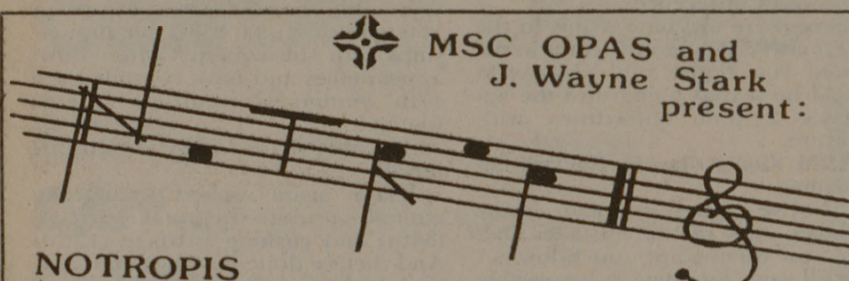


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Aggie spikers to start SWC play

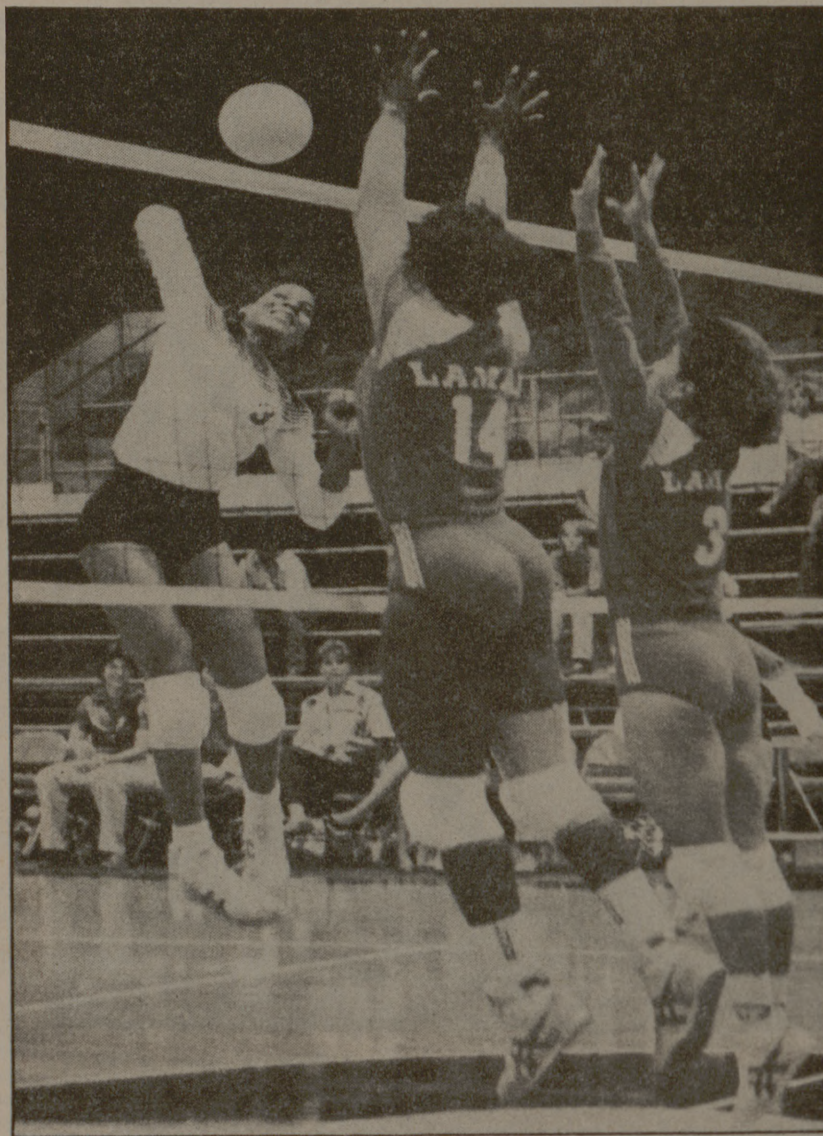


Photo by ANTHONY S. CASPER

The Texas A&M volleyball team hopes to be flying high as it opens Southwest Conference play tonight at 7:30 against Houston in G. Rollie White Coliseum. Aggie middle blocker Stacey Smith (3) gets off the floor for a spike in a victory over Lamar two weeks ago.

By CHAREAN WILLIAMS
 Assistant Sports Editor

The last time the Texas A&M volleyball team met up with Houston, the trip didn't involve just a simple van ride down Highway 6. And it didn't count in the Southwest Conference standings either.

The teams traveled 1,500 miles to compete in the Michelob Light/Aztec Classic in San Diego last month and ended up playing one another in third-place match.

Although it didn't start out well for the Aggies, they arose from their slumber just in time to take the match 3-15, 15-6, 15-7, 15-10.

A&M and Houston meet again tonight at 7:30 p.m. in G. Rollie White Coliseum. Only this time, it's a little closer to home for both teams.

"I don't think that (losing the first game of the UH match) will be any big deal," A&M Coach Terry Condon said. "We were down mentally when we played them there (in San Diego). I think they'll be nervous just knowing they have to come into G. Rollie."

If last season's match is any indication, the Cougars might indeed be just a little worried about playing before the always noisy A&M crowd.

The Dunn Hall Bleacher Bums rattled Houston and Coach Dave Olbright. In fact, the Cougars went so far as to file a protest with league officials.

"Where I come from, they wouldn't have let that harassment during the serve go on," said Olbright after last year's match. "The large crowds are good for volleyball, but there's a difference between enthusiasm and harassment."

Condon thinks that last year's episode should give the No. 19 Aggies a psychological advantage.

"I think it will be a very big factor," Condon said. "They were really mad at Dunn last year. I told (Olbright) he should listen to his own crowd. The crowds are good for college volleyball. They're supposed to be rowdy."

The Cougars' crowd hasn't had much to be rowdy about so far this season.

Houston played Lamar for the third time Monday night and lost to the Cardinals for the third time. That match lowered the Cougars' season mark to 10-12.

But regardless of Houston's record, Condon said it's always a battle when the two teams play.

"Houston is going to be tough," Condon said. "We have to be ready to play. We need to play our own game, which means we really have to play as a team. They play good defense so we're going to have to be able to run our middle."

Cougar outside hitter Angela Lewis gave the Ags a few problems when the teams met the first time.

"She played real well in San Diego," Condon said. "She hit the ball well and played good defense."

**Volleyball
 Top 20 Poll**

Here's the Tachikara Coach's Top 20 Poll with overall record through Oct. 8 in parentheses:

1. Stanford — (12-0)
2. UCLA — (10-2)
- (tie) Pacific — (10-1)
4. San Jose St. — (13-2)
5. Nebraska — (15-2)
6. Hawaii — (11-2)
7. Cal-Poly SLO — (10-1)
8. USC — (10-4)
9. Texas — (8-4)
10. Colorado St. — (11-4)
11. Western Michigan — (11-1)
12. San Diego St. — (14-6)
13. Illinois — (23-0)
14. Arizona — (10-4)
15. BYU — (14-4)
16. Purdue — (13-0)
17. Arizona St. — (11-3)
18. Cal-Santa Barbara — (11-3)
19. Texas A&M — (10-3)
20. Rhode Island — (13-5)

Baylor, SMU tired of taking back seat

Associated Press
 Once every two years, the Baylor Bears meet Southern Methodist in Dallas on the second weekend of October — and inevitably take a back seat to two other schools.
 On that weekend, the annual Texas-Oklahoma clash grabs headlines and airwaves.
 "I've been mildly irritated that

through the years we have had to play second fiddle to the Texas-Oklahoma game," Baylor Coach Grant Teaff said. "A lot of times we have had the much better game, but nobody seems to know it."
 Teaff would like for the SWC office to find a solution, but isn't sure what it would be.
 "We tried playing the game in

Waco every year but SMU really didn't want to do that," said Teaff. "Sometimes we have a lot better football game and I'd like to see the game get more recognition."
 Asked about the "bidding" competition against Oklahoma and Texas, SMU Coach Bobby Collins joked, "Oh, I didn't realize they were playing."

Getting serious, Collins said an example of how Texas-Oklahoma gets top billing was the SWC broadcast log released this week.
 "I was amazed that the Southwest Conference radio bill headlined Texas and Oklahoma," Collins said. "Our game with Baylor is a Southwest Conference game. You would think it would have been on top."

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