

# Skilled player shortage hurting A&M Rugby Club

By DOUG HALL  
Sports Writer

The Texas A&M Rugby Club, Texas Collegiate champions for the past 15 years, is experiencing some hard times.

Like all college sports, the A&M rugby club undergoes a continuous turnover that has severely depleted last year's strong team.

"We lost a lot of veteran players," said Tim Cone, a senior rugby player from San Antonio. "We are just too young right now."

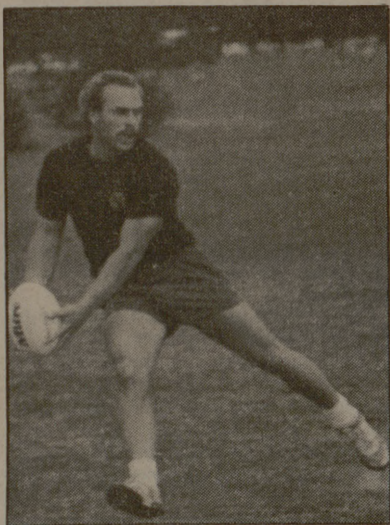
Cone said the rugby team, which has three "sides," or teams of 15 players each, would like to see more people come out and experience rugby, especially those who have played before.

"Right now we only have about 40 people out there," Cone said. "We'd like to see about 70. The University of Texas had over 120 try out for their club."

Mark Flinn, who is also a senior from San Antonio, said there are many families in the Bryan-College Station area that come from countries where rugby is a favorite pastime.

"We have a few South Africans on our team right now," Flinn said. "But we'd like to see more (foreign players) come out."

"We want to propose to them that since they (foreigners) are familiar



A&M rugby player Mark Flinn

with the game, to come out and experience Texas A&M rugby."

But don't underestimate the Aggies this year, just because they have a young team. They play a very high caliber of collegiate rugby, and so do Cone and Flinn.

The two senior starters were invited to compete for the Texas Rugby Union at the Western Select Side Invitational in Omaha, Neb., two weeks ago.

Rugby is divided across the nation into four divisions: Western, Mid-

western, Eastern and Pacific, each of which have separate rugby unions. The Texas Rugby Union is in the Western Division.

Flinn and Cone, the only collegiate players at the tourney from Texas, competed against players from the other unions for two all-star teams — the under 25 age group and the over 25, or senior, side.

From the western division tournament, individual players are chosen to compete against all-star teams from the other three divisions in the hope of being picked for the U.S. national team, the Eagles.

But more importantly, and closer to home, the Aggies host the San Antonio Armadillos Rugby Club Saturday on the rugby field, directly behind the Zachary Engineering Bldg. parking lot.

"They are good," Cone said. "And since they're in our division, they are a team we've got to beat. We were tied with them last year in club play."

Rugby is broken down further into the collegiate level, in which A&M has dominated, and club play which is open to any team, not just colleges.

"We want to win the western collegiate," he said. "We have come real close, but right now it is not looking too good."

Saturday's games will be at 10 a.m. and noon.

# Ag tennis 'doubling' with joy

Women's team ready for Houston Fall Festival

By KEN SURY  
Sports Writer

The Texas A&M women's tennis team hopes a successful past weekend and a good showing from last year will spark them to victory in the Houston Fall Festival Tournament this weekend.

Last weekend, two Aggie doubles teams made the semifinals in the Westwood Invitational tourney in Austin. Although the team of Gaye Lynne Gensler and Vanne Akagi were eliminated in the semifinals, Kim Labuschagne and Karen Marshall brought home a first place win.

Last year, Gensler and Akagi won the doubles championship at the Houston Fall Festival. They enter this year's tournament as the No. 1 seeded doubles team.

Players from Rice, Southern Louisiana, Houston Baptist and Pan American universities, and a few Houston-area tennis pros, will compete in the open tourney.

Akagi and Labuschagne are seeded third and fourth in the singles competition of the tournament. Gensler is an alphabetical seed, which means she is seeded anywhere from ninth to 16th. The tournament doesn't give specific seed numbers past No. 8.

A&M Women's Tennis Coach Bobby Kleinecke said this tournament, and the team's other fall matches, give the Aggies a chance to prepare for their spring schedule.

"Doubles are going to be a key to our success as a team this year," Kleinecke said.

Kleinecke also said he's trying different pairings for the doubles teams to find which players will make the best tandems. But he said the teams of Akagi-Gensler and Marshall-Labuschagne will probably remain the same since they've played well in previous tournaments.

The other doubles teams Kleinecke said he will use for the Houston tournament are Helen Christiaanse-Julie Vaughan, Kellie Dorman-Cathy Nutt, and Laura Liang-Missy Kibler.

Kleinecke said the team's more aggressive playing style is starting to pay off for them, although last weekend's early round matches were troublesome for the Ags.

"We got off to a slow start, then really picked it up and played a good tournament," Kleinecke said. "We took the net away from Texas (in the championship match)."

The early round matches will be played at the Chancellor's Racket Club, and the finals will be held at the Southwest Tennis Center.

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