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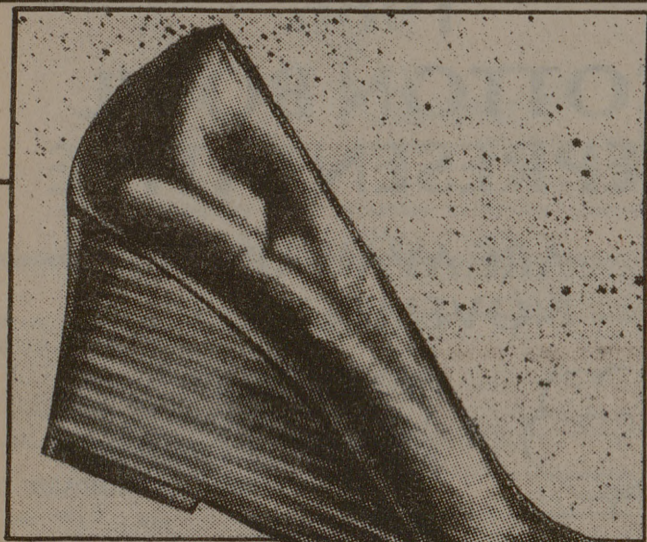
MSC Recreation Presents: ACU-1 Qualifying Racquetball Tournament

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On Campus

RECEPTION:

November 5th
6 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.
RM 302 - Rudder Tower

INTERVIEWS:

November 6th & 7th
Contact your
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TANK McNAMARA®

by Jeff Millar & Bill Hinds



Ag volleyball team's loss to 'Horns causes trouble

AUSTIN — The 13th-ranked volleyball team in the nation was playing No. 17.

Two traditional rivals, whose contests have been filled with sweat, tears and bad blood, were meeting once again with little more at stake than a Southwest Conference Championship.

Four seniors for both teams were seeing each other for the last time in Gregory Gymnasium.

So, with all the buildup, just what did happen in Austin Wednesday night?

For starters, the University of Texas volleyball team defeated Texas A&M, 15-7, 15-9, 15-13.

For clinchers, Texas may have cost the Aggies a lot more than just a loss in the SWC standings.

"The match was just what I thought would happen," A&M Coach Terry Condon said Wednesday. "We were just too weak in two rotations."

The "two rotations" referred to were those belonging to A&M middle blocker Margaret Spence and outside hitter Michelle Whitwell.

You see, until two weeks ago, Spence was an outside hitter and Whitwell was the Aggies' designated bench warmer.

With Wednesday's leading ladies in their performing roles, A&M had spiked, blocked, dinked, served and pounded its way to 15-3 record and a No. 10 national ranking.

But the Aggies' steamroll lost its spark plug in a match against Texas Southern, when starting middle blocker Stacey Smith injured her ankle and would be lost for most of the remainder of the season.

A&M hasn't been the same team since it lost Smith.

The Aggies, having inserted and inverted Whitwell and Spence, immediately lost to Texas Tech in Lubbock after the TSU match, putting themselves in a must-win situation going into "Orange Wednesday."

"I expected a lot of mistakes of them (Whitwell and Spence)," Condon said, "but I was just hoping Texas would make a few. It's really disheartening because when Stacey was with us, we were playing so well."

BRANDON BERRY Sports Viewpoint

So is everything over for this year's battered, bruised and "horned-hooked" Aggies?

"We're down right now," Condon said. "We know Texas will win (the SWC championship), unless five of its starters get hurt. They aren't going to lose again."

"We've just got to make sure we win the rest of our games and finish second, instead of third (behind Tech). I think the NCAA will let us in (the national championship tournament) because of us not getting invited last year."

A&M should finish second in the conference, despite Smith's absence from the lineup. However, when the NCAA selection committee looks at the Aggies' wins and losses, their upcoming schedule might be more important than Wednesday night's defeat.

The Aggies defeated the Georgia Bulldogs in Atlanta Thursday night and moved on to the Tennessee Invitational Tournament in Knoxville, Tenn.

For A&M to make the NCAA playoffs (by which time it hopes to have Smith back in the lineup), the Aggies realistically need to have a perfect week.

Losses to nationally-ranked and respected Texas teams are merely thorns in the sides of playoff contenders. Losses to Tennessee and other Southeastern Conference teams would be shots through the Aggies' playoff-seeking hearts.

More important than any game, loss or playoff exclusion, Texas may have set A&M's volleyball program back a step or two. Until the Tech defeat, the Aggies had never lost to another SWC team except Texas.

The A&M-UT match was more than just intense volleyball — it was the clincher that decided which team would represent the SWC in the NCAAs and which team would have a longer off-season to plot its revenge.

But the Aggies have lost their past matches with the 'Horns and haven't been invited to the NCAAs since 1981. And that streak is in danger of being extended.

What makes this season's derailment even harder to take for A&M coaches, fans and players is that 1985 was supposed to be the Aggies' year.

Four starters from last year's 33-4 team were returning for another try at the NCAA playoffs. Condon had recruited one of the best freshman classes in A&M history. And the Aggies had beaten Texas three times last spring in an off-season tournament.

"We're going to be the best team in the United States," All-American middle blocker Sherri Brinkman whooped after a spring practice.

But now the Aggies are searching for stronger rotations, stronger performances and stronger answers to four-year-old questions.

Seniors Brinkman and Leshia Beakley are winding down illustrious careers, and their losses will leave the '86 cupboard quite a bit barer than this year's preseason deluxe china cabinet.

But will Condon be around to arrange the dishes?

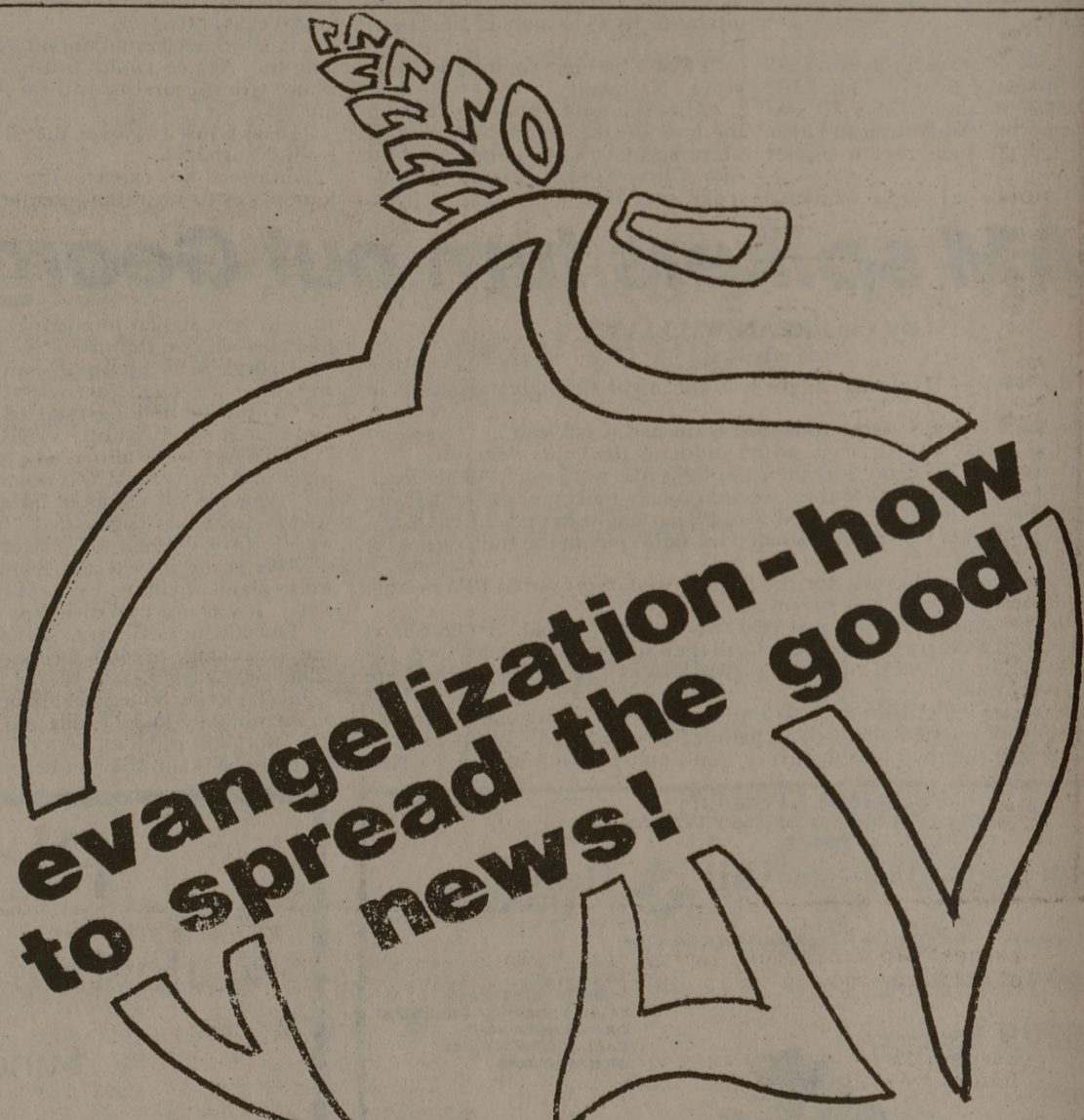
The long-time A&M coach entered this season in less than great spirits. After a season in which a 33-4 record didn't earn the Aggies a playoff berth, the A&M Athletic Department told Condon her team would be playing its matches in the Bryan High School gymnasium this season due to the renovation of G. Rollie White Coliseum.

The lack of respect, both home and nationally, for A&M volleyball has to make other pastures appear enticingly green to a woman described as "one of the best young coaches in the game today."

At least one of Condon's highly recruited '84 recruits has stated privately that if Condon goes, she also will transfer.

So a twist of an ankle and an un-

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