

Texas A&M

The Battalion Sports

Wednesday, August 31, 1983/The Battalion/Page 17

Freshman tennis star up for challenge

by Joe Tindel Jr.

Battalion Staff

You can start when you're barely old enough to pick up a racket. You can practice every day for as many hours as you want and you still might not become a visible enough player to be recognized.

You have to do some very visible things.

A couple of years ago, Mark Smith had all the right tools. He hit the courts at age nine and he had the ability to build. But until a sudden awakening of enthusiasm during the summer of 1982, Smith wasn't on the course that would eventually bring him to Texas A&M.

"I played tennis for all those years," said the Aggies' highly touted freshman. "I'd play, but I wasn't just really 100 percent into it. But after last summer, playing the nationals (National Hard Court Championships), that summer is when I really got started and I really wanted to play in a high league."

A class 5A state singles championship victory over two-time defending champ Denny Bishop this spring brought long-awaited recognition to Smith, a product of Austin High.

Smith continued to impress college scouts over the summer with a victory over Richey Renenberg of Houston, the 12th-ranked junior singles player in the world, for Texas Sectional Singles crown.

Smith became the first player to win both the UIL state crown and the Texas Sectional Singles championship since 1973.

"He's a talented and a very dedicated kid," says David Kent, head coach of the Aggie netters

and victor in a tough recruiting battle with Texas to get Smith. "He's a Horatio Alger story. A few years ago nobody paid any attention to him, and he just worked hard, sacrificed and pulled himself up by his bootstraps.

"I was fortunate to get on him early. I got him down here and stole him away from the University of Texas and a bunch of other places. We're real lucky to have him and I think he's going

Smith's older brother played for Texas A&M three years ago, but knee problems limited his career to only a year, Smith said. Add to that the fact that his mother is the secretary of the Texas Tennis Association and it's easy to see where some of his enthusiasm came from.

Still, Smith says he's his own man, and his decision to attend John Newcombe's Tennis Ranch in New Braunfels last fall may have been a key factor in his eventual rise to recognition.

The name of the academy's program was "Competitive Edge," and it was led by the former coach of Newcombe, the former pro from Australia. In order to attend the academy, Smith said, he left Austin high for the fall semester and went to school in New Braunfels.

"It (the Ranch) really paid off," Smith said. "That was the most intense tennis I've ever had. I expect college to be the same. That's (the academy) was where I improved the most. I expect to improve a lot here, too."

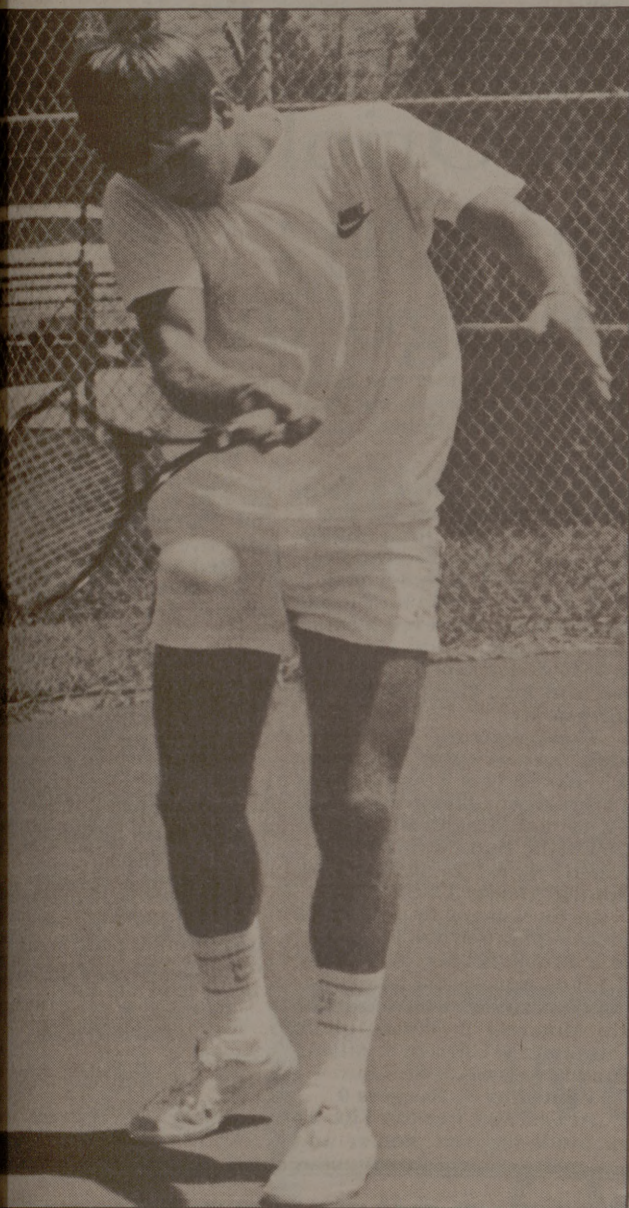
He says he expects to improve enough to break into the Aggies' top six singles players this season, but he admits the job will be tough.

"To play in the top six I have to play better and consistent as well — not just play good one tournament and not play good in another tournament," he said. "You never can let down. Everybody's so good."

While singles may be his forte, Smith said he thinks he can help out in doubles as well because his playing style is ideal for both games.

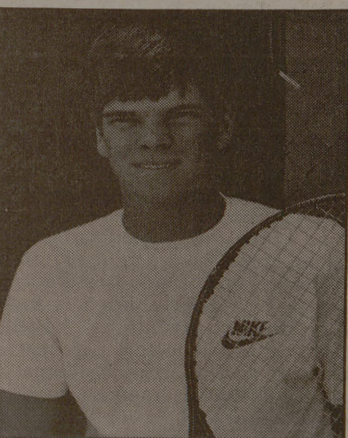
"My game is based on serving and volleying," he said. "In doubles, that's all it is — serving and volleying. So my singles game is very adaptable to doubles. I play good doubles and I like doubles."

Kent may like doubles and singles better if his prize plays up to his expectations this fall.



staff photo by Mike Davis

Texas A&M head tennis coach David Kent said Mark Smith, shown here during practice, could help the Aggies considerably this year.



john wagner

Search is on at Texas for 'missing link' QB

BEFORE WE JUMP head-first into the 1983 Southwest Conference football season, there are two misconceptions that need to be cleared up.

•The conference is strong from top to bottom.
•The Texas Longhorns can win the SWC with Bevo at quarterback.

The first goes without saying. Any conference with Rice and TCU is not *that* strong. The coaches just like to say it is. Makes 'em sound tough.

The second may take a little explanation. Ever since the Longhorns' 1982 season-ending reign of terror (they defeated six straight opponents by a combined score of 199-60), talk of Cotton Bowls and national championships has swirled around Austin like a hurricane.

UT has enough depth to send its third-string to a bowl game. Returning starters, possible starters and hopeful starters are flocking to Memorial Stadium in such numbers that coach Fred Akers might consider fielding two teams — as in Texas I and Texas II. Scrimmage games would resemble Super Bowls, with the winner automatically taking the conference crown.

THERE'S ONLY ONE minor detail left to take care of before UT fans can make reservations in Dallas. The Horns need a quarterback.

With the graduation of Robert Brewer, Akers finds himself searching for the missing link. The right man could possibly mean Texas' fourth national title. The wrong man might lead to a terribly disappointing season for fans who aren't used to being disappointed. They think their team is going to win. It better.

With that in mind, Akers opened up the QB competition. Apply in person. Form one line to the left, have Social Security cards and chinstraps handy. Job objective: Lead the Longhorns to No. 1.

Without realizing it, however, Akers created a monster. There were more quarterback candidates in Austin than fraternity houses, and the list grew daily.

Let's meet the candidates.

YOU CAN START with last year's backup to Brewer, Todd Dodge. Dodge took over for Brewer when the latter broke his thumb practicing for the Horns' Sun Bowl appearance. That break helped end UT's six-game win streak, as North Carolina dropped Texas, 26-10.

See HORNS page 19

STUDENT GOVERNMENT TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

BIG EVENT

FIRST MEETING
SEPT. 13

Aggieland Giant Volunteer Service Day—5 March 31
The Most Wonderful Meeting You Will Ever Attend

TRADITIONS COUNCIL

• APPLICATIONS for COORDINATORS
OPEN WED. AUG. 31
CLOSE TUES. SEPT. 6

• FIRST MEETING
AUGUST 8 AT 7:30
701 RUDDER TOWER

All Aggies interested in promoting Aggie Tradition—PLEASE ATTEND!

MUSTER and PARENTS DAY

Applications for Committee Members available Aug. 31 in Student Gov't Office.

Completed Applications Due
SEPT. 9
(5:00 Deadline)

SENATE

ORIENTATION
SUNDAY
SEPT.

4

Harrington
204

1-4 P.M.

(AN ADDED
PLUS FOR
SENATORS)

BE THERE!

THE TIME IS NOW GET INVOLVED!

FRESHMAN AIDES

- Applications accepted in Student Gov't Office
Aug. 29-Sept. 9 (5:00 deadline)
219 Pavillion
- Informal "Get-Together" concerning Student Gov't Freshman Aides
Sept. 11 2:00-4:00
302 Rudder
- Interviews Sept. 12-24
5:30-10:00 PM
(Sign up when application is turned in.)

SPREAD THE WORD—POSITIONS OPEN

- | | |
|---|---------------------|
| 1. Communications Chrmn. & Committee Members | 4. Senate Vacancies |
| 2. Census & Research Chrmn. & Committee Members | Judicial Board |
| 3. Data Processing Committee Members Only | 5. Members |

Applications in 219 Pavillion

ELECTION COMMISSION

ALL THOSE INTERESTED IN SERVING AS MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION SHOULD CONTACT: PAT WOOD OR TEDDY DELA CRUZ AT 845-3051 OR COME BY 208 PAVILLION FOR FUTHER INFORMATION.

ALL STUDENT GOVERNMENT BAR-B-QUE
Sunday after Senate Orientation