "a brainchild."

Ill, thinking of it was the easy part. And

ering up enough experienced players to field un wasn't too difficult, either. The tough part

when the team had to actually play.
begin with, the Bryan/College Station area
of teven have an ice rink. The Aggies began ice this season using the Sharpstown Ice er in Houston — a two-hour drive away — as home rink. But a single stroke of ill-timed hing put an end, to that plan, hitting the rator at Sharpstown and melting the ice. The has still not reopened.
tanother rink did. After the Aggies traveled

won one and lost one), Spenco International Vaco opened its doors. The opening night ction? SMU vs. Texas A&M in an intercollehockey match.

brez says it was a night he'll never forget. ecause of all the things we'd run in to," Dobays, "we really didn't get too keyed up, as far pecting too much (from the rink). But it was

e went into the locker room to get dressed, then we walked out, there was a deafening There were 550 people there, and I'm not gerating. The reception we got was so spon-ous and so incredible the whole team was just

not only were there regular Aggies, but there were old Ags too. And they were there to watch Texas A&M play hockey.

"They were coming up to us and saying 'we didn't know you had a hockey team.' And we were

saying 'we really didn't, either.' The Aggies finished out the season with two games against North Texas State, one game against the Austin Saints, and the season-finale against the Capitols.

Finding a place to play wasn't the only problem, however. There were little problems (finding a place to buy sticks) as well as big problems (paying

for ice time). Both were nagging, to say the least.
"Ice time," Dobrez says, "is very expensive (approximately \$100 an hour at most rinks). So our primary concern was paying for the ice. We would've slept in the car if we had to, but we wanted that ice time. We were a bunch of hockey players who just wanted to play."
But hockey players need sticks to play. And one stick usually lasts only one, maybe two games — if

"If you walk into a pro shop in a city like Chicago — some place up North — there'll be sticks everywhere," Dobrez said. "And when you walk in there'll be maybe a 100 sticks to choose from that many sticks displayed.

"Wheras down here there's like nine, and there's only two different kinds. It's either this one or that one. You walk in and you take whatever

you can get.
"You grow up using a brand of stick, and you just don't want to change. A stick is a very vital, important piece of equipment—it's like a baseball

"So one time one of the players' father was coming down from Minnesota, and he called up his dad with an order of sticks. The dad was coming anyway, so he drove down with a good amount of sticks. Everybody put in their personal order.'

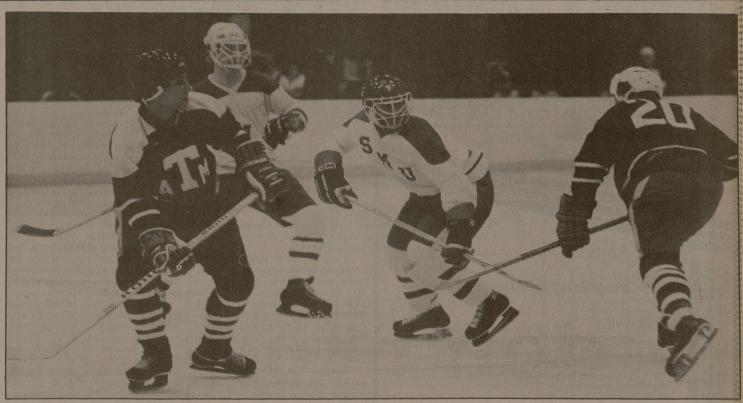
Another problem licked. But practicing was another story. The Aggies tried working out in DeWare Fieldhouse, but the results weren't encouraging. It might have helped

"Hockey is not so much a question of having strategy," Dobrez said, "as much as knowing the guy next to you — how fast he can skate, how he can catch the pass, does he pass, or does he shoot a lot. And every week we would have no practice. That was our problem — we never had any prac tices. We were lucky enough just to get games, let

alone practice.

"This team now has some individuals who sparkle on ice, and you could tell by the way our team progressed that we were getting to know each other. Our fourth game was probably only the fifth time we had skated together."
Gordie Anderson is one of those sparklers Dob-

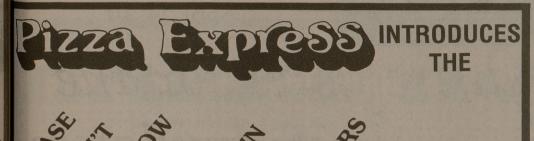
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Above, action from SMU game. Below, hockey team's most valuable players. From left to right, defensemen

Joe Anderson and Todd Steinweg, goalie Blair Oliver and forwards Gordie Anderson and Tom Dobrez.

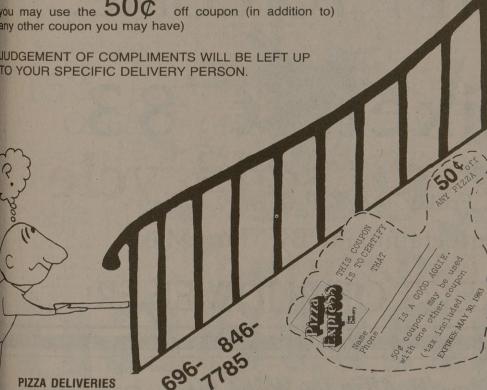


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Sat. Apr. 23 6 p.m.-Midnight FINALS