

Sports

Aggie spikers' home isn't sweet anymore

CHAREAN WILLIAMS
Sports Viewpoint

After two weeks on the road, the Texas A&M volleyball team returned home — well, it was sort of like home, but not the proverbial "home sweet home."

Upon their arrival to practice Monday afternoon, Terry Condon's Aggies learned that they would not be able to practice on their home court — G. Rollie White Coliseum.

The Texas A&M Athletic Department had good intentions when it decided to renovate the 28-year old facility. Everyone knows "the barn" is one of the less attractive gymnasiums in the Southwest Conference.

However, the Athletic Department's timing was bad — real bad.

When the project was started back at the first of September, the A&M volleyball team was forced to change its home dates with Sam Houston State. So, on Sept. 9, the Aggies traveled to Huntsville instead of playing at home.

A slight inconvenience, but not a major problem.

However, the Athletic Department's part of the deal was to have G. Rollie ready by Sept. 24, the date of the second Bearkat match.

But, it wasn't complete and workers said Tuesday that it might not be ready for another four to six weeks.

Although it was finally agreed that the Aggies could play their matches on their home court, they were negated on practicing there. In the process, the Aggies' home court advantage has turned into a disadvantage.

"Although it shouldn't be an excuse, we don't have a home court advantage anymore," Condon said. "We won't be practicing there; which hurts. A lot of people don't even think we're playing here."

So the big question is, why was the project started now, when the Aggie spikers are just starting their 1985 season — starting a season in which the Aggies have a chance to not only win the

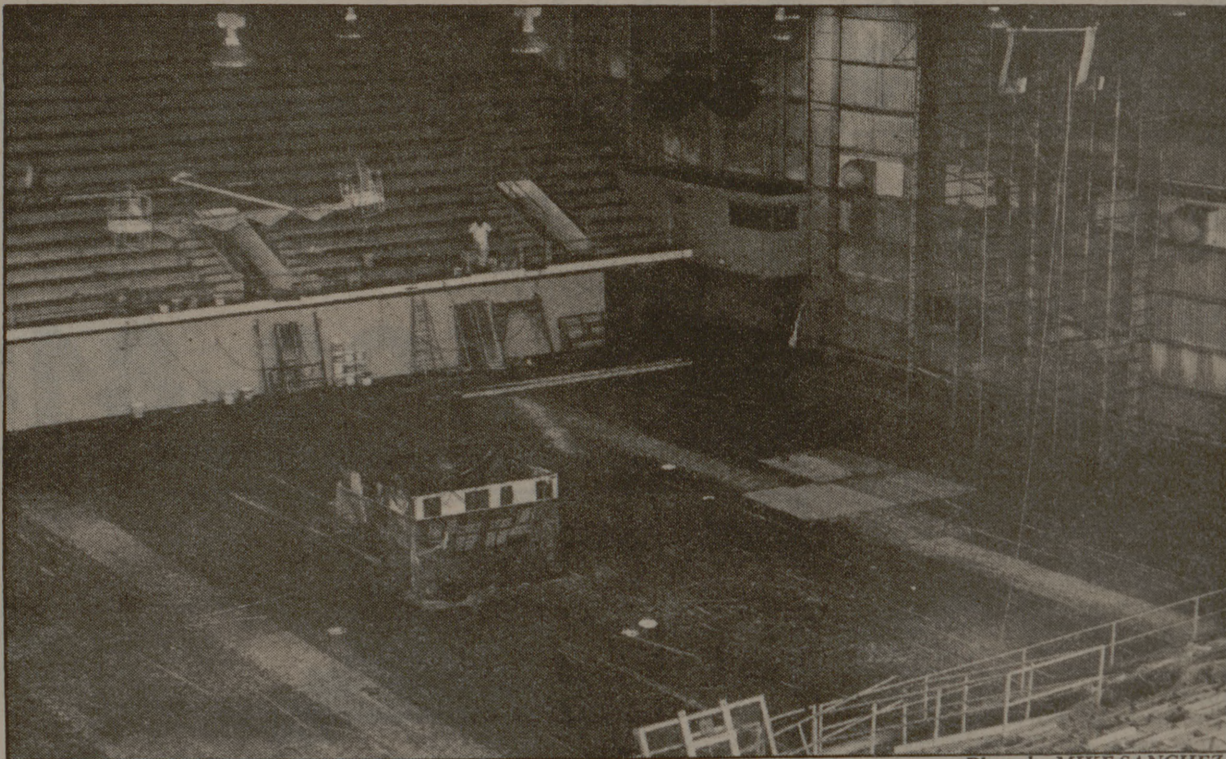


Photo by MIKE SANCHEZ

Does the Texas A&M volleyball team play here? Indeed, although the Aggies aren't allowed to

practice in G. Rollie White Coliseum, they are being allowed to play their matches there.

Southwest Conference championship, but to do well in the NCAA tournament as well?

"We're trying to get it done for the basketball season," said A&M Associate Athletic Director John David Crow. "I would have loved to have been able to do it earlier, but circumstances prevented that. The money has to be there and the availability of trades has to be there to do the job. Our painters and carpenters are very needed during the summer."

If a team earns respect at A&M based on final SWC standings, overall wins and losses, rankings in the Top 20, and upsets of Top 10 teams, the Aggie volleyball team should rate at least as high as the A&M basketball team.

However, in the decision-making process at A&M, the scoreboard reads basketball 1, volleyball 0.

Comparing the records of the basketball team and the volleyball team is not the issue at hand. Ev-

ery Aggie is proud of every sports team at A&M.

So, why would the Athletic Department bite a part of the hand that feeds it?

"We have a volleyball team that's got a chance of being invited to the NCAA tournament," Crow said. "We don't want to do anything to hinder their chances, but we can't just look at one sport when making these decisions."

But the fact is, the department did just that.

They looked at one sport, basketball, and are, in fact, hindering the volleyball teams chances of getting a NCAA bid.

The spikers have had to change practice times from 11 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. They had to change practice places from G. Rollie White to the "lovely" confines of East Kyle.

They are no longer allowed in G. Rollie until they warm-up before their matches.

The ceiling has been painted

jet black, something the Aggies must slowly become accustomed to match-by-match.

The normally rowdy, big and fun crowds that usually file into the facility whenever the spikers play, failed to show up Tuesday night. Even the Dunn Hall Bleacher Bums were not as representative as usual.

The reasons for that? The schedule said the Ags would be in Huntsville, in fact there were some Aggies who showed up in Huntsville for the match.

Many of the ramps leading to the bleachers of the Coliseum said, "Closed."

Many saw the tarps, paint cans and workers earlier in the day and decided the game was going to be played elsewhere — somewhere like Bryan High School.

Yes, the Athletic Department's intentions were good. But, it wouldn't have been that big of a deal to wait until the spring when the gym will sit silent and unused.

Believe it or not, it's not the facility that brings the crowds to the games — it's the team.

The A&M women's athletic program is becoming one of the strongest in the nation.

The softball team has been the most successful team at A&M in recent years.

Under Coach Bob Brock, those Aggies won back-to-back National Championships in '82 and '83. In '84 the team lost in the championship game to UCLA by a 1-0 score. In '85, Brock's Ags were ranked No. 2 in the nation for most of the year.

The volleyball team is the second most successful team at A&M in the past couple of years. They finished 33-4 and were ranked as high as No. 12 in the nation last season. When's the last time you heard about an A&M team winning .892 percent of its games?

Lynn Hickey was lured from Kansas State in '84 to become women's athletic director and to turn around the flailing women's basketball team. With her '85 recruiting class, Hickey has proved she will do that just that.

Aside from the coaches and players in the women's program, some problems still exist.

Have you seen the women's softball field lately? Do you even know where it's located? A&M really pumped the money into that sports facility. It looks almost as good as G. Rollie White.

If they can spend \$100,000 plus on a new track facility, they can certainly spend that much to create a real softball field that isn't used by the intramural program.

And, when's the last time you saw a "higher-up" A&M Athletic Department member at a women's athletic event?

Until the women's program can get the money and support of the upper echelons of the Athletic Department, the women's program, as a whole, won't rise to the national prominence it seems to deserve.

A&M will remain a second class outfit, compared to the UCLA's, USC's, the Louisiana Tech's, and, yes, even the Texas, where the women's programs are first class.

And, come to think of it, those schools' football teams aren't too bad either.

Golfers swing for SWC title

6 A&M players return for '85-86 campaign

By DOUG HALL
Sports Writer

It's been a long four years since Texas A&M Coach Bob Ellis and men's golf team brought a Southwest Conference Championship trophy back to Aggieland.

However, with six letterman and three upcoming prospects on the team, 1985 may be the year the Aggies break that drought.

"We should have a pretty good season," Ellis said. "We've got a team. We had a pretty good team last year, we just didn't play well. We have every one of the players back that really helped. We lost two to eligibility and one else is back."

Headlining A&M's returning golfers are Paul Mayo, a junior from Wales and honorable mention American last season, and John Coghlan, who made All-American year before.

But for the Aggies to be competitive, in a conference which considers one of the toughest in the nation, Ellis said the Aggies must have solid play out of, at least, six of the team's 11 players.

"What we really need is to have people playing well (in every tournament)," he said. "That would be ideal thing. But there is just no way you can win it (the SWC title), unless you have at least three playing well."

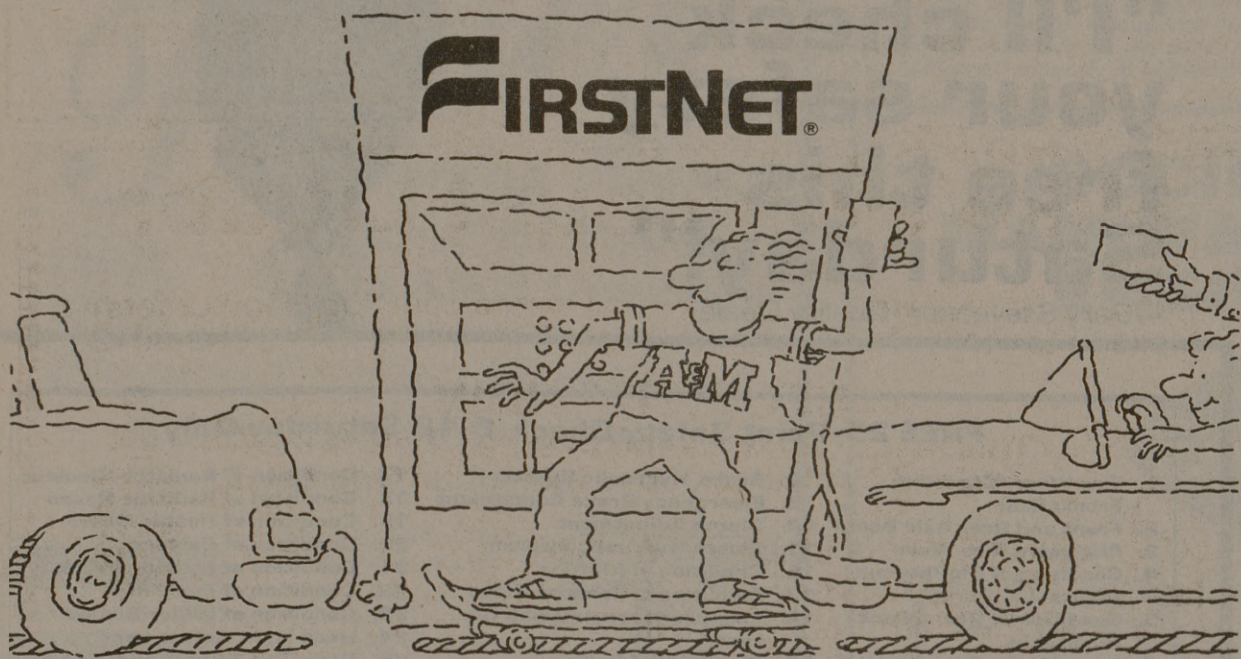
In addition to Mayo and Coghlan, Ellis hopes sophomore Flint Nelson, junior Randy Wylie and fifth-year senior David Jones provide the team with some additional depth.

"I felt like Flint, even though he was a freshman last year, was going to have a great spring," Ellis said. "He was in contention to win every tournament he played in during the fall."

Unfortunately, after finishing third at last spring's opening tournament (the Pan American Intercollegiate), Ellis said Nelson began to struggle with his game and failed to

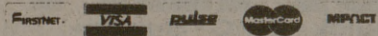
See A&M Golf, page 13

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