

SPORTS

Ags to awake to sleeping giant

Condon's Ags find team unity

By CHAREAN WILLIAMS
Assistant Sports Editor

And on the seventh day, the Texas A&M softball team rested.

After 10 straight days on the road and 23 straight road games to begin the season, the Aggies (19-6) had a coming home party a week ago when they hosted Missouri. That sure wasn't the time to catch up on the shut-eye.

Even though the Ags showed signs of weariness, they overcame the Tigers 2-1 and 9-0. Since that game on March 19, the Aggies have gotten a well deserved rest.

"We all feel a lot better," said A&M Head Coach Bob Brock. "We took a three-day weekend. I can see a difference in the girls already."

Characteristically, hitting has been the Aggies' biggest weakness and this year, so far at least, has been no different.

In the Oklahoma Tournament against Missouri, the Ags left 17 runners stranded in a 1-0 loss.

The Ags, however, showed signs of improvement the next time the Tigers came growling.

"We haven't been hitting the ball well," Brock said. "The Missouri game had to help our confidence at the plate. Missouri was on a roll. I don't think Missouri has ever been beaten 9-0, at least not while I've been here."

A&M still falls asleep at the plate ever so often, but Brock said he's worked to correct the problems.

"We just have to get rid of the little lulls at the plate," he said. "We have a lack of offense sometimes which can happen to any fast pitch softball team."

"When we do lose, that's how we lose. We're not going to give up the game in our pitching or defense. I feel like I've done a lot to alleviate the problems at the plate."

If the problems at the plate continue to arise, substitutions might become more frequent.

"We need to do something about our hitting," Brock said. "We're a tougher team than that. If it means more substitutions, then we will do that. We have a fantastic 18-team roster. Any of the players on the bench come in, and we won't lose anything defensively."

Sophomore ace Shawn Andaya will get the starting nod in the first game of a double-header against Sam Houston Tuesday at 4 p.m. The



Texas A&M's ace pitcher Shawn Andaya releases the ball to a Missouri batter during last week's game against the Tigers. The Ags

beat the Tigers 2-1. Andaya will get the nod in the first game of a double-header with SHSU Tuesday at 4 p.m. at the A&M Field.

Photo by KARLA JAMES

second game will find either Karen Athanacio or Yvette Lopez on the Aggie Field mound.

Lopez has been a real blessing for Brock and the Ag pitching staff.

"Yvette Lopez has been pitching the way I felt she could pitch," Brock said. "She has beaten everybody. She is one of the biggest improvements on our team. She's just living up to her potential and getting better."

"Added to Shawn, and Karen who hasn't gotten to pitch as much, we have one of the better one-two punches in the nation. I think a lot of people felt relieved when Shawn

wasn't pitching last year. This year they're worried about all of our pitchers."

The Ags got another boost when sophomore Judy Trussell successfully made the switch from shortstop to second base. This move allowed freshman Liz Mizera stay at her natural position.

"Judy Trussell made a good transition," Brock said. "She has done a real good job for us."

The Sam Houston Bearkats have been sleeping — sleeping giants that is. They are on a 15-game roll and

looking to make it 16 if they can lull the Ags to sleep.

"They are on a 15-game winning streak," Brock said. "I figure they will be real fired up and I expect them to bring a lot of fans who will also be fired up. Sam is Sam. They are ranked one or two in Division II. They're a scrappy team and they will be up for us since we beat them at the Mardi Gras Tournament."

"I expect their winning streak to stop with two losses. We're the kind of team that can do that."

By CHAREAN WILLIAMS
Assistant Sports Editor

The Texas A&M volleyball team has adopted a new theme song. "We are Family" seems to apply to Terry Condon's Aggies just as it did to the World Champion Pittsburgh Pirates in 1979.

"They play more as a unit than in the past," Condon said. "They talk a lot more on the floor. They know each other real well. Each player does what she's expected to do."

So far that team work has paid off just as it did for the Pirates.

The Aggies won another USVBA tournament this past weekend. A&M captured the Houston Invitational held at San Jacinto Junior College by going 9-1 in pool play.

Aspri, a team of Houston players, was the first to fall, followed by Lamar's Mr. Gatti's team.

In the semifinal match against Bud Light, a team of ex-Texas players, Condon finally found something to get upset about.

"I was a little mad in the semifinal," she said. "We played real well the first game. The second game we lost bad — 15-0. I just want them to maintain some consistency. We had a little screaming contest. We still need some work on the mental aspect of our game."

Setter Lesha Beakley had the most consistent tournament.

"Lesha had the best tournament," Condon said. "She's the only one that maintained the mental consistency. She hit the tar off the ball which she really hasn't done in the past."

Self-confidence is the reason behind Beakley's improvement, Condon said.

"(Self-confidence) was the only thing she needed," Condon said. "She has that now. She knows she's in charge now. When the spikers yell at her, she sluffs it off. Nothing seems to faze her."

"I think she's one of the best setters in the (Southwest) conference. Her role is to lead the team and she does it well. She's our quarterback."

You can't overlook the play of the three "new" players. The Ags lost two starters from last year's 33-4 team, but three of last year's back ups have filled the holes nicely.



A&M's Lesha Beakley

Stacey Smith, Michelle Whitwell and Stacey Gildner have done their share of damage to opposing teams.

"Stacey Smith has come a long way," Condon said. "She's been playing good defense and has been thinking. She's going to hold her own next year."

"Gildner has a sore shoulder that has hurt her hitting, so we have substituted Michelle in for her. Michelle is doing well."

And of course the ever-present and steady as a rock players, Sherri Brinkman and Margaret Spence, could be counted on in the clutch.

"I didn't think Sherri was quite a dominating as usual," Condon said. "We were down 14-8 against Houston and she decided she was going to play. Houston didn't score another point after that. She blocked everything. I think that's the best I've seen her play, but overall it wasn't one of her best days."

"Margaret was her old normal self. She tried out for the Sports Festival on Sunday, and she was really tired. I still think she's one of the best players in the South."

Going into the spring season, Condon was hoping to get six Ags playing together. She was expecting a transition from last fall's team to the current team. What she got was something better — perhaps better than last fall's No. 15 team.

"They're doing a lot better than I dreamed," Condon said. "With the changes in the lineup, I didn't think we'd be this consistent. I sure didn't expect us to win any tournaments. They have jelled. I am very pleased with the progress."

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