

Texas A&M

The Battalion Sports

Monday, August 29, 1983/The Battalion/Page 1B

Freshmen to play key role in Aggie volleyball season

by John Wagner and Scott Griffin

Battalion Staff
It couldn't have been any simpler. Two teams with equal records — Texas and Texas A&M — stood tied for first place in the Southwest Conference. They would meet in the final regular season game.

At stake, the conference's volleyball championship. The winner would take home the conference crown. The loser would be forced to settle for second best.

For the Texas Aggie volleyball team, the match took on epic proportions. They won their first eight SWC games, and had been in first place all season long.

But key injuries, including the loss of two-time all-America Joey Vrazel, had taken their toll. The Aggies dropped their ninth conference match to the University of Houston. A loss to Texas would end their title chances.

And the Longhorns were not to be denied. They defeated the Aggies to claim the SWC title, but all was not lost for A&M's 1982 season. They went on to the NCAA tournament (losing in the first round to Arizona) and finished the year ranked No. 14 in the country.

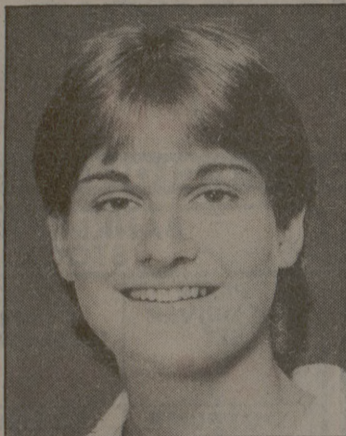
Along the way coach Terry Condon's squad picked up three tournament championships, three all-SWC players and a 32-13 record. Condon was named SWC Coach of the Year, along with Texas' Mick Haley, and hitter Lisa Johnson made the Academic all-America team.

Alas, that was 1982. This year holds less promise. Only two starters return from last season, and Condon says three to four freshmen will play prominent roles in the Aggie attack.

But the fourth-year Aggie



Coach Terry Condon says UT is SWC team to beat



Cathy Frederick will play key role in 1983 season

coach says she's ready to face the challenge of rebuilding with young recruits.

Condon recruited five freshmen in the off-season: Angi Smith, from Houston Clear Lake; Stacey Smith, from San Antonio Jay; Chris Zogota, from LaGrange, Ill.; Brookfield; Margaret Spence, from Houston Clear Lake; Lisa Williams, from Dallas Carter, and Laura Hoppe, from Houston Spring Branch.

Of the five, Smith, Zogota and Spence are possible starters.

"Angi and Margaret are outside hitters, a position with the least depth," says Condon. "Both will have a load to carry. Angi is particularly strong in good volleyball court sense. Chris will pair with Cathy. She'll be young but she's played a lot of good volleyball in Illinois."

One plus for this year's team is size. Condon's starters will almost all measure six feet in height, with the only exceptions being 5-11 sophomore Kim Leach and 5-7 senior Cathy Frederick.

Ironically, it is Frederick — the shortest member of the team — who has one of the biggest roles.

"Cathy Frederick is going to play a major part of this team in that she's going to have to keep the group mentally together," Condon said. "It will be vital that she keep her head in the game, keep the setting going, move players around, talk to the freshmen and help them out as much as possible."

Another key player for the Aggies will be junior Chemine Doty. Doty, an second team all-SWC player in 1981, injured her knee during the 1982 Sports Festival and was redshirted. If she can return to form, that will help give the Aggies added depth.

A third key player will be Sherri Brinkman.

"Sherri is our top returning player," says Condon. "She'll be middle blocking again. We'll be looking toward her strength and experience for help in a lot of areas."

As a 1982 all-SWC selection, Brinkman ranked third in the conference with four blocks per game. She was also a starter and team captain on the 1983 Sports Festival South team that won the silver medal.

In addition to the new players, Condon will be working with a new type of offense.

"No one has seen it before," Condon said. "Players will be in positions they are not accustomed to due to lack of strength in certain positions and the power we have in others. Middle blocking will be very strong with Brinkman and Doty. Outside hitting will be shaky and our setting will be young. We expect some mistakes in that area."

"We have to face the fact that we're going to lose some matches. The team has to be able to accept that and then learn from it."

The defense will consist of two versions similar to the ones used by last year's squad, Condon said.

As far as the conference race is concerned, Condon said, "Texas is going to be tough. Houston should be strong. The rest of the conference is up for grabs."

"But you never know," she added. "Any of us could give Texas a run for their money."

And though she picks the Longhorns to once again finish first, Condon doesn't rule out her own chances for at least a post-season playoff spot.

"Realistically, our goals will be two-fold — to finish in the top three in the SWC and qualify for the NCAA tournament," she said.

"We could be good this year. We could be really good. It just depends on how we handle ourselves, what kind of mistakes we make and how we learn from them."



A&M's Linda Clausen hits the net as she puts the ball over during a game

last season. Clausen is one of six Aggie letterwinners returning in '83.

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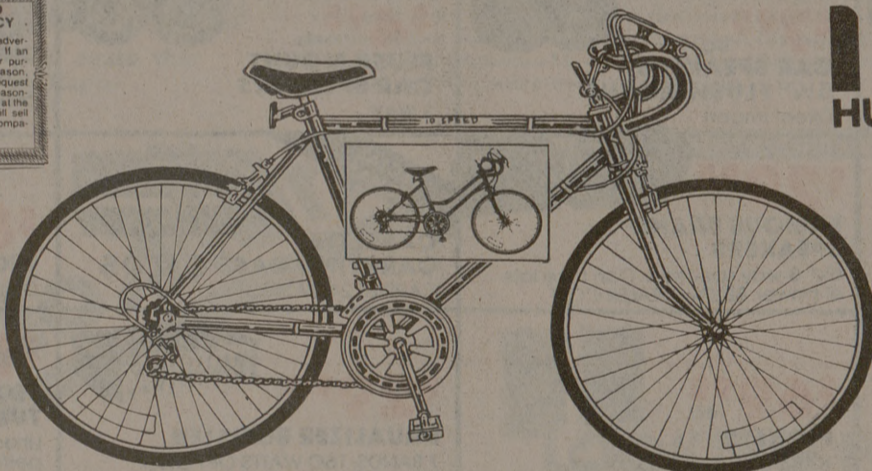


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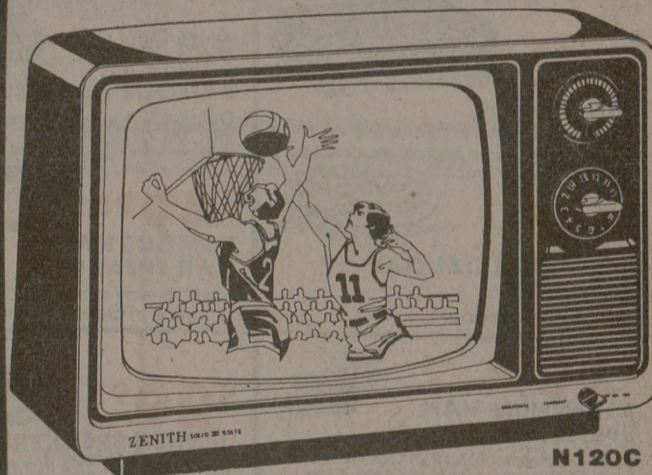


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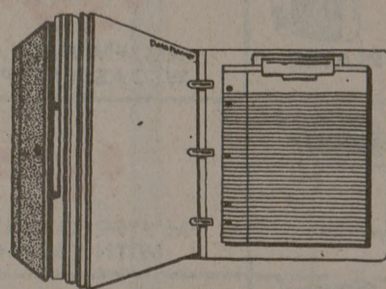
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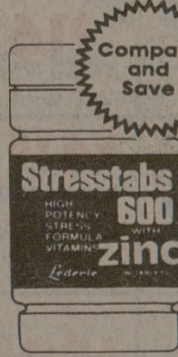
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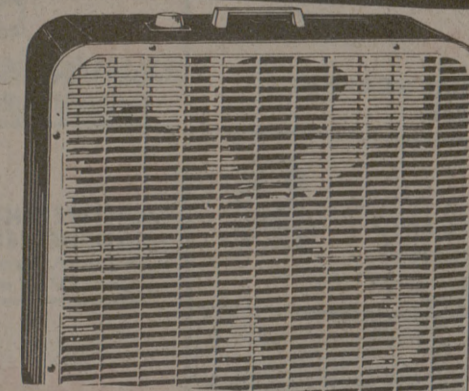
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