

SPORTS

# It was 'Advantage Ags' during netters' roadtrip

By MARYBETH ROHSNER  
Sports Writer

Home court advantage? There's no such thing. Over the weekend, the Texas A&M men's tennis team proved it by overpowering both TCU and Texas Tech on their own green concrete. "Everyone likes to end the season on a good note," said A&M Coach David Kent. "We've had our ups and downs this year. We're on an 'up' now." The "downs" took place during the last few weeks when the Aggies lost three consecutive Southwest Conference matches to Texas, SMU and Arkansas.

The No. 10 Aggies' turnaround began with a win over Rice last Saturday, followed by the 6-3 wins over TCU and Tech. A&M took four of the six singles matches against both teams. And, much to Kent's delight, the Aggies won two of the doubles matches against both the Horned Frogs and the Red Raiders.

"We're finally starting to have a little confidence in doubles," Kent said.

*"Everyone likes to end the season on a good note. We've had our ups and downs this year. We're on an 'up' now."*  
— A&M tennis coach David Kent

This weekend's victories brought the Aggies' SWC record to 5-3, good enough for fourth place in the conference standings. The final SWC rankings won't be decided until the conference post-season tournament this weekend in Corpus Christi.

"Things are looking bright for us," Kent said. "We're just within striking distance of No. 2 in the conference."

The No. 1 spot in the conference goes to the nation's No. 2 team — SMU. The Mustangs are undefeated in SWC play and boast two of the Top 10 singles players in the nation, John Ross and Richey Reneberg.

If the Aggies keep the weekend's momentum going in Corpus Christi,

they could finish second in the conference and be virtually guaranteed of an NCAA team at-large bid.

"The wins this weekend will really help us get in the NCAAAs," Kent said.

The Aggies' No. 1 player, Grant Connell, should have no problem landing an NCAA bid. Connell finished the regular season undefeated in the SWC and has carried the nation's No. 9 singles player ranking for most of the year.

"Grant is one of the premier players in college tennis today," Kent said. "His record is as good as anybody in the nation."

The sophomore from Vancouver, Canada is a prime candidate for the All-America singles title. He has consistently defeated older, more experienced players, even those ranked higher than himself.

But Connell is not Kent's only superstar. Senior Greg Hill and junior Kimmo Alkio are also nationally ranked. The season's surprise superstar, though, is freshman Dean Johnson, a native of South Africa.

"Dean Johnson has really come on strong," Kent said. "He's going to be a world-beater."

# Weekend wins prepare netters for SWC tourney

By MARYBETH ROHSNER  
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In more ways than one, the Texas A&M women's tennis team rained on Houston's parade this weekend.

First, Saturday's showers brought about a move from the Omar Smith Tennis Center to the indoor courts of the Royal Oaks Racquet Club in Bryan. Then, A&M defeated Houston 6-3 in dual-match play, taking two of the three doubles matches and four of the six singles matches.

"The team played with incredible intensity through the whole match," said A&M Coach Jan Baldwin. "I'm very proud of all of them."

The defeat over Houston followed the Aggies' win against Texas Tech Friday. The Aggies' 5-4 victory over Tech was an especially satisfy-

ing one — the Red Raiders had edged the Ags 5-4 just one week ago in the New Mexico State Tournament.

"It was great to beat (Tech)," said senior Nandini Rangarajan. "We lost a close match to them before. There was a revenge motive."

Rangarajan, the Ags' No. 2 singles player, won her singles sets against Tech, 6-2, 6-4. Though Rangarajan lost her doubles match against Tech, she ended her career at home with victories in both singles and doubles play against Houston.

"(The team) did really well," Rangarajan said. "We got everything together. I think we were really tired of losing."

The Aggies hope to keep that attitude going at the Southwest Confer-

ence post-season tourney next weekend in Corpus Christi.

"Beating Houston was a big boost for the team," said tennis trainer Chris Blume. "They'll ride that boost on into the tournament."

Though the team has suffered several close defeats against conference opponents, Blume is confident of the team's strength.

"The team has the ability to beat anyone in the conference except maybe Texas," she said.

The Lady Ags, now 40-32 in overall play and 4-4 in the SWC, will do a little "psyching up" before the SWC tournament.

"Everyone's so close," Rangarajan said. "It'll all depend on who's mentally toughest and who wants to win the most."

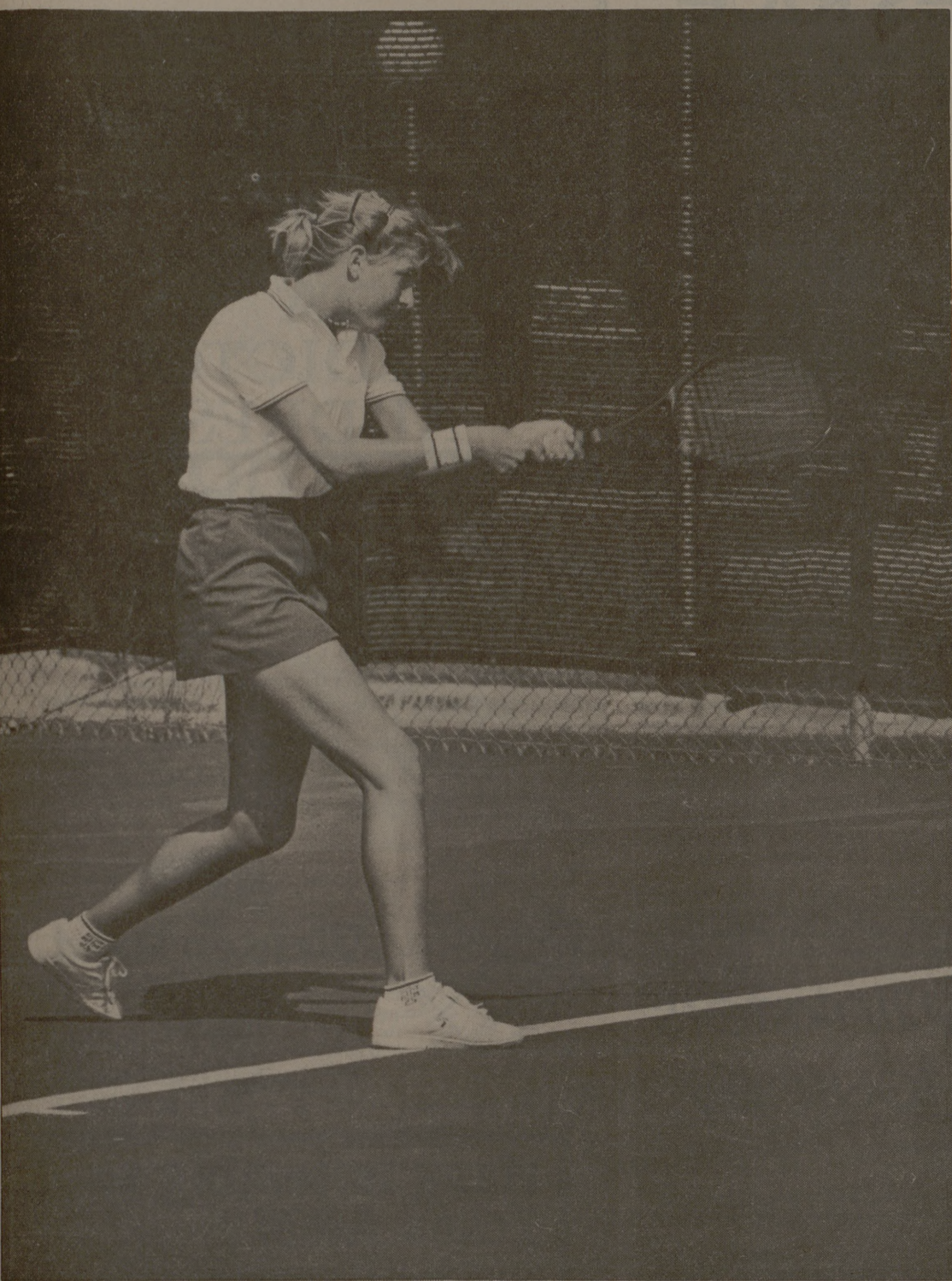


Photo by MIKE SANCHEZ

Texas A&M's Gaye Lynne Gensler belts a passing shot from the baseline during her No. 4 singles match Friday against Texas Tech. The Aggies (40-32, 4-4 in the SWC)

won both their dual matches during their homestand at the Omar Smith Tennis Center over the weekend. A&M defeated Tech 5-4 and then downed Houston 6-3 on Saturday.



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