

# Top 20 teams come calling for Ag tourney

By CHAREAN WILLIAMS  
Assistant Sports Editor

The pitching will have to be as strong as usual. The hitting and base running will have to be better than usual. That is if the Texas A&M softball team expects to win the Aggie Invitational this weekend.

"We have to hit," said A&M center fielder Iva Jackson on what the Ags would have to do to win the tournament. "One word — hit."

Chimed in catcher Gay McNutt laughing, "Score more runs than they do — cross home plate."

The No. 3 Aggies (21-6) will play host to a strong field of teams, including No. 8 New Mexico, No. 11 Utah and No. 17 Baylor at Southwood Athletic Complex.

"When you get right down to it, this is a strong tournament," said A&M Coach Bob Brock. "The three ranked teams are tough. Louisiana Tech is strong even though they've been hit by injuries. Southwest Missouri is always tough. Northeast Louisiana is an ability team. They are getting better every year."

To win the tournament with the most wins will be tough. To win all nine games will be tougher.

"It will take a heck of a team to go 9-0 in three days," said A&M Coach Bob Brock. "I feel real good about our chances of winning. We're at home and we're well rested."

With the pitchers the Aggies have, it's no wonder Brock is confident of his team's chances.

Perhaps the best pitcher in the nation, Shawn Andaya, will be on the mound several times for the Ags over the weekend. She has already struck out 17 batters in one game and has posted an 8-3 record with a .990 ERA.

A&M's Yvette Lopez, 8-2 on the year, just might be the second best pitcher in the nation behind Andaya.

Karen Athanacio can't be forgotten although she has seen more time at first base than on the pitching mound of late. The left-handed freshman is 3-1 with her only loss a 1-0 loss at the hands of No. 15 Cal-Berkeley on the road.

"We haven't pitched Karen that much," Brock said. "She's looked real good at first. I have also been using her for as a designated hitter. She's come in and done a good job for us."

Catcher Gay McNutt, who perhaps knows the three pitchers better

## Softball Top 20

1. Cal-State Fullerton
2. UCLA
3. Texas A&M
4. Cal-Poly Pomona
5. Northwestern
6. Pacific
7. Fresno State
8. New Mexico
9. Missouri
10. Nicholls State
11. Utah
12. Oklahoma
13. Nebraska
14. Arizona State
15. Cal-Berkeley
16. Creighton
17. Baylor
18. Oklahoma State
19. Indiana
20. South Carolina



Photo by PETER ROCHA

A&M Softball Coach Bob Brock (far right) huddles his players around him to talk strategy during Tuesday's double-

header with Sam Houston State. Brock's No. 3 Ags will talk even more strategy this weekend in the Aggie Invitational.

than anyone, said they will give the Ags an added advantage.

"They have a lot to do with our winning," McNutt said. "We have three of the best pitchers in the nation."

Of course, having a freshman shortstop by the name of Liz Mizera won't hurt either.

Mizera won both games of a double-header on Tuesday against Sam Houston State with homeruns, which accounted for every A&M run. Mizera is batting .390 with nine homeruns and has won several games for the Ags with her hitting.

The homeruns by Mizera enabled the Ags to move into the tournament on a four-game win streak.

Hitting has been the Ags' biggest

weakness (if they have a weakness) this season, following in the foot steps of past A&M teams.

"We have a really strong team," Jackson said. "Our team is not perfect, but that's what we strive for. The perfect prima donna team is what any team wants."

"The reason we weren't hitting had to do with being tired (on a 10-day road trip over spring break). Some of it had to do with shots not falling. Some were long, deep, deep fly balls. And sometimes we just got robbed."

The home field advantage should cure most of the Ags' hitting problems.

"A lot of our hitting problems were mental," said first baseman

Mary Schwind. "We didn't have time to rest."

"The home field will be a big advantage. You always play better in your own surroundings."

True, the Ags will be at home for this particular tourney, but they've got Omaha, Neb. and a second NCAA national championship on their minds.

"More than anything else, I would like to win one more title before I leave," Jackson said. "There's no absolute guarantee. Any team can lose and any team can win at any time. We're just hoping we're the team that wins."

Especially in this weekend's Aggie Invitational.

## Aggie Tournament Pairings

Friday, March 29

- 11 a.m. — (Field #1) A&M vs. Northeast Louisiana
- 1 p.m. — (Field #1) South Florida vs. A&M
- 6 p.m. — (Field #1) A&M vs. Southwest Missouri

Saturday, March 30

- 9 a.m. — (Field #2) New Mexico vs. A&M
- 11 a.m. — (Field #2) Stanford vs. A&M
- 3 p.m. — (Field #2) A&M vs. Louisiana Tech

Sunday, March 31

- 9 a.m. — (Field #3) A&M vs. Baylor
- 11 a.m. — (Field #3) Florida vs. A&M
- 3 p.m. — (Field #1) Utah vs. A&M

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